

National Assembly Debates

**PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF
THE FIRST SESSION (2001) OF THE EIGHTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA
UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE RE-
PUBLIC OF GUYANA**

Part I

10TH SITTING

2.00 PM

Thursday, 28th June, 2001

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (68)

Speaker (1)

The Hon. Hari N. Ramkarran, S. C., M. P. - *Speaker of the National Assembly*

Members of the Government - People's Progressive Party/Civic (34)

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The Hon. Samuel A.A. Hinds, M.P. | - <i>Prime Minister and Minister of Public Works and Communications (Absent-performing the functions of the office of President)</i> |
| The Hon. Reepu Daman Persaud, O.R., J.P., M.P. | - <i>Minister of Parliamentary Affairs</i> |
| The Hon. Clement J. Rohee, M.P. | - <i>Minister of Foreign Trade and International Co-operation (Absent)</i> |
| The Hon. Harripersaud Nokta, M.P. | - <i>Minister of Local Government and Regional Development</i> |
| The Hon. Gail Teixeira, M.P. | - <i>Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport</i> |
| The Hon. Dr. Henry B. Jeffrey, M.P. | - <i>Minister of Education</i> |
| The Hon. Saisnarine Kowlessar, M.P. | - <i>Minister of Finance</i> |
| The Hon. Shaik K.Z. Baksh, M.P. | - <i>Minister of Housing and Water</i> |
| The Hon. Navindranauth O. Chandarpal, M.P. | - <i>Minister of Agriculture (Region No.4 - Demerara/Mahaica)</i> |
| The Hon. J. Ronald Gajraj, M.P. | - <i>Minister of Home Affairs (Region No. 3-Essequibo Islands/West Demerara)</i> |
| The Hon. Rev. Dr. Ramnauth D.A. Bisnauth, M.P. | - <i>Minister of Labour, Human Services and Social Security</i> |

The Hon. Clinton C. Collymore, M.P.	- Minister in the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development
The Hon. Satyadeow Sawh, M.P.	- Minister of Fisheries, Other Crops and Livestock (Region No. 5 - Mahaica/Berbice)
*The Hon.S.Rudolph Insanally, O.R, C.C.H, M.P.	- Minister in the Office of the President with responsibility for Foreign Affairs (Absent - on leave)
*The Hon. Doodnauth Singh, S.C., M.P.	- Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Absent)
The Hon. Dr. Jennifer R.A. Westford, M.P.	- Minister of the Public Service
The Hon. C. Anthony Xavier, M.P.	- Minister of Transport and Hydraulics
The Hon. Bibi S.Shadick, M.P.	- Minister in the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security (Region No. 3 - Essequibo Islands/ West Demerara)
**The Hon. Manzoor Nadir, M.P.	- Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce
The Hon. Carolyn Rodrigues, M.P.	- Minister of Amerindian Affairs
The Hon. Dr Leslie S. Ramsammy, M.P.	- Minister of Health (Absent)
Mr S. Feroze Mohamed, M.P.	- Chief Whip
Mr Cyril C. Belgrave, C.C.H., J.P., M.P.	- (Region No. 4 - Demerara/Mahaica) (Absent)
Mr. Donald R. Ramotar, M.P.	
Mr Husman Alli, M.P.	- (Region No. 7 - Cuyuni/Mazaruni)
Mr. Komal Chand, C.C.H., J.P., M.P.	
Mrs Indranie Chandarpal, M.P.	
Mr Bernard C. DeSantos, S.C., M.P.	- (Region No.4 - Demerara/Mahaica) (Absent)
Mrs Shirley V. Edwards, J.P. M.P.	
Mr Odinga N. Lumumba, M.P.	
Mr Heeralall Mohan, M.P.	- (Region No.2 -Pomeroon/ Supenaam)
Mr Ramesh C. Rajkumar, M.P.	- (Region No. 6 - East Berbice/ Corentyne) (Absent - on leave)
Mr Kumkaran Ramdas, M.P.	
Mr Khemraj Ramjattan, M.P.	- (Region No. 6 - East Berbice/ Corentyne)
Dr Bheri S. Ramsaran, M.D., M.P.	
Mrs Philomena Sahoye-Shury, C.C.H, J.P, M.P.	- Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Housing and Water
Mrs Pauline R. Sukhai, M.P.	- (Region No.1 - Barima/Waini)(Absent)

* Non-Elected Minister

** Elected Member from The United Force

Members of the Opposition (30)

(i) People's National Congress/Reform (27)

Mr. Hugh Desmond Hoyte, S.C., M.P.	- <i>Leader of the Opposition</i>
Mr. Robert H. O. Corbin, M. P.	
Mr. Winston S. Murray, C.C.H., M.P.	
Mrs Clarissa S. Riehl, M.P.	- <i>Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly</i>
Mr E. Lance Carberry, M.P.	- <i>Chief Whip</i>
Mr Ivor Allen, M.P.	- <i>(Region No. 2-Pomeroon/Supenaam) (Absent - on Leave)</i>
Mrs. Deborah J. Backer, M.P.	
Mr. Deryck M.A. Bernard, M.P.	
Mr. C. Stanley Ming, M.P.	
Mr. Raphael G. C. Trotman, M.P.	
Mr Vincent L. Alexander, M.P.	- <i>(Region No. 4-Demerara/Mahaica)</i>
Mr. Andy Goveia, M.P.	
Mrs. Volda A. Lawrence, M.P.	
Dr Dalgleish Joseph, M.D.,M.P.	- <i>(Region No. 5-Mahaica (Berbice)</i>
Miss Amna Ally, M.P.	- <i>(Region No. 10-Upper Demerara/ Berbice)</i>
Miss Sandra M. Adams, M.P.	
Mr. Jerome Khan, M.P.	
Dr George A. Norton, M.P.	
Miss Myrna E. N. Peterkin, M.P.	- <i>(Region No. 4-Demerara/Mahaica)</i>
Mr. James K. McAllister, M.P.	- <i>(Region No. 3-Essequibo Islands West Demerara</i>
Miss Lurlene A. Nestor, M.P.	- <i>(Region No. 4-Demerara/ Mahaica)</i>
Mr Abdul Kadir, J.P., M.P.	- <i>(Region No. 10-Upper Demerara/ Berbice)</i>
Mr Ricky Khan, M.P.	- <i>(Region No. 1 - Barima/Waini)</i>
Mrs. R. Bancroft, M.P.	- <i>(Region No. 8 - Potaro/Siparuni)</i>
Mr Nasir Ally, J.P., M.P.	- <i>(Region No. 6 - East Berbice/Corentyne)</i>
Miss Judith David, M.P.	- <i>(Region No. 7-Cuyuni/Mazaruni)</i>
Miss Genevieve Allen, M.P.	- <i>(Region No. 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)</i>

(ii) Guyana Action Party/Working People's Alliance Party (2)

Mrs Sheila V.A. Holder, M.P.	- <i>(Absent-on Leave)</i>
Mrs Shirley J. Melville, M.P.	- <i>(Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo)</i>

(iii) Rise, Organise and Rebuild Party (1)

Mr Ravindra Dev, M.P.

OFFICERS

Mr Frank A. Narain, C.C.H., Clerk of the National Assembly

Mr Sherlock E. Isaacs, Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly

PRAYER

The Clerk read the Prayer

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Leave

Hon Members, leave has been granted to Mr Rudolph Insanally, Minister in the Office of the President with responsibility for Foreign Affairs up to the 29th June, 2001.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

MOTION

MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 2001 (2001 BUDGET)

Assembly resumed the debate on the motion for the approval of the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2001

The Speaker: Hon. Members, we can now resume the debate on the Budget for the year 2001. The first speaker today is the Hon. Member Mr. Robert Corbin.

Mr. Robert H. O. Corbin: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. My intervention today in this 2001 Budget Debate would be uncharacteristically brief for three main reasons:

After three days of speeches in any normal situation, there would be a saturation point where words are spoken but no one hears.

Secondly, I am not sure from the responses we see so far to the PNC's contributions to this debate, that speaking makes much sense in this Parliament, apart from records of Hansard, and *[Applause]* thirdly, my lack of faith in the accuracy of information presented to this Honourable House notwithstanding the prayer that we just heard,

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Where words come from the depth of truth. As representatives of the people, we have an obligation to present issues from the perspective of our constituents, so that their voices can be heard, that they can believe that they are being seriously taken, that they can see evidence of that in their daily lives and feel that they are parts of the mainstream of their native land, and in so doing respond favourably to make the words of the Hon. Minister of Finance at paragraph 1. 3 of the Budget Speech a reality.

I want to refer to that paragraph 1. 3, I think it is the third or fourth sentence:

We are single-minded in our resolve to establish a society in which no one feels excluded from the mainstream of development, a society in which the rich diversity of our people is used to strengthen the bonds that bind us, rather than accentuate those that divide us.

Then, if that happens we can begin to believe the words of the first sentence of this first paragraph which states:

We have taken careful note of our people's demands, their hopes and aspirations.

The only saving grace of this entire fiasco, Mr. Speaker, is that much of it is being televised so that the people of this country can make their own judgments and assessments.

Yes, they heard the Hon. Member Mr. Baksh yesterday, that all is well with water supply in Guyana. No cause for complaint, no need for investigation. Yes, Mr. Speaker, it is like the hymn, *It is well, it is well, with my soul.*

Yes, they heard the Hon. Member Mr. Odinga Lumumba yesterday, who said that all is well too and that there is no discrimination. I would not be unethical as he was yesterday, to use what a Member said to me outside this Chamber to score any debating

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point with him or I would have quoted the very Hon. Member outside this House. All I would say, is that *it is a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive.*

It seems that the only proper contribution is one that praises the Government. So we have several teachers marking our books on that side of the House during this Parliamentary assessment. Like one who responds to serious points made by Brother McAllister about perceptions in West Demerara, of serious perceptions of the people there, would want to feel that thirty-five years of teaching is any qualification for assessing the veracity of what is happening on the ground.

Mr. Khan draws attention to this serious crisis in agriculture in this country, rice, sugar, et cetera. What is the response? The son of a rice farmer doesn't know anything about rice, bald head and things like that.

This is the seriousness with which we approach this Debate, but page 7 of the Budget Speech is very instructive in this regard. Don't let us listen to what Mr. Jerome Khan stated in this House and I quote from page 7, paragraph 3.1, not the entire section:

Mr Speaker, sugar production of 273,317 tonnes, which was achieved in 2000 was, 15 per cent less than that produced in 1999.

Paragraph 3.2, the same page:

Rice production fell by 20.1 per cent.

Not Jerome Khan, I am reading from the Budget Speech. Paragraph 3.3, the third line:

However, there was a decrease in poultry meat production by 5.3 per cent,

Two lines down:

In forestry, output declined by 16 per cent.

Paragraph 3. 5:

The manufacturing sector declined by 13.9 per cent. Of the four sub-sectors within the sector, beverages and other manufacturing fell by 12 per cent and 16 per cent respectively. Short falls in output were experienced in ointments, 19.5 per cent; footwear, 12 per cent; soap, 54.5 per cent; garments, 24.3 per cent and rum 33 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, the same Budget, however, if you look at paragraph 3. 4, and I am deliberately drawing this reference, the two sentences before last, on page 8, I quote from the very Budget Speech:

In bauxite, production increased by 14 per cent 2,689,451 tonnes. There were noticeable increases in all grades, in spite of the problems encountered with flooding of the mines, obsolete machinery and equipment and an unstable power supply.

Compare this report, Mr. Speaker, with what we have heard from the government benches over the past few days. Mr. Speaker, you can therefore appreciate my assertion about the lack of faith in the information being presented to this House. Sometimes I wonder whether the information is really for this House or to continue the propaganda, as we see the cameras beaming in, specifically when some speakers are speaking and obviously it is not really intended to fool the Members of this House because we have the Budget before us. So obviously it's a smokescreen for the Parliament and a wonderful propaganda exercise for those who are looking on television. Of course, we have been treated to a profound thesis of this dismal performance by the Hon. Prime Minister. The Hon. Prime Minister blames all of these deficiencies, all these terrible performances, be

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said, on the PNC - slow-fire and more-fire. Soon we might hear about aggressive fire.

Mr. Ramjattan would have us believe, I don't see him here today, so I will say little at that, he would have us believe that the PNC is the problem. Well, Mr. Speaker, I have been around a long time and so have you, and I heard in my years, in the short period of my political sojourn, many calls for civil disobedience - no PR or death, burning of sugar cane, numerous strikes for twenty-eight years, continuous years. I never heard the PNC complain. I want to give some advice to my friends on the other side, when you are in government you are expected to govern and govern in the best interest of all Guyana. [Applause] If you cannot stand the heat, well, it's time to cut and run. If the PNC is so powerful to be responsible for everything that went wrong, perhaps you should step down and handover and let the PNC put everything right.

Mr. Speaker, we have two options, we can make this National Assembly a talk shop or if we don't want to make this National Assembly a talk shop we can use the comments made, whether harsh or not, as a barometer and, as responsible leaders, take appropriate action. The only promising remark I've heard so far on the other side was from Mr. Bheri Ramsaran. I say so because shortly after Mr. McAllister spoke, he said he was taken aback, he was shocked at what Mr. McAllister said. I am happy about that. At least someone has been affected by what someone on this side has said, and let us hope that the shock propels serious evaluation of the problems which we experience in Guyana. If we behave like ostriches, Guyana will be the poorer. We should therefore carefully analyse the situation. I say it is summed up in one word, *alienation*. Alienation at many levels of our society.

Let's not look at slow-fire, more-fire and aggressive-fire, let's not look for scapegoats and blaming persons for the problems, let's examine what happened in this country seriously since 1997. Let's evaluate the real causes of those problems and address them, and I

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want to advise my friends that that is the only way that we will really be serious when we speak of putting this country forward and having full cooperation. I am not going to rehash and repeat those problems, they are known, but I want to say seriously, that it is time for us to deal with the problems that cause the elections dissatisfaction, which led to deception, distrust, lack of confidence and no faith in the words of our leaders. And I say that seriously because the way that this dialogue is proceeding and the work of these committees and the evidence of their performance, will perhaps be the final test as to whether the people will have any faith in us, who are representing them in this country.

It is time for us to look forward. The PNC/Reform, Mr. Speaker, is seriously interested in all the people of Guyana. Let us not see complaints and representations only from the point of view of ethnic polarisation. Let us not see the problems of Guyana only from the point of view of political polarisation because poverty, depression, backwardness, lack of facilities affect many communities. But it is the manner in which the people perceive the state machinery as addressing these problems.

The politics of Guyana is very complex and it is no point our trying to score political points and say because the PNC speaks about discrimination or marginalisation of certain ethnic groups that the PNC represents only one ethnic group of this country. The PNC could not win an election on ethnicity alone. The PNC could not receive forty per cent that were announced by the Elections Commission on the basis of any ethnic polarisation or representing any singular ethnic group. And therefore when we speak of the problems in Guyana, it must not be wished away as though we are trying to pull out skeletons and raise red herrings. And therefore, Mr. Speaker, I urge this National Assembly, as we look at the Budget Debate to pay keen attention to what the Members of this House are saying, and let us not seek to find excuses and bury our heads in the sand, rather let us address them.

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I know, Mr. Speaker, that I am supposed to speak today on Works, Communications, Regional Development et cetera. I know that my friend, the Hon. Mr. Xavier and my good friend Mr. Harripersaud Persaud Nokta, are waiting anxiously to respond, perhaps in the same fashion as the responses we have heard before. I wouldn't give them the pleasure of confusing this House. The PNC applauds all the good measures in the Budget, but we are not here to share out bouquets. We are here to point out weaknesses in the system so that the whole society can benefit. So why point them out, if like ostriches, we bury our heads and our consciences in the sand and not seriously take them into consideration.

I refer to paragraphs 4.16 to 4.22 in the Budget between pages 28 and 30. *Infrastructural Development* - I know the Hon. Minister is going to be pleased to tell us about the many things that are stated in the Budget:

\$18.7 billion to Public Sector Investment Programme

Drainage and irrigation program exceeding one billion, involves works in areas such as the Mibicuri, Nos. 52 to 57 villages.

And he will tell us of all these programmes and elaborate on the millions of dollars that will be spent:

Over \$1.8 billion that have been budgeted to construct and rehabilitate the Bartica/Issano Road, Blackbush Polder and all these roads.

The \$448 million on our Bridges Programmes, all Bridges on the East Coast, East Bank, West Coast including the main Mahaica/Mahaicony bridges are scheduled for rehabilitation

but he said,

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over the next four years.

So we are not sure what is happening this year,

which includes 57 bridges.

The Hon. Minister goes on to speak of communication,

US\$30 million, four-year Air Transport Project

and so on, and so forth.

These massive investments in our infrastructure, must be welcomed by all the people of Guyana. Who would criticise expenditure for improving infrastructure, which is so essential if we are interested in Guyana developing. So I am not going to praise the Minister of Finance. I would say, it is good that the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Works have recognised these realities *and are attempting to implement this programme.*

What we need to address more seriously, is how the programme is being administered. How the contracts are being awarded? What kind of work is being done and to ask ourselves whether the limited resources, which we have and which we are borrowing ... *[Pause]* I note that the Minister of Finance did not tell us about our debt ratio in any serious way (I assume that our debt burden has reduced and we are not increasing debts.) but said that all these projects, and a lot of them are funded from international agencies alone. So I would leave it to the economists to work out whether or not that debt burden is not increasing. We welcome these projects, but I have to ask the question, can these projects be really achieved in the six months that we have in the remaining part of this year? So how the Budget is couched, with these massive projects, these large figures, give the impression that dramatic changes are going to take place in Guyana. I think that that is a deception. Perhaps the Minister will tell us what will really take place in Guyana. For looking at these things, I say that even if the Minister was willing or the government was serious

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about this, we do not have the absorptive capacity to execute these projects as outlined in this Budget. We do not have it. The raw materials, stone alone, unless you are going to get Mazaruni Granite to give you all the stone and not pressurise them or you are going to do, as was attempted sometime ago, to import stone with all implications that went with that importation at the time.

But apart from that, Mr. Speaker, I say that while the programme on paper looks impressive and no one can quarrel with these investments, we must take note of the speakers from the various regions, whose contributions to this Debate highlight some serious imbalances in the manner in which this expenditure is being utilised, and how, despite such large resources are being made available for development, that that development is not taking place in and even way.

I would not give the Minister the opportunity to deal with some of the other matters. They are well-known and again he will give some fancy answers. I know, if we ask him what happened he will tell me, as he told me in the corridor yesterday, that in 2000 he was able to achieve ninety-five per cent of his work programme. If that is true, I congratulate him.

But would he tell me, if I asked him seriously, the truth about the awarding of these contracts, about why so many people are complaining about the uneven hand of the administration in the award of contracts?

Will he tell me the truth about the Charity Wharf and how many taxpayers dollars went down the drain? Lovely programme!

Will he tell me the details of the Mon Repos Sea Defense and how much money was wasted and the report that we do not have the privilege of seeing to this date? At least I have not seen it wherever it is.

The truth about the stone scam, and I hope that these are matters

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that are objectively addressed so they will not re-occur, not because we want to expose and embarrass the Minister, but because these are issues of concern to the taxpayers of this country. It is no point answering it by referring to the past as some people would want to do. These are realities which we face today as part of your programme, for putting Guyana in the 21st century.

Will the Minister tell us the truth about the Essequibo Road which Mr. McAllister spoke about and which he knows about, because he worked on that project as a professional with TECHNODOMI and the French Company DONZENAC? He can speak more about the details of what went on there, but will the Minister tell this House and the people of Guyana the truth of what took place there?

Will the minister tell this House, frankly, with all this expenditure, what has happened to the Mandela Avenue bridge? Are we going to get excuses that it was an old design, and that seems to be the satisfactory answer to the concern of the people of this country?

Sure we welcome the continuation of the initiative to have the road from Guyana to Brazil. Indeed everyone will know that it is the People's National Congress/Reform's dream that road becomes a reality, and I am not beating my chest about it. I am saying that if you are proceeding with the Guyana/ Brazil Road, naturally it is a project that the PNC/R will applaud. What we will not applaud is the way in which the plans are proceeding and the manner in which the government is proceeding to deal with investors, who are interested in helping that dream to become a reality.

Mr Speaker, I looked at the Stabroek News, for example, of Monday 25th June 2001, *South African group eyes Lethem road for regional development plan*. I have got some information on this company. I am reliably informed that this group has wide experience in building roads internationally. I think they have built a road from Moputu, Mozambique and I am told that the officials were here. But

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will the Minister tell us, other than what we read in the papers, how seriously this government has addressed this proposal? Or are we, as we are doing with the proposal from ALCOA, putting on blinkers and not assessing economic projects and potential investors in an objective manner and setting up standard criteria for dealing with them? This is what we want to know, not that the road is continuing. We want to be assured that the resources are properly spent, we get the best for our dollar and that we see development taking place in a very rapid way.

Will we get the truth from the Minister about what is happening with infra structural development in the West Coast Berbice area such as the MMA, the dams, the conservancy, its maintenance and what is responsible for the serious setback in the rice industry, which hinges on infrastructure and development? Sure the figures look impressive, but those figures do not reflect reality.

I looked at Thursday June 28, Stabroek News, I think that is today. Is it today? Thank you. Today's Stabroek News, and I am reading, after hearing all the wonderful stories in this House, *Kayman Sankar sends home one hundred and fifty workers, Blairmont operations closed*. Well the PNC probably had demonstrations there, and burning fires, I don't know if the Minister of Home Affairs can tell us whether there was any slow-fire there. That must have been a secret-fire, that's a new slogan *secret-fire*. And if I look at that article it states:

Rice millers and farmers will have to go out on the streets and burn tires before we see the results.

I am looking to see whether this is the PNC here, Mr Speaker –
[*Interruption: 'You are looking at the New Nation' "No this is not New Nation, this is the Stabroek News, Thursday 28th June"*]

Mr. Speaker, the point I am trying to make, is that unless this government and those on the other side of this House seriously address

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the real problems of this country ... Don't look at the effects, we are all intelligent people; don't look to score cheap political points, it will not help us. The political leaders are incapable of holding back the wrath of an angry people, whether PNC/R or PPP/Civic. History has many lessons for us - recently in the Philippines, Malaysia and around the world. We can sit in this Parliament, we can make wonderful speeches, we can retort and find beautiful answers, we can coach statistics like Mr. Lumumba yesterday afternoon, we can find all kinds of rationale, but the people out there are the final arbiter for what we are doing for their welfare. *[Applause]*

So, I want to say to the Minister of Works, I am not going to waste my time this afternoon to speak on all the ills, you know them. I would like to know what you are doing, and I will tell you why I am not going to say anything more. The Hon. Minister of ... I am not sure which Minister, so I don't want to be incorrect, but the speaker on the other side of the House, sometime today in this debate, opined that you would hear nothing from this side of the House, no suggestions. They expect to wear beautiful clothes and bouquets, but what is the point of making suggestions if they are treated as political propaganda.

I will give one example to this House, why I said, I have lost faith in truth and in what is said here. Mr. Speaker, the budget debate, I am not sure, I could be wrong with the year, but I asked my friend the Hon. Minister Mr Xavier, – *[Interruption: 'Objection to the pronunciation of the Minister's name' "Yes, in the hinterland I know that is how they pronounce some of their names with the same spelling, I apologise if I pronounced it incorrectly. Mr. Xavier"]*

It was probably in 1996, when he came to this House and I thought that he was a brave man, to have accepted that position, he came out of the private sector, and I thought it was a good move because what we want is to push Guyana forward. He would tell you, I said, I wish you well, and in his first outing in his budget

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debate I saw him being manipulated to continue the same old trend of deception in this House. I hope he has learnt. But he will attest to this because I sat here when the Hon. Minister, Mr. Harripersaud Nokta, stood up and, as they are doing in this budget debate, regaled us about the wonderful things that were happening throughout all the Regions, the road programs that were going to be finished.

I was the former Minister of Works. The projects he was speaking about, are projects that were all signed under PNC government. So I knew the projects, I knew the expenditure and the funds that were available. We didn't make a big ... and beat our chests about it because the PNC negotiated it. We were anxious to see that those programmes were carried out. The Hon. Minister stood before this House and told us that he would have a four-lane highway from the Demerara Harbour Bridge, in 1996, to Georgetown, to ease all the traffic situation. Well, I nearly got here late for Parliament today, Mr. Speaker, on that very four-lane highway that Mr. Harripersaud Nokta, swore before this Parliament was going to be finished in 1996. I stood here on the Committee of Supply and I advised my good friend Mr. Xavier, I said, *Look don't take lead up, there is no money in the project for any four-lane highway.* The way-leaves were too expensive, they had lots of surveys, it can't be done, there is no money this year. I don't blame him. Some consultants advised the Minister, rushed up to him and whispered something and made the poor Minister inform this National Assembly that that four-lane highway would be built from the Demerara Harbour Bridge to Georgetown. This is the year 2001 and I wonder if the Minister would tell us the reality. I am sorry, I can't ask Minister Nokta to rectify his errors before this Parliament and poor Minister Xavier has to face the music.

But if we have such misinformation, I am sitting here, I know what's in the Budget. But they continue, because it sounds good to the people. But the people are there every day, coming from Georgetown to the Linden.

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The whole economic life of this country has been brought to a halt at that junction of the Demerara Harbour Bridge for the last five years. Every morning for people coming from Linden, it takes two hours from Providence to Georgetown. People who have to be engaged in the productive sector, and who live nearby in Eccles, Republic Park, farmers from Parika, Essequibo, who cross in the boat, all of them depend on that section of the road. And after five years, every year we hear four-lane highway, and the reason, Mr. Speaker, is because nobody listened, nobody listened on that side to what we were saying from over here. But had they listened, the Minister's approach would have been different, he would have gone back to the technicians, see how they could have remodeled the project. They probably deceived them for a whole year and then there was money on the rehabilitation on the Soesdyke/Linden highway.

The Hon. Prime Minister started to think of the project, it took two years before they finished. There was money left for rehabilitation of all the coastal roads in 1992. I am saying this, not because I want to say that the PNC did this and that. I am saying that there were funds there to do all of these things and the coastal roads, and when we look at what the result was when the East Bank Road was done, the people can judge for themselves, how well that money was spent. *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Time Hon. Member.

Mrs Clarissa S. Riehl: Mr Speaker, I rise to ask that the Hon. Member be given ten minutes to conclude his presentation.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr Robert H. O. Corbin: Thank you, Mr Speaker. And so, the point I would like to illustrate to this House this afternoon, but it is pointless speaking about uplifting standards of debate, expecting kudos, when even positive or practical suggestions are being made

and they are being pushed aside.

I urge the Members of that side of the House, to take seriously what Mr. McAllister and other regional speakers said here today. Don't make political points out of them, let us address them seriously. So I quote since they are not listening to me. Mr Speaker, I will have to quote from somebody else, this is not the PNC, what somebody else had to say and I will give you the quotation shortly:

Enough is enough –

This is not the Leader of the Opposition, even though these were her original words, I want you to know that,

Enough is enough. On every side there are voices of frustration. Where are we heading, foreign telecom investors are embraced, local investors are at their wit ends to get started. We are like citizens of a country that has been conquered by an invading army, the conquerors turn deaf ears to the voices of local consumers and frame their policies to win praises from some unseen hierarchy.

And it continues:

Immediately it comes to mind that this Ministry –

And you would judge what Ministry the person is speaking about – has had some devastating contracts, Charity Wharf, Mon Repos Sea Defence, Essequibo road. Can we be assured that the Minister has taken advice from Guyanese experts in the field. When we mention this Ministry we are reminded of the scandal raised shortly before the last General Elections, where the advice of the Director of Public Prosecutions was ignored and a contract granted to a foreign company. A promise is made to carry out investigations after the elections. Has this investigation started? Perhaps Mr. Xavier could tell us.

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These are the words of a personality in Guyana who spent years in this house recording all the speeches of a lot of us in here. These are words of Miss Eileen Cox, speaking in this pamphlet. Not PNC, not Desmond Hoyte, these are the words of Eileen Cox, quiet member of the society, who has been here religiously observing all that we have been doing here. Hence by these, while we applaud the good things in the Budget, I want to say to the Members on the other side of the House that the People's National Congress/Reform is serious about the development of Guyana. The Peoples's National Congress/Reform would like to see all the people of Guyana, not one section of the people, but if we do not address development in an even-handed way where the people can perceive that there is justice and fair play then, I say, we will be moving this country to destruction. I urge you, as we approach this 2001 Budget, let us lift our heads out of the sand like ostriches, let us lift our consciences, and let us together really seriously work to address the problems of this country if we want genuine development to take place. Thank you very much.*[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Member.

The Hon Minister of Transport and Hydraulics

Hon C. Anthony Xavier: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. My friend and colleague would uncharacteristically grieve ...
[Interruption]

The Speaker: You have forty-five Minutes, Hon. Member.

Hon C. Anthony Xavier: I know. In his opening remarks, Mr Speaker, the Hon. Member very eloquently repeated some parts of the Budget Speech, but was very skillful in avoiding to say the reasons why some of these things occurred when he was talking about the negative growth in the economy.

He failed to mention the massive increases in price of oil, the declining prices of our main exports, the threat to our markets and

trading arrangements, adverse weather conditions and the most popular of them all, political instability. *[Interruption: 'Slow Fire']*

Well, we will let the Minister of Water deal with the fire.
[Laughter]

Mr Speaker, he also went on to say that he will not give us, myself and my colleague Minister, the pleasure of confusing the House. Well, I must say that after listening to the Hon. Member Mr Corbin, the pleasure of confusing the House was all here, Sir.

I appreciate very much the way the Hon. Member approached the Budget, the comments he made on the Budget, the reasons why, et cetera. I think fundamentally they are right and there are lots of things that we have to do.

Rebuilding the infrastructure of this country is not an easy task; he as a former Minister of Works would understand that. And what is comforting to me is to know that in the tenure of the PPP/Civic Administration where democracy has been restored and everything is transparent and above board, everyone knows what is happening. There are still reasons to question the floating wharf and the stone scam and all the various things that they bring up.

When we were in the Opposition, it was unfortunate that we did not have any evidence or any accountability brought into this House; we were unable ... And when we go back in history, we must be prepared to face the facts and answer what happened to the Mahdia/Annai Road Project, what happened to the Upper Mazaruni Road Project, what happened to the Power Barge and what happened to the glass factory and the leather factory? We must be prepared to answer those questions. But they were never answered - *never!* No accountability! From 1993 to 1999, all the reports from the Auditor General on our tenure have been presented in this House. How much was presented during their tenure? Let us face facts!

Public Works is visible works. A mistake is made! A bridge

sinks! Big! Big! Everybody sees it. That's the nature of the job.
[Interruption]

Mr Robert H. O. Corbin: On a point of order, Mr Speaker, the Member is misleading the House, when he says that there was no accountability for the Power Barge. There was a Commission of Inquiry, which outlined the whole story of the power barge and let him be informed that not a cent of Guyana's taxpayers' money was spent on it unto today.

Hon. C. Anthony Xavier: Mr Speaker, I was saying that there is no accountability, there was no Auditor General's Report. That is what I said, but maybe the Barge - *the Barge* - is on the Hon. Member's mind.

Mr Speaker, facts are facts and will always be facts, okay. The Hon. Member knows fully well and all of you are aware. I don't have to get into it, the truth would speak for itself. I hope it sets some of you free.

Mr Speaker, I am, indeed, heartened and encouraged by the theme of this year's Budget as was presented by my colleague, the Hon. Minister Mr Saisnarine Kowlessar, which is *Moving Guyana Forward Together*. As I listened to the Debates over the last three years, much of the focus has been on ways and means of moving us together. It is a theme which speaks of inclusiveness and which embraces all strata of the Guyanese society. It is a theme that is saying to us, let us put aside pettiness and rancour and work in harmony to achieve our common objectives, which is building this dear land of ours. For too long, we continue to be torn apart by strife, mistrust and confrontational politics. It is time for us to move on and put Guyana first and show a selfless commitment to Guyana and Guyanese at large.

The Government's plans for Guyana's future are not based on the illusion of inclusion, but the reality of diversity and harmony and

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the commitment to one another.

Mr Speaker, in recognition of this fact, the government is advocating the co-operation of all progressive forces including civil society to advance the thrust we began in 1992. We invite all factions within Parliament and without to join with us in advancing growth and development of this land of ours and move this country forward.

Mr Speaker, in fulfilling its mandate, my Ministry has been playing a pivotal role in advancing our forward process. We have performed our varied tasks with the highest level of efficiency and effectiveness and today, I am proud to give a brief account of that stewardship in the areas of roads, sea defences, bridges, maritime and air transportation.

Very briefly, Mr Speaker, I would like to report on the achievements over the past year:

Roads In the area of Roads, I have had the pleasure to report quite contrary to what the Hon. Member, Mr McAllister reported to this House that the Essequibo Coast Road has been successfully completed and not at that ridiculous amount that he mentioned, US \$30 million. I don't know where he got it from. *Graspmatix*, I would imagine, again. He knows fully well, the problems that we have encountered on that road. He was part and parcel of one of the problems, where we have had to go through three different contractors who performed miserably. And it's a funny thing when you allow a contractor to perform miserably. He does a bad job, nobodysays anything, but when you stop the contract before he does anything chaotic, everybody jumps on you. The project is delayed. We don't want a contractor to be doing inferior work on any of our projects. He does that and he doesn't follow the rules, his contract is terminated and that's a fact.

Mr Speaker, I am happy to report also that the Georgetown/Mahaica Highway has been successfully completed and the Soesdyke/

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Linden Highway, including the extension works in Linden that the Hon. Member, Miss Sandra Adams didn't even have time to report on when she said last night that we have never done anything for Linden. All those roads and drains in Linden have been completed successfully. *[Applause]*

Many village and community roads were rehabilitated, also farm-to-market roads as well as roads in the depressed communities and squatter settlements, and maintenance was carried out on the West Demerara, West Berbice, East Bank and other areas. We also did some work in Georgetown and New Amsterdam.

Sea Defence In the area of Sea Defence, I am also very happy to report that that has been very successful. As a matter of fact we had a ninety-five percent performance. Areas include:

Aberdeen, Taymouth Manor, Devonshire Castle, Reliance, all on the Essequibo Coast, all successfully completed, one hundred per cent;

Good Hope/Lusignan, one hundred per cent;

Cornelia Ida, West Coast Demerara;

Mon Repos, West Coast Demerara;

Hague, West Coast Demerara and;

Stanleytown and West Bank Demerara.

Again, Mr McAllister, all completed and well within the budget. Those are the things you must also talk about instead of only criticising all the time.

Transport and Harbours Department Mr Speaker, the Transport and Harbours Department performed creditably in that it continued its reliable service, all the ferry vessels were maintained,

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rehabilitation works were done to the Kimbia, the North Cote and the Barima. The Dredge Stephen was extensively repaired thus continuous dredging was done on the ship's channel. Also the pilot launch 'Allan Young' was rehabilitated and re-engined with the M.L. Thompson. The pilot service which normally would escort ships coming into the country was properly carried out. Of course the continued maintenance of the Stelling was also done, but all in all, the Transport and Harbours Department performed very creditably and all praise must go to its management staff, who normally worked beyond the call of duty to keep those boats sailing.

Bridges The Bridges Project, Mr Speaker, the designs of sixty-structures, bridges and culverts have been completed and the contractors for the construction of these structures have already been pre-qualified. Approximately another eighty structures are to be done. The consultants have been pre-qualified and the bidding process should commence in July.

The Demerara Harbour Bridge A comprehensive maintenance plan was implemented and as a consequence of that programme the Bridge was trouble-free for the past year. We are waiting on the advice from the Attorney General's Chambers in relation to designating of the Harbour Bridge a public corporation. That is in process right now.

Guyana/Suriname Ferry Service The Guyana/Suriname Ferry Service has met with reasonable success. We were able to complete some work on the Guyana side to house the Customs and Immigration staff. Electricity has finally been taken to the building and we are now awaiting the activation as soon as the meter is put in place.

Mr Speaker, also the road from Moleson Creek to Crabwood Creek commence and we are expected to complete that in September of this year. This was funded by the European Union.

On the Suriname side, I understand a duty free shop was

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established and similar facilities are to be opened on our side.

Air Transport Reform Programme Mr Speaker, the Air Transport Reform Programme, the Hon. Members of this House would recall that in my presentation last year, I outlined the components of the IDB funded Air Transport Reform Programme I am pleased to report today that there has been considerable progress, although not necessarily visible progress as yet. This is because the focus has been on the institutional reforms needed to create Guyana Civil Aviation Authority and the CJIA Corporation. The studies have now been completed for both organisations and we are in the process of implementing the transition plans.

The process of the institution building will take approximately two years, to bring us to the point where we would have completed the recruitment and training of the aviation professionals needed to staff these institutions. Ninety-five per cent completion under the circumstances, I would say, excellent work, Ministry of Works. But there have been problems. I may never want to keep those problems to myself I tried to share them as much as possible because the more answers I get, the easier probably I can solve them. But we have had problems with shortage of staff, we have had problems sometimes when engineers do not do the right thing for one reason or another, and sometimes a bridge gets problems like the Mandela Avenue Bridge. But these are problems that can be fixed and we intend to fix them [*Interruption: 'Hear story. There is fuel there. You have to talk it boy. He feels a little embarrassed' "You see, that's the trouble, when you try to explain something, the reasons why ... I suddenly become a priest ..."*]

Programmes for 2001 and Beyond We will continue to maintain the Black Bush Polder road, Bartica/Mahdia/Issano road, our miscellaneous roads programme will continue. The Hon. Member, Mr McAllister would be happy to hear that some monies have been included in our programme which we have sent to the Ministry of Finance for approval for some roads in the West Demerara Region.

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In relation to the Mabura/Lethem road, the Ministry will continue as it always has been doing, its maintenance programme to ensure that the road is passable throughout the year, during the rainy season and the dry season. I have been also advised that the construction of the bridge over the Takutu River, something that was started since the PNC was in government and is now coming to fruition under the PPP/Civic Administration. That bridge will be started in November, and I will probably invite some of you to the turning of the sod, so to speak, if you are interested.

In addition, every effort is being made to seek funding for the construction of an all-weather road from Linden to Lethem. We have been doing that for quite a while. There have been some people who have come in, just come in and then they go out. The South African proposal that was brought up by the Hon. Member, Mr Robert Corbin, is actually an expression of interest and I think that they are coming back within a month. I have invited them to come back for us to discuss further.

Mr Speaker, also last year and during this year, officials from the Ministry of Public Works attended meetings in Uruguay and Bolivia, where South America was discussed among other things. We will continue to have dialogue with our South American neighbours to improve the transportation network among the different countries in this hemisphere. This would not only facilitate the easy movement of people and goods, but obviously it will bring us closer together culturally, socially and economically, and I personally believe that we have to fulfil our continental destiny.

In the area of *Sea Defences*, Mr Speaker, the institutional capacity building activities funded by the EU, which entails the establishment of a reliable baseline data for sea defence and shore zone management will also continue.

In the *Maritime Sector*, the Bill to give effect to the establishment of the Guyana Maritime Authority, is being sent to

Cabinet for consideration and should be presented to this House shortly. This obviously would pave the way for the separation in the now Transport and Harbours Department and where you will have the Guyana Maritime Authority and the Transport Ferry Service. It means that the regulatory arm of the body will be completely separated from the operating section. It is my hope that these operations should be finalised during the course of this year. We will continue our usual capital works on the ships, the Stellings and so on.

Bridges The bidding process for the selection of consultants for the supervision of Lot I will begin in July. The selection of contractors for that same Lot should be completed by year end. Actual construction of the structures should start in early 2002. Construction works on these bridges will include the use of pre-stressed concrete on a large scale for the first time and I was glad to hear the Hon. Member Mr Ming mention it in his presentation, but we were thinking of it for a while. We are now going to introduce on a large scale, pre-stressed concrete which allows for faster construction, since various parts are prefabricated and this reduces the need for the concrete to be cured *in situ*. It is the expectation, of the Ministry that we can learn from this technology and adopt its usage in other areas.

Mr Speaker, the ***Mahaica-to-Rosignol Road Project***. I think that this was a question that the Hon. Member, Mr McAllister had asked and I want to bring him up to date with it.

The final designs are almost completed, the contractors and the consultants have already been invited to submit their pre-qualification information in order for us to short-list the consultants and contractors for the construction phase. I also want to state that for ***feasibility studies for the rehabilitation of the New Amsterdam/Crabwood Creek Highway, including the Black Bush Polder Roads*** the notice of expression of interest to pre-qualify consultants will be advertised on the 16th July both locally and in the United Nations Development Business Journal. Also the ***feasibility study for the new corridor***

from Timhri will also be advertised on that same day.

Road Maintenance - Mr Speaker, under one of our projects we have a Road Maintenance Schedule. The position is the pre-qualification is in progress for the selection of consultants to establish and implement a Routine Management System. Now, under this programme, these consultants would establish a data base of maintenance record and condition surveys of the main roads in Guyana. The data base would allow us to forecast and prioritise maintenance requirements ahead of the deterioration of our roads. This programme also includes the maintenance of one hundred kilometers of roads as a pilot project and hopefully by March, 2002, maintenance contracts will be awarded for this exercise. The preliminary activities involving condition surveys have already begun.

Road Safety - Mr Speaker, since June 1, a Road Safety Engineering Team has been established. It has already begun work on the **collection of data**, the establishment of a data base to store this data which will include traffic accidents and vehicle counts categorised by location. The analysis of this data will identify dangerous curves or stretches of roads which may required redesign or installation of devices which can help to reduce the accident. Road Safety Engineering is a new concept to this Region, but in recent years it has gained prominence in some developed countries to the extent that it is included in the curricula of Engineering Educational Institutions and in some cases the data generated is used for the revision of traffic laws and regulations.

There is a **Physical Work's** component also and this will include the improvement of traffic signalisation and priority areas, installation of crash barriers and delineators, urban cross-walks and side-walks, public awareness of road safety and supply of equipment to the Police which include radar guns, helmets and scooters et cetera.

Berbice River Bridge - Mr Speaker, we are committed to building this bridge across the Berbice River and since September 2000, we

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have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Ballast Nedam International, which states that both the Government and BNI would be working to conclude a BOT Development Agreement, since discussions have been going on between the Government and Ballast Nedam International and a final version is near completion. It is expected that this agreement will be signed in July this year.

The Future of the Demerara Harbour Bridge Mr Speaker, we will continue the general maintenance of the structure within the next month, we will fabricate twenty-five periods of the connection posts, et cetera. The maintenance of the toll collection offices will continue, the construction of a slipway to handle the maintenance of our pontoons. If you will remember after the Damian Warranty (Damian were the contractors who had done the maintenance of the bridge originally. When that period was finished, the pontoons from under the bridge would have to be taken out every three or four years, cleaned and painted, et cetera.) So the Monitoring Unit will be looking after that and I would imagine that once the toll charges are adequate and the periodic increases are approved, they will continue to be in a position to carry out the works envisaged.

The *Guyana/Suriname Ferry, at Moleson Creek potable water facilities* will be provided. I am also being informed that the road, eventually now from South Drains to New Nickerie, will commence next year January and this is to be funded by the European Union. I am hopeful that after that stretch of road is completed, there would be a heavy movement of people and goods between Guyana, Suriname and Brazil.

Air Transport Reform - Mr Speaker, I would like to take the opportunity to clarify some public misperceptions about the programme. While it is true, that the value of the loan is \$30 million, the majority of the funding will be for balance of support to the Government. US \$2.3 million has been allocated for consulting services which includes the legal and legislative work in drafting the Civil Aviation Act that was passed last year.

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The Institutional Reform Programmes that are now on the way - the training programmes for staff in the aviation sector, engineering consultancies for the work at CJIA and the Environmental Impact Assessment and Monitoring - A total of US \$7.5 million will be used over the next two years to meet the cost of the new runway at CJIA, the rehabilitation of the new runway, sewerage and drainage systems and upgrading the power distribution system.

Mr Speaker, much of the engineering design work has been completed and we have already began the process of pre-qualifying contractors for the works, which will commence later this year.

Mr Speaker, the planned *Lease of Ogle Aerodrome to Private Investors* is also moving forward. I want to take the opportunity to emphasize that the Ministry insists on strict adherence to the Environmental Permitting Process. Although there were some false starts last year due in part to unfamiliarity with the EPA procedure, everything will be done in a transparent manner. The Environmental Consultant Report will, among other things, examine the issue of noise and the mitigation programme will recommend how to keep these at acceptable levels in the Ogle area. The Preventative measures will include imposing a curfew on late night flying and the construction of sound barriers. Strict adherence to the mitigation programme is a condition of the lease and independent consultants will be contracted for a period of two years to ensure that the developers comply with the Environmental Mitigation Plan.

Some persons, Mr Speaker, have raised the issue of safety. Over the past fifteen years there have been two accidents on approach into Ogle, both due to fuel problems. In each case the aircraft has landed in agricultural land. The approach path is mainly over agricultural land and the government will ensure that there is no residential development directly under the flight path. Issues of safety are the concern of the new Civil Aviation Authority and that organisation will soon be recruiting additional technical staff, such as air worthiness inspectors to ensure that the airport and aircraft

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operations meet the required standards.

Please be assured also, Mr Speaker, that both the FBA and the IKO conduct regular inspections of Guyana's airports and aircraft operators and those organisations would not hesitate to demand immediate action if they found any unsafe practices.

Mr Speaker, my Ministry is a Ministry on the move. It is a Ministry with a vision and a mission to accomplish. We have done a lot given the constraints, and we are so serious about our work that we have gotten an assessment of priority projects for the next ten years. Some of these projects, I would just like, quickly, to share with the Honourable House and they include some of these road projects – *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Perhaps this is a good time to get an extension of time, Hon. Member.

Hon. Reepu Daman Persaud: I wish to move that the Hon. Minister be given fifteen minutes to conclude his speech.

Question **put** and **agreed** to.

Hon. C. Anthony Xavier: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Some of the roads we are thinking of in this assessment that was done showed the vision that we intend to include every single part of this country and try to connect it. Apart from the Linden/Lethem Road, Vreed-en-Hoop/Parika, New Amsterdam/Crabwood Creek, the farm-access road programme, Parika to Urisirima, Patentia to Vreed-en-Stein, Vreed-en-Stein to Sand Hills, Rosignol to Ithaca, Sisters to Mara, the Intermediate Savannahs Project, the Bartica/Potaro Road rehabilitation, Itabali to Peters Mine to Kurupung, Kaituma, Five Star, Wuninchi, Wismar to Cookerite Island, Ituni and the Linden rehabilitation.

These are some of the projects that we are trying to plan for. This is our vision, but we also know that we need to ensure that we

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are capable of doing these things. We have to ensure that the testing of local road building materials and a well equipped laboratory to determine their economical usage in government designs, improve processing of naturally existing deposits of road making materials like laterite, sand, clay deposits which we call loom, extraction of river sand and stockpile and so on. So we are aware of some of our constraints but at the same time we are trying to put forward our vision for the future.

Roads, bridges, sea defences have been built, repaired and reconstructed, but the maintenance has lagged behind. In view of that fact and with funding from the IDB an institutional strengthening study was conducted and among its recommendations was a setting up of a work services group which embraces roads, bridges and sea defences. Cabinet has approved this in principle, the setting up of such a body, and support from International Donor Agencies involved has been sought and obtained. An Implementation Plan or an Action Plan is being prepared for submission to the Bank's Board Meeting, and once this is approved, this project will commence operations in phases, starting initially with roads, bridges and moving to sea defences. I can assure you that once this Work Services Group comes on stream, the duplication and the inefficiencies inherent in the present system will come to an end. The services will be rationalised, will be consolidated and improved to ensure maximum efficiency and effectiveness of the available resources.

Towards this end also, a strategic national transportation policy needs assessment was done with the help of the Canadian Government through a Memorandum of Understanding with Transport Canada. This is the stepping stone in the process of developing and implementing a national transportation policy. Six strategic directions for the future development of the transportation system in Guyana apply to all three modes of transport.

Building the foundation for development.

Developing human resources.

Improving safety.

Preserving transportation infrastructure.

Developing transportation infrastructure and

Co-operating with regional partners.

Mr Speaker, this must now be developed in a methodical manner, involving consultation with the industries' stakeholders in the various Ministries and Agencies of Government. This policy must then be presented to Cabinet and a national transportation act passed in this Honourable House. We intend to pursue this diligently.

Mr Speaker, as I said in my Press Conference on June 21, all contracts above G \$6 million have to be approved by the Central Tender Board in accordance with the existing Tender Board Regulations. For the benefit of those of you who do not know the system, after the bids are opened at the Ministry of Finance, Central Tender Board sets up an evaluation team which invariably includes officers of the Ministry of Works. This team submits its report directly to the Tender Board for consideration. Thereafter it makes a recommendation to the Minister of Finance, who refers it to Cabinet when this amount is over G \$9 million. After the approval is obtained, the Public Works Ministry enters into an agreement with the contractor and we become the executing Ministry.

In the case of foreign funded projects, however, the relevant documents are sent to the respective funding agency with *No Objection*. Only after that is received would a contract with the contractor be executed. The *No Objection* implies that the relevant funding agency was satisfied with the process. If there is a protest by any contractor or who feels that his bid is not properly considered, and this has happened before, it appeals to the funding agency which is duty-bound to examine the case and make a final pronouncement

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on the matter. And we have had experience with that, where contractors have felt that their tenders were not properly dealt with and they made representation.

I am saying this, Mr Speaker, because some Members on the other side of this House have been consistently making unfounded and unsubstantiated allegations against the Ministry of Works. As a Minister, I am happy to receive any concrete evidence of acts of malpractice, so that appropriate action could be taken against any officer, who is guilty of corruption. But all I am hearing, is that you are humming but you are not coming. That is exactly what is happening. Come forward with your evidence and let us deal with it. I am willing to invite whoever the shadow Minister of Works is, to work along with us, scrutinise any document where he feels that there has been acts of irregularity and I hope that with his involvement this should minimise and eliminate altogether these unfounded allegations of corruptions.

Mr Speaker, support from my Ministry's plans, that of my Government, requires that we look at these from the standpoint of what is good for Guyana, what will move the country forward and thus provide the necessary impetus that will see the rapid growth and development of Guyana to aid our economic, social and cultural thrust. These plans are intended to develop every area of our country for the betterment of all. They will open areas previously inaccessible, protect farmers, link the farm and market, ensuring enhanced communication and lend strength to our development efforts. This is the theme of the Budget so let us move together forward. I endorse the thrust of the Budget and I would like to congratulate my colleague and his staff for all the hard work that they have done, and it is certainly in an attempt to continue to move the country forward. I urge you, my colleagues and Hon. Members on the other side to support the Budget. Together we can move this country forward, so that our children and our children's children may be proud, that when our history is written, they will say our fore-parents were stalwarts because they were able to put their differences aside, and they were

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interested in building and not destroying. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker [*Applause*]

The Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Member.

The Hon. Member, Mrs Clarissa Riehl

Mrs Clarissa S. Riehl: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I wish to extend my congratulations to the Hon. Minister of Finance on the presentation of this Budget, a Budget which records negative growth for 2000.

In past Budgets, Sir, there has never been any reference at all to anything foreign and I have time and again spoken to the Hon. Minister, then Minister of Foreign Affairs, about no reference at all to Foreign Affairs in the Budget. I am pleased this time around to find a few lines, because the past budgets were bereft of any lines; this one has a few lines, so that to some extent it's an improvement on other budget speeches. All the other ones had were about the foreign debt, so we are getting some improvement.

Mr Speaker, since this administration assumed office, it has never adumbrated a foreign policy, although time and time again, I have pressed the Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs to get about preparing one and tell us what is the vision, the outlook for this country vis-a-vis the world, but I have not succeeded over the years. If there was a foreign policy at all, it was entirely in the head of the Foreign Minister or perhaps he conducted one purely in an ad hoc basis. I want to believe it is more the latter.

I was particularly happy then to read in last Sunday's Stabroek News, when the new Foreign Affairs Minister gave an interview to a journalist of that paper and I wish to read a little excerpt of what he said. This is Sunday's Stabroek News at page 9, and the Hon. Minister said that his main thrust would be safeguarding the territorial integrity of Guyana but he also said and I am quoting from the article:

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Insanally recognised that Guyana's Foreign policy needed to be defined and refined, so as to open up new vistas for co-operation with countries in the region.

So at least there is some recognition by this new Foreign Minister that a foreign policy needs to be first defined and then refined, but as I said, we have never been fortunate to have at least a statement of that nature before from the previous Minister of Foreign Affairs.

As a result of reading that article, I fully expected the Hon. Minister to share some insight with this Honourable House and perhaps give us the benefit of some of his initial ideas as to what he thinks, being a former very senior diplomat as to what he thinks Guyana's foreign policy should be at this juncture of our history, this stage of our development. Unfortunately, we did not have much from Mr Insanally this time. I know he is capable of giving us some fine speeches and I am anxiously waiting for a foreign policy paper from this Hon. Gentleman.

I agree, Sir, with some of the things that he said when he gave his short presentation here in Parliament two days ago. I agree that we have to take cognisance, as he puts it, of the realities inside and the realities outside.

On the inside, I would posit, poverty reduction must not be mutually exclusive from economic growth. Indeed, it is economic growth and the creation of wealth in any country which are the sure means of eradicating poverty, not the dependence on any HIPC funds or begging aid from overseas. It is the creation of wealth and growth in an economy which are the foremost means of eradicating poverty in any country.

On the outside, Sir, using Mr Insanally's words, the developed world by their posturings are indicating that they owe us nothing. They are indicating that at every turn, every agreement, at every

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level that they owe us nothing although the Hon. Minister has said, not to let them off the hook

The developed world, Sir, has been transmitting signals to the Third World for more than a decade, when they began talking about trade blocks and banding themselves together into trade blocks. The European Union was the pacesetter in this field and they were the first big trading block, to get together and be working together effectively. They have been sending these messages, Sir, and these messages were sent get to the Third World, *get you act together, become efficient, become self reliant, we would not prop you up forever.*

We, on this side of the House, have picked up those signals very early and that is why we have been encouraging and saying to this administration ad nauseam, *encourage and welcome foreign investors, utilise all the talents in your society wherever those talents are to be found, create systems that work, do not deal with individuals, let the individual deal with the system that you create, do not discriminate, practice good governance, practice participatory democracy.*

In small developing countries such as ours, Sir, talents and skills are often very scarce, especially when you take into account the seductive forces of the developed world, which are forever pulling all our human resources, trimming human resources away out of the Third World context.

Today, the words, Sir, good governance, participatory democracy, those same words and concepts are being made the bases of international agreement. Consider, Sir, the COTONOU Agreement of June, 2000. It is the successor Agreement to the Lome IV Agreement negotiated by the EU and the ACP countries. I guess I recall during the previous debate in this House when, based on what I said from a report in the newspaper, I praised the Foreign Minister of Jamaica, Mr Anthony Hilton because he is one of the chief negotiators and

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brokers of the ACP side that brokered the COTONOU Agreement. There are five dimensions to that Agreement. There is a political dimension where dialogue between the EU and each ACP partner will determine the nature and objective of a system and that is premised on respect for human rights, democratic principles the rule of law and good governance. There is that term again *good governance*.

There is a participation aspect, Sir, which encourages greater participation by civil society, local government bodies, trade unions and private sector. Another section the poverty reduction section centered around the development of the Private Sector, youth issues, gender equality, environmental sustainability and institutional capacity building. Then there is an economic dimension, economic and financial reform, where disbursement would be made to assist ACP member states to achieve economic growth and here allocations will be subject to revision based on development needs and performance, much like the World Bank approach, where they would come in, assess and revise, based on your development needs and performance.

In all of these aspects of the Agreement there is an element that the EU, and I think it goes for all international agreements and not dealing with governments alone - the political governments alone - they want inclusion and participation of the entire society and that seems to me to be the thrust in all international agreements today.

Lastly, there is the trade relations and this aspect is of immediate and vital importance to us because it caters for the roll-over of the existing preferential markets for our rice, sugar and bananas, I think, for some of the other Caribbean territories. It caters for the liberalisation of all imports from the NDCS and within the ACP grouping by 2005 and the launching of formal negotiation by September next year, on regional economic partnership agreements, new trading agreements to be in force by January, 2008.

Mr Speaker, this agreement was hailed as a good agreement at

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the time and the best prospect for the Caribbean area and the ACP countries, as I said due to the skill of some of our Caribbean negotiators, who led the team on the ACP's side, but the gains made by the ACP countries particularly the Caribbean negotiators, who spearheaded the negotiations were thrown into serious jeopardy less than a year after the COTONOU Agreement was signed, when the EU unilaterally in February of this year agreed to *Everything But Arms Initiative*, which offers the least and less developed countries of the world - this is not the least and less developed countries of the ACP group- this is a much wider catchment of all the least and less developed countries of the world, allowing them duty free and quota-free access into European markets by the year 2005. This, *Everything But Arms Initiative* has spelt disaster for the Caribbean. The forecast is disaster. This is how David Jessop, the Executive Director to the Caribbean Council of Europe puts it. And this is from Stabroek News, The Week in Europe, which is a weekly column by this gentleman. This is dated March 4, and I quote:

*While the overall initiative, that is, the same **Everything But Arms Initiative**, is welcomed, it recognises the plight of the poorest countries, but it will have a serious impact on employment in every more developed ACP nation producing sugar, rice and banana,*

and then it goes on further

but despite Caribbean and ACP protestations that under the terms of the COTONOU Convention signed in June, 2000, they must be consulted, the EU chose not to see this as an issue. The ACP nations now have to try to salvage what they can through the hapless process of arguing after the event that impact studies on the effect of ACP commodities producers must be undertaken and discussed.

Mr Speaker, Mr Jessop goes on to say:

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They suggest the way in which the EU's decision is structured means that the negative impact will wholly be borne by more developed ACP sugar producers and it will be the poor not the rich who bear the brunt of an initiative to help the poorest.

So, he is arguing that the poorest - the poor - which would be the more developed ACP countries, and that would include many of our Caribbean countries and Guyana also. It will be the poor who will suffer to help the poorest, which is the less and least developed countries of the world. As if things were not bad enough,

Sir Shridath Ramphal, who is the Chief, consummate Diplomat and the Chief Negotiator on the Regional Negotiating Machinery, tendered his resignation just a few months ago to the Heads of State. It was this Regional Negotiating Machinery which was helping the Caribbean and ACP countries to grapple with all that is required in dealing with these ACP arrangements, and all the agreements that are coming on and are yet to be looked at. So that has come as a tremendous blow to the Caribbean and no doubt it has put us all in a tailspin. The gains that the ACP made in that COTONOU Agreement, as I said, are now on the verge of being frittered away in this Agreement.

In addition to all of this, the ACP countries which include us, at all times, has to deal with another round of WTO trade talks, which is supposed to be coming on in November. The Stabroek News described all of this as a major crisis which is looming on the Caribbean, Guyana and other ACP countries.

All of this, Sir, is but a fore-taste of the dynamics that would shape globalised world trade in the harsh and not too distant future. It is incumbent on us, and small countries like us working in small regional bodies like CARICOM to get our act together and get it fast. As Hon. Members can see everything has a time frame and time is of the essence in every agreement in the structure of the COTONOU

Agreement. We do not have time and we lag very far behind.

We in the PNC/Reform, Sir, have always been ready to work with this administration in any way to promote the interest of Guyana and this has been so since Mr Hoyte, The Hon. Leader of the Opposition, attended the inauguration of Dr Jagan in 1992. We were always strident. We were and we are, always strident in our advocacy for good governance and for investments to advance the economics of our country and to better the welfare of all of our people.

It has taken this administration more than eight years to come around to the realisation that they must work with the political Opposition. I quote from page 1 of the Budget Speech, the second paragraph:

We have to work with all political Opposition and other groups in the society to create a lasting environment of peace, trust and enduring stability. Without a doubt, these are vitally important prerequisites for attracting investment that is so necessary for the continuation of economic progress and social development in our country.

We hope, Sir, that this change or apparent change in outlook by the Government of the day, was not brought on only by the expediency of international dictat, but by a genuine attempt at foregoing the winner-take-all principle, which is fast becoming obsolete in the world, because no one recognises that the political government alone can solve the problems of any one country.

Mr Speaker, I turn a little to the Foreign Ministry. Now, in a peculiar twist or perhaps I should say, in political manoeuvring, Guyana boasts two Hon. Ministers with the word *Foreign* attached to their portfolios. I refer, of course, to the Hon. Clement Rohee, Minister of Foreign Trade and International Co-operation and the Hon. Rudolph Insanally, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

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My information leads me to believe, Sir, that both of these gentlemen are escutcheons in the building designated Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is not the impracticality of this arrangement or yet the tug-of-war that I understand is ensuing for staffing these two entities nor yet the discomfiture, which at least one of these two gentlemen must be experiencing in such a situation. But it is for us, this senseless truncation of this Ministry, that is a cause for serious concern. Consider, Sir, the respective portfolios of these two Ministers and I will use for this purpose a little handbook that the Clerk of the National Assembly, Mr Frank Narain, presented and I think, you yourself were here also on that occasion when he briefed us. I am sure knowing the thorough person that Mr Narain is, he would have gotten this information from good source. I am looking at page 73, Sir, of the handbook and it cites there:

The Hon. Clement J. Rohee, M.P., PPP/Civic, Minister of Foreign Trade and International Co-operation,

Member of the Cabinet.

Group of matters:

Foreign Trade - bilateral, regional, multilateral and International Organisations, United Nations Conference for Trade and Development, CARICOM

I will pause there for a while, that is, on page 73.

On page 80:

With effect from 21st May, 2001

The Hon. S. Rudolph Insanally, O.R., C.C.H., M.P., PPP/C, Minister in the Office of the President with responsibility for Foreign Affairs, Member of the Cabinet. Diplomatic relations, multilateral relations, CARICOM.

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Both of these gentlemen seem to have responsibility for CARICOM. One has responsibility for multilateral relations, while the other has responsibility for multilateral institutions. Exactly how does the government conceptualise the work of these two Ministers? How does one pursue multilateral relations except within the context of the multilateral organisations? I don't know what will happen there.

Consider this also, on page 27 of the Budget:

Further, the trade offices that have been established in Guyana's Embassies and Consulates will be re-organised and appropriately staffed to become pro-active agents for advertising Guyana and Guyana's products abroad..

I have never known of these because year after year, Mr Rohee was talking about economic diplomacy, but I never know, he even had a trade office, but here it is, the Minister is saying that these will be upgraded.

Consider, Sir, that these Embassies and Consulates being of a diplomatic nature would presumably come under the aegis of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, but who will have responsibility for trade attaches and trade offices within the Ministry of Foreign Trade? Is it going to be an overlap there also or will there be a fight as to who will control the persons in the trade sections of these Ministries?

I am happy that there are the trade officers, I say in the first instance, but I want to know who will be controlling these trade officers and which of these two Ministers would be exploring the Caracas Energy Accord that the Hon. Minister of Finance spoke of on page 11 of his Budget Speech?

Hon. Members would recall that this Caracas Energy Accord was Venezuela's answer giving cheap fuel to the Caribbean and excluding Guyana. So now, we will have someone of the two

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Ministers exploring the source of cheap energy through this Caracas Energy Accord. Would that be the same Minister who is responsible for the Venezuelan border or would it be the International Trade Minister?

To make matters a little more baffling in the same newspaper I quoted from, Sunday Stabroek, the Minister of Foreign Affairs was saying that he was also responsible for economic matters and this is the first paragraph: Mr Insanally told Stabroek News last week that as Minister of Foreign Affairs, he intended to enhance both political and economic relations with all neighbouring countries. So I think that there could be some serious overlap and inter-twining in these two Ministries and I figure that there will be a lot of encroachment on one or the other Minister. The overlap and inter-twining of these two Ministries Sir, apart from becoming quite confusing for those who have to deal with them can become quite a nightmare for those two gentlemen or the two Ministers. We cannot afford any bundling, Mr Speaker, or mix-up between Ministries at this sensitive stage of our development when serious trade and other forms of negotiations are taking place all around us. We must treat intelligently and in a disciplined manner with our international responsibility.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been emasculated and all our seasoned diplomats either have been sacked or have left the service. The institutional memory of this Ministry has been lost. There are lots of bright young persons out there, it is my understanding, but there is no senior person to teach even the foreign service institution, which I think was a baby of the previous Foreign Minister. It is not functioning as it should. Why could not this Ministry be properly staffed? Beef up the Ministry, employ talented people; that may have been a far better proposition than chopping up the Ministry into two. Frankly, Sir, I consider this a waste of taxpayers money to create another ministry in this artificial fashion. *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Time Hon. Member.

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Mr E. Lance Carberry: Mr Speaker, I would request fifteen minutes for the Hon. Member to conclude her presentation.

Question **put** and **agreed** to.

Mrs Clarissa S. Riehl: Yes, Sir, I consider that a waste of taxpayers money for the chopping of this Ministry in this fashion. The country can ill afford this and I think it was one of the Speakers here, Mr Ravi Dev, who said that this Government already has nineteen Ministers and more to come, whereas you may recall that Mr Hoyte had cut down the Ministries to eleven just shortly before demitting office.

Mr Speaker, the Hon. Minister of Foreign Trade and International Co-operation during his presentation on Monday, in this Honourable House said and I quote:

CARICOM is our frontline defence. This administration's relations with CARICOM has not always been characterised with such confidence.

In earlier times one could have detected a certain ambivalence in dealing with this regional body and this bold statement coming from a former Foreign Minister, is an indication of this administration's growing realisation of the following fact that we are interdependent in this region. The great strength in a unified approach to development that our fortunes are linked by a common colonial heritage, a common language, although there is now Haiti and Suriname, but essentially the English language and by our Geography and finally a great reluctance on the wider developed world to treat with small countries such as ours individually.

It is this realisation, which no doubt spurred Guyana into full participation in the affairs of CARICOM and in the quest to revise the Treaty of Chaguaramas, to facilitate the coming into being of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy. Hon. Members who were

here present would recall that during the Seventh Parliament nine Protocols were ratified in this House. The last, I think, related to dispute settlements and that is the one which will usher in the Caribbean Court of Appeal. These nine Protocols constitute the amendment to the Treaty of Chaguaramas and, as I said, that Treaty, which would now facilitate the Single Market and Economy, which provides for this region a singular opportunity to organise itself for efficient and competitive production and trade in a globalised world. This is a quote from a CARICOM Magazine.

Mr Speaker, that plunge into a globalised world will take place in less than four years for us, because it is the stated intention of the leaders of this hemisphere, come January 1, 2005, to constitute the whole of the Americas from Canada down to Chile, down in the South, into one giant trading block, the Free Trade Areas of the Americas or the FTAA. It has been said that the US President, George W. Bush, is so bullish, to use an Americanism, on this subject of the FTAA, that he even contemplated bringing forward the date to the year 2003. As of now the operative date remains January 1, 2005. Into this huge trading block, with all the countries of North America, Canada, United States, Mexico and the South American giants such as Brazil, Venezuela and Chile will come the CARICOM territories. Countries in Latin America have their own free trade area the Andies and Pacific. In South America there is Mercursieur. The Caribbean Single Market and Economy is to become operative in a phased manner and Caribbean leaders particularly Prime Minister Owen Arthur, I think, has the responsibility for pushing this single market project. We will do well to accelerate this process, if it is at all possible, so that the discipline and the levels of efficiency required to effectively compete in a free trade area will be known and understood and become a way of life with our manufacturers and businessmen long before our entry into NAFTA. That we will become a part of NAFTA is a fait accompli. It is not a matter of if we will become; we will be drawn or sucked into FTAA and we will either have to sink or swim. It is up to the Caribbean and, of course,

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Guyana, an integral part of the Caribbean.

Mr Speaker, I share the view that whatever our other alliances, we have a continental destiny. The fact is inescapable, we are a part of the South American Continent and although language barrier and history have combined to deny us the opportunity, ultimately, we have to interact with our South American neighbours. In this spirit, I welcome the renewed interest in the Guyana/Brazil Road. The Hon. Member, Mr Corbin spoke about that road, which had its embryonic stages since the 1980s in the previous PNC's administration. I think a lot of work was done on that road. Unfortunately it was not completed. Having said all of this, however, I deplore, like my Hon. Friend Mr Raphael Trotman or I should say My Hon. Friends Mr Raphael Trotman and Dr Norton, I deplore the unregulated manner in which Brazilians are pouring across the border and taking away all our minerals.

During the 2001 debate, those two gentlemen have spoke of it, this time around, Sir, but during the 2000 debate, it was yours truly, who brought that up as a substantive item in my address before this Assembly and I can quote.

Mr Speaker, as I said, I spoke about this same issue last year, but the silence of this government on what is happening in our interior particularly on this border is deafening. I urge them to investigate what is happening, investigate and see what is wrong, why these Brazilians are flowing over here and why can't we take some control of what is happening on that particular border? Brazil, our large and friendly southern neighbour, has a population of some 174,000,000 and landmass of nearly 3.3 million square miles and ever since 1960 when they built a new capital city in the interior, they have had an active policy of what the Brazilians called the interiorisation of their country. They are forging and creating new communities and towns in their interiors. I am wondering if they are mistaking some of our interiors for theirs.

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Mr Speaker, having said that, in closing, I would like to recommend to this Honourable House, that we, in Guyana take the same bold initiative that Brazil had taken forty years ago, perhaps as a medium term initiative, to explore the interiorisation of our own country. Of course, with such a tiny population as ours it would also have to be pre-empted on some form of immigration. Everyone will tell you that the great take off in development in the United States of America was a direct result of its immigration policy. We have not only to consider the imperative of it here and now, but we have to look, to create a future for our children and our children's children. We have to be able, along with grappling with the problems of the present, we have to plan for the future. We cannot continue to only look at the short term, we have to have the imagination and to capture the imagination of the world with our imagination for the development of our country, if we want to be one day a great country. I urge a serious consideration as either a medium or a long term initiative, but the exploration has to start now to consider the interiorisation of **our own country**; also putting people on our borders, particularly our sensitive border with Venezuela, because it is recognisable that when you people an area over which there is some dispute, you are half way through to winning that dispute.

On this note, Sir, I will close. Thank you [*Applause*]

The Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Member.

The Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport.

Hon. Gail Teixeira: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I have been here in the Parliament, for eight years and one of the concerns I have always had, is that we are Members of Parliament and we represent our people, that we have a proper level of preparedness, analysis, research and certainly a desire to find answers to problems which are besetting our country and all developing countries at this time.

I am saddened by terms being bandied around in this Parliament

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with no respect for context, history or reality and the simplicity and simplistic approach to using terms like *marginalisation*, *discrimination* and what is total ignoring of the geographic facts. It is sad that Members on the other side of this House keep countering whatever is said by themselves. So with Region 6 - this is the second largest population base in this country and therefore whether one is trying to make a score, a political point, an ethnic point or an economic point, you are ignoring what is the demographic reality of this country. Region 6 has the second largest population base other than Region 4 ... [Interruption: 'What is the point? I don't understand.' "If you don't understand then you will never understand the point I just made"]

We are treated in this Parliament, as if Guyana is a little planet somewhere, as if the history of Guyana began in 1992 and others seem to want to make white-wash, historical amnesia, when it comes to what was the history of this country, what was the role of various people in the history of this country. It is as if in 1992 Guyana appeared on the map of the world. But we are not a planet, we are part of the economic realities, the world system, the world order, we are part of the geography of the world, we are part of the global economy. As the Hon. Member Mrs Clarissa Riehl was speaking today, I was wondering if she was the Minister of Foreign Affairs giving us a lecture on COTONOU and so on. Oh, by the way, I am the acting Minister of Foreign Affairs today. [Applause]

But when we look at the context within which we are operating as a country, we are dealing with the World Order. That makes it difficult for developing countries and we are facing a planet in which there is global warming, in which it is clear that many of the temperate countries, in fact, it is now discovered that winter is probably the biggest and best public health intervention ever created and that tropical countries usually have the highest level of health problems, not only because of economic, but because of the environment within which we live.

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But when we look at what is going on in the world, there are some very interesting things that we can talk about. Many issues of the international trade and equalities, which I will come to later. But what is an actually new challenge that is facing the developing countries now and will hit us and is hitting us, is the whole issue of access to human knowledge and let me explain what I am talking about.

When we have moved into the whole global economy, the World Trade Organisation's Agreements and so on, one of the issues that the west had pointed out was intellectual property rights and making that one of the pre-conditions to be able to deal with certain agricultural trade and tariff arrangements.

The United States in particular prevailed upon the world to tighten patent codes and cut down on intellectual piracy, but now transnational corporations, rich countries and institutions are patenting everything from the human gene down to rainforest bio-diversity. The poor will be ripped off unless some sense of equity is introduced into this runaway process.

Quote from the ECONOMIST August 14 to 20, 1999.

So this is not as the Hon. Member, Mr Jerome Khan is concerned, that this is some communist text I am reading from. The fact is that in the developing countries now our right to have access to innovations, technology, to be able to move our countries forward is a major problem. A recent example of that is the current struggle over access to AIDS medicine in South Africa and Brazil and this is an early warning shot, that a much larger struggle is going to affect us in relation to access to the fruit of human knowledge due to research and development in many parts of the world. Why I say that, would be one of our challenges in the future, in that we have a rainforest, we have amazing areas for bio-diversity, but if we were

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to take one project from the interior for those who are from the interior regions, that the minimal cost of investment, the research to decide whether that can become a drug, pharmaceutical or some new product is minimally, US \$10 million. So that we are facing as a hundred years ago, major disadvantages as a developing country. Therefore the point the Hon. Member, Mrs Riehl stated, about the trade relations is an important factor and that is in fact, why the government has put greater emphasis on creating a Ministry of Foreign Trade in order to boost up and strengthen our negotiating capacity at an international level. [Interruption: 'You sound like the Minister of Foreign Affairs' "I am acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, I told you that before"]

Guyana in 2001, has been the product of an amazing history, and it seems as though we want to eliminate history, and if we do that, we are forced to repeat it and that is the truism that everybody knows. But our history isn't based on environment, our pre-history of thousands of years ago, our colonial past of slavery and indentureship, unequal trade relations, our struggles for independence, our post independence era of thirty-five years, in which the PNC were there for two-thirds of our post independence period twenty-eight years, and the PPP for eight and a half years. We inherited as a country, as a people, the PNC inherited from the colonial masters, a colonial economic and political system – [Interruption: 'You are the transformer' "You did not, that was the problem"]

Because of the tinkering that went on (you tinkered, you didn't change) the major challenges now for us, as Guyanese, is how do we create a new order, a new system in our country that is democratic and allows for sustainable development?

The Challenge What the PNC did was to change the constitutional system to a Hybrid Republic Westminster System in 1980, in which the human rights section was not enforceable by going to the courts;

one had to pass a law.

In addition to that, it was only when the Hon. Member, Mrs Deborah Backer and a number of us sat on a task force to create the human rights section it became enforceable in this Constitution. But the inherited colonial structures in terms of:

- how the economic system runs in this country?
- how we were still a primary producing country?

We were still depending on International Trade Relations and we still are today, because the global order which was inherited after colonialism, all it did was to intensify and strengthen the power and the monopoly of what were the western countries.

There are comments here made about ideology, but I challenge those who are talking about ideology to look at what are the CARICOM statements and the developing countries' positions that they are taking to the World Trade Organisation, in relation to the tremendous disadvantage they are facing, in relation to the new World Order that has been created in the last ten years or the newer version of the World Order.

Under globalisation these trends are further exacerbated that we inherited from colonialism, and trade liberalisation threatens to move up preferential markets. Hence the importance of developing countries to hold one head and to be able to negotiate, as pointed out by the Hon. Member, on the other side and the two Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, who both spoke earlier in this session. But I think that we have to look at what is up the road and what is anticipated as a country.

We have a new administration in the United States, which is very clear that the issue of American Protectionism, is going to not open the doors as wide as we in the developing countries would like for our trade exports, and in fact, the rules in terms of

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protectionism which is one of the tenets that the World Trade Organisation balks against. In fact, in the American System, it is one of the most protected economic systems in the world and I will give you an example of that. Why I am raising this issue, is because agriculture is still one of our basic primary exports, as are timber, gold, diamond and bauxite; but agriculture is an interesting one because over the past half century global trade in farm products has been liberalised only slowly while tariffs and manufactured goods have dropped from an average of forty per cent to four per cent. Agricultural tariffs hence our exports from Guyana have tariffs that would stay at the forty to fifty per cent range.

In fact, in the United States, last year, in the year 2000, over \$5.4 billion of agricultural sales were under-written in order to protect the American farm exports to the rest of the world. The terms of the farmers' repayments on these loans are limited to three years in most cases, but up to ten years. This is last year where \$188 million were given in terms of supporting the American farmers so as to protect them in the world trade arrangements. Now some people may say, this has nothing to do with us. I am saying it has a lot to do with us. We need to go into the world with our eyes wide open, recognising that we are a tiny little dot in a major system and that we will have to be able to make tremendous efforts to move forward.

One of the issues therefore, is that the colonial system and its sophistication is what we inherited after independence, but how did we deal with it? How are we dealing with it today? The measures that a country grows are its indicators, if it is developing, and the pace of its development. There are basically six indicators:

What is the level of your financial management?

What is the level of your governance or what type of governance?

What is the state of your infrastructural development?

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What is the level of your investment, production and productivity?

What is the quality of life of your people, and

What is the political environment in which you are functioning?

The basic six ... If the PNC, when it got into office long years ago had kept on the same process of development, and we had not ended up in serious crisis, in which Mr Hoyte as the President then had to swallow some horrible IMF medicine in order to make Guyana credit worthy, because by 1985 Guyana was no longer credit worthy. We couldn't go and get a dime. *[Interruption: 'Everybody else']*

Well I am not opposed to loans and grants, so don't misunderstand me, that's not the point I am making. *[Interruption: 'So what is the point?']* "The PNC had run this country in such economic crisis that you couldn't even go and borrow money. You were un-creditworthy and the IMF medicine that came in played havoc on the people of this country. Now, I know you don't like to hear these things. Let me tell you something, when you start off ... " *[Noisy Interruption]*

The Speaker: Hon. Member!

Hon Gail Teixeira: A society moves step by step. Mr Speaker, I am sorry, I didn't mean to ignore you.

The economy of this country is not something that stops and starts because there is an election. The economic systems are impacted by policies of ten/twenty years ago, and the policies of today will be impacting for ten/twenty years in the future. Economic systems are much more tenacious than we think and so what is important is that what the PPP inherited, was a system in crisis.

Now, I am very happy to hear on the other side of the House

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these grand comments on governance and participatory democracy and investment and so on. It is unfortunate that they didn't think this way before 1992. It is very unfortunate, because Guyana would be right now way ahead of Trinidad, way ahead of Jamaica in our developmental process, way ahead of Barbados, but they took a long time for their light bulbs to go off in their heads.

Financial Management The Financial Management Issues are important, because here we look at the debt servicing as a percentage of the current revenue. These are facts, I am not making them up. If you don't like facts then maybe, you don't belong here because we have to deal with facts if we are going to move our country forward.

In 1992, the external debt service was 70.6 per cent of the current revenue. That is why you had no money. You didn't have money for water, housing, drainage and irrigation and health.

If you don't manage your economy properly and you don't manage the finances of the country properly, then you are going to get into serious economic, social and political hot water. *[Interruption: 'Make sure you don't get burn' "I am not afraid of burns"]*

But the problem was that 70 per cent of the current revenue was going to debt servicing. Therefore it is not surprising that they had to collapse the Ministry of Housing. So poor people were living on the streets, ten/twenty people living in one yard, one house, one room. And drainage and irrigation ... Why we couldn't improve production and productivity? Because 1.9 per cent of the budget in 1991, went to Drainage and Irrigation. So that is why you had all the production and productivity, you had all the rice farmers that couldn't produce rice, you had sugar production down.

But you know the other side doesn't like to hear these things, they like to have what I call *historical amnesia*, and I ask the doctors in the House to start looking at the medical consequences of a person

who has historical amnesia.

When we look at what happened in health and education ... *ditto*, because you were in trouble. The example of our good financial management is that in the same area of external debt service exposed as a percentage of our current revenue, we went from 70.6 per cent in 1992 to 16.5 per cent in 2001. That's what you call good financial management! [*Applause*] The facts belie.

The total scheduled debt that is all your debt as a percentage of your current revenue - in 1992 it was 100.3 per cent. In the year 2001 it is 28.2 per cent. Again, good financial management! Because if you don't manage your economy properly, you don't manage the revenue, a collection of your country properly, you wouldn't have money for some of the issues people ask you for - their needs, their expectations.

So, my issue is financial management was a serious deficiency and in comparison with what is being done now, financial management has improved. That is not to say, ladies and gentlemen, on the other side of the House that everything is perfect. I am not trying to say that, because poverty is still a problem, and there is no country in the world that has eradicated poverty so far - none. Right in the United States, thirty million people have no access to health care, this is the Meca of capitalism, the most developed country in the world.

The financial status of the economy therefore is an important thing one has to look at. Let us go on then and I must say this, that in swallowing the IMF medicine - hook, line and sinker because you see, when they swallowed the IMF medicine, they didn't have the strength of the people behind them because they were rigging elections, so they couldn't negotiate tough with the IMF. But under this Government, we have negotiated, we weren't supposed to increase salaries the year when there were all the strikes in 1999. Under the conditionalities of the IMF, we were not allowed to do that, but we did it because the people had problems and they needed

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to be looked after and at the same time we had the strength and the backing of the majority of the people of this country to go to the IMF with political will and strength to negotiate for us to be able to do this.

We don't like to hear these things, but I want to say this, what was injected into Guyana between 1986 and 1991 was a lethal injection of the working people and poor people of this country - a lethal injection, which we are now trying, over the last years, to recuperate from and build back from. There is no quick-fix, there is none. The process of development, and sustainable development, is a journey, not a quick-fix and one in which the success stories take a long time to come. But if you start out under the ground, it takes a long time to come up to the fifth story. But if the PNC had run the country properly and got us to the first stage, we could have taken off, but they had us under the ground in poverty.

Governance - Mr Corbin does not like to listen to me. Mr Speaker, its alright, he is afraid of women. *[Laughter]*

On the issue of governance - let's analyse what governance means, because I believe some people are using words - buzz words. They are not buzz words. Governance means a number of things. Again, we have accounting systems and auditing systems that work a little better than under them. You know why? Because you have auditor reports coming here. For ten years there was no Auditor General's Report in this House, so the Opposition of the day, which was us on the other side, were forced to come into this Parliament with our hands behind our backs, because you had no information to be tabled, to talk to anybody about. This is called *glasnost* and *Perestroika*.

The checks and balances ... there is no system that can eradicate corruption. What one tries to do in a society, in a government, and by law, is to create systems and checks and balances that can unearth them, correct them and so on along the way, that is what it is all

about. So, sometimes we forget that the important thing is governance, is putting proper systems into place. Because, what was one of the issues under the PNC? They had no systematic approach to many issues. It was all ad hocism, who knew somebody, who had a PNC card, who had the palm tree on their button that could get things.

Even the Hansard, I felt so good, Mr Speaker, when one of the Members on the other side of the House, could get up and quote from a Hansard, because it is produced. I remember working with Dr Cheddi Jagan, as the Leader of the Opposition for eight years. There was no Hansard. So you couldn't track down what anybody said in this House because definitely there was - you know what - *amnesia*.

When you look at **Tax Collection** - the revenue collection of this country from Customs tariffs - taxes have gone up amazingly and that is why there is more money to improve the social services of our society. But when our friends, who don't like to hear facts were in the government ... because I want to quote Mr Corbin who said a very right thing. He said a very correct thing ... *[Interruption: 'Always' "No, not always, but, anyway, what he did say was, when you are in government, you were expected to govern and if the heat is too much, cut and run and let the PNC take over"]* Right about the PNC. I was there, the PNC was there for twenty-eight years. What were you doing all the time? And the heat got too much, the power of the voters, the power of the ballot boxes, the power of counting the votes at the polling place, knocked all you guys out. - *[Interruption: "The power of Doodnauth" "No, in 1992, it was Doodnauth"]* That is what happened. But we have put in systems, we are not completed.

Governance is a major challenge for newly emerging democratic countries. There are no quick-fixes again, but what are there? There are the intentions and the attempts. The attempt to do it and do it as best as you can and you improve as you go along.

Sometimes we try to copycat the United States. You know how

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long it took the United States to get their governance right. It took them two hundred years to build their democracy and especially in the 1960s when the Afro-Americans had to fight for their civil rights, workers had to fight. We are in the stage that is many years behind the United States or the British who took four hundred years to develop their democratic state. We are eight years, so let us not get carried away and look at what were the systems? What were the systems doing? Are the systems there? You have a right to ask and you should ask. Are the systems there? Are they working? What is to be done to put them right? That is the analysis of governance, not getting up and talking in a very airy fairy way.

I would like to add that if the COTONOU Agreement was in place in the 1980s and early 1991, when this government was not in government, you know what would have happened, the PNC government would have lost on the whole thing because the five areas of the COTONOU Agreement, participatory democracy, involves inclusion in the development of the investment of production and productivity. You couldn't do it, you couldn't make the COTONOU Agreement but we can.

Infrastructural Development - There are many who will talk about that but why you talk about infrastructural development? Because if one were to move a country forward, and if one were to be able to get investors, one has to have roads, one has to try and expand the electricity, telecommunications, water. So why investors weren't coming here? You know, the Opposition side of the House and the Members of the House on the other side talked about investment. What was the investment the PNC brought in? Let me quote some for you, for example, OMAI, BARAMA and Telecommunications (GT&T). But let us use the investment and let us see what's happening with investment in Guyana. What was the investment between 1997 and 2000? This is private investment in the economy. I don't mind the criticisms from the other side of the House, Mr Speaker, but I would prefer if they were to come to this House and say, you know what, I would like the Ministry of Finance to answer, why was the

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private in this economy only \$21.6 billion? But you don't know that. What you are coming and talking about investments in a vacuum. US \$128.8 million was invested in this country in 1997 to 2000. There were nineteen new investments in Manufacture worth \$7.5 billion; Mining \$4 billion, five new investors; Tourism \$965 million, six new investors; Fisheries \$600 million, four new investors; Agriculture \$14 million, six new investors; Forestry \$5.7 billion, five new investors; Services \$2.5 billion, eighteen new investors; Info-tech Investments \$120 million, one new investor, the total number of jobs created were over 3000. The Industrial Estates that were created have provided jobs and the investment in line at Eccles is \$136.5 million by private investors and Coldingen is \$380.5 million which is providing jobs for another three/four hundreds of people...
[Interruption]

The Speaker: Time, Hon Member.

Mr S. Feroze Mohamed: I wish to move, Mr Speaker, that the Hon. Member be given another fifteen minutes for the Minister to continue her presentation.

Question **put and agreed to.**

Continued in Part II

National Assembly Debates

**PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF
THE FIRST SESSION (2001) OF THE EIGHTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA
UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE RE-
PUBLIC OF GUYANA**

Part III

10TH SITTING

2.00 PM

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Continued from Part II

Now, a little bit of mining lesson for my friend, Hon Mr Belgrave. In the mining industry we have what is called primary stripping, secondary stripping and then mining coming after. When mining catches up with stripping it means that we have major problems within the Bauxite Industry. Because of the inability of Linden Power Company to supply effective and efficient power to the bauxite industry the draglines cannot operate and so mining caught up with stripping. Today we are faced with serious problems within the Bauxite Industry.

Mr Speaker, I should also bring to this House that when Linmine was faced with those problems because of the need to have power to operate, Linden Power Company imposed a clause on the bauxite industry, and to date the industry has to supply fuel to the tune of an extra US\$200,000 dollars per month to the Linden Power Company so that they can receive energy to continue their operations. Mr Speaker, in spite of all of this, the installed capacity has dropped to an unreliable 20MW and we should note at the same time that every time the dragline swings its bucket there are major problems within the entire community of Linden. Mr Speaker, we are suffering from these problems and I do hope, I do pray, that a greater understanding of these lessons can be learned when we come to deal with our natural resources in future.

Mr Speaker, what is even more disturbing is that the Government's allocation to cover electricity cost for regional buildings which include four (4) hospitals and fifteen (15) large buildings is very inadequate. At present the Regional Administration of Region No. 10 owes Linmine and the Linden Utility Service more than \$20M for electricity supply. This year's allocation would have already been used up because, for example, a ridiculous sum of \$200,000 has been allocated for electricity to the Health Sector. Mr Speaker, one hospital, the Linden Hospital complex would consume this amount of power in less than four (4) months. So I wonder about the practicality and relevance of this Budget in light of these harsh realities. Mr Speaker, it indicates a clear lack of concern and simply put, bad governance and administration of this nation's resources.

Mr Speaker, let me very quickly touch on **Water**. We recognise that water is something that everyone uses, the source of life. For years water in Linden was carried by this same ailing company, Linmine. Let me give you some figures to make it more practical and real. We heard over the past two years about Guywa taking over water supply system in Linden. The last information that we had was that this Government through Guywa would have taken up their responsibilities from the 1st June; it has further shifted now to 1st September. In the meantime this very ailing company that we want to bring to the point of sale is being burdened and saddled with the managerial and financial responsibilities of subsidising the water sector. In the year 2000 Linmine subsidised the water sector to the tune of over \$110M .

Mr Speaker, I am lost for some rationale to understand how is it possible that we can be attempting on one hand to say that we are going to bring the bauxite industry to a point of sale and profitability and at the same time we are raving its meager resources by taking out of it monies for expenditure in a sector that the Government should take full responsibility and accountability for. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, in areas of **Drainage and Irrigation** it is very

important that I bring to this House some of the misrepresentation and deliberate falsification of the facts as it relates to the infrastructure within Linden and Linmine. Over the past nine (9) years Linmine, an industry that has contributed the majority of its wealth in the past to the national economy of Guyana, has had 12.6 kilometers of its roads re-surfaced. When this is compared to infrastructure rehabilitation and works in other regions we recognise that this is just a drop in the ocean. The Government's insensitivity towards the needs of the people in Linden further shows itself, for example, when the Drainage and Irrigation Board came up with a drainage scheme for West Watooka, that their engineers valued at \$90M, the Government decided to allocate a meager \$10M to drainage and irrigation in Linden.

Mr Speaker, is it possible that we can build one-tenth of a drain? Is it possible, when we look at the allocation for roads we can build 50% or 10% of a road? I would have liked to credit the Government with a higher level of intellect and fair play but the realities of the figures and the disproportionate allocation of funds commands that I deal differently with this important issue.

Mr Speaker, I recognise time is running short so I will quickly deal with some further issues for Region No. 10. For the **Capital Budget**, 9.3% of the total allocation has been given to the Region and 16.34% has been given to Region No. 4. Region No. 4, to the best of my understanding represents 50% of the nation's population. On the other hand 20.2% has been given to Region No. 6 whose population is 30% of that in Region No. 4. Mr Speaker, what I am terribly disappointed about is the disproportionate nature of allocation of this country's resources in which the Government has temporary custodianship over.

Road Mr Speaker, I have one last question for the People's Progressive Party before I take my seat. I heard the Hon Minister talk about the roads in Essequibo. A road was contracted for US\$9.46M by Paranapanema, the contracted was terminated in 1995

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after expending \$4.3M. This tells me that a remaining \$5.05M is there for the completion of the remaining aspect of the work. The question is for the Hon Minister Nokta who has now handed over that responsibility to the Hon Minister Xavier. To date we recognise that a total of \$21.35 M has been paid to contractors for this very project that was originally calculated to cost \$9.462M. This tells us about extra allocation, extra expenditure of US\$17.05M of this nation's scarce resources. This year a further \$108M is allocated in the Budget for this very road. Mr Speaker, what is the level of efficient and effective management of the resources of the people of this country when over 334% of overrun cost is identified with this road when the scope of the contract to the best of our understanding has not changed?

Mr Speaker, questions and issues like these raise the eyebrows of the Guyanese people and create conditions where people view this Government as one that is promoting social injustice and one that every live, sane and sober person will react against in methods that maybe considered as inappropriate. Mr Speaker, if you go to the cemetery where only the dead reside and you do anything in the domicile there you will not receive any reaction from those who passed on, but if you go amongst the living and you tamper with their property and rights then you are sure to have a reaction. Mr Speaker, in this respect when the Guyanese people view their legitimate rights being trampled upon and they react against it I can only see them as a people who are alive.

Mr Speaker, only a people who are alive and who are vigilant will be progressive and will achieve social justice, which is one of the highest virtues that any government can achieve in their tenure of office

Mr Speaker, I will therefore implore this Government to focus on issues of social justice during their brief tenure of office and I will also implore them to let their allocations and management of this country's resource represent that great virtue. They will be judged

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by the people of this country, and whether they believe it or not they will be judged by a greater force who has control over their meager and humble lives.

I thank you. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Hon. Member.

The Hon. Minister of Local Government and Regional Development.

Hon. Harripersaud Nokta: Mr Speaker, the people of this country did make a judgement on the 19th March. I rise to give my two bits of contribution to the debate and congratulations to the Hon. Minister of Finance for a Budget well crafted and presented to the Nation of Guyana through this National Assembly.

Mr Speaker, while I am happy to have this Budget, I want to see it as an embodiment of views and ideas with a philosophical content and a vision. I have been hearing all the comments over there, quite a lot of noise, a lot of humour, distortions, half-truths, I wouldn't say lies, because it is not Parliamentary, but I can say falsehood and a good measure of threats, but we are accustomed to that. Hitler once tried to burn the world down and what happened. I don't want to go to history as my colleague on the other side has been attempting to do through religion. But life goes on.

I want to congratulate all the Members who have spoken on the other side and also those on our side especially those who have been making their initial interventions. Whether your opinions are good or bad at least you have expressed them. For us, whether we want it or not, it is an expression. You are entitled to it. That is what matters: our democracy permit that. *[Applause]* Because I used to be standing over there, when those people, some of them were sitting over here and you had a Speaker by the name of Sase Naraine, he didn't allow us to speak and that is why Isahak Basir had to pelt a glass at him. Unfortunately he missed. *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Hon. Minister, please contain yourself. [*Laughter*]

Hon Harripersaud Nokta: Mr Speaker, I am not threatening you, but I am just trying to let the Hon. Members understand that we on this way, are not afraid of threats and threats don't succeed in running a country. However, Mr Speaker, I want to say that the Budget being well crafted has taken into consideration all aspects of Guyanese life, and the Minister, despite constraints, has been able to equitably distribute the resources of this Budget so that all Guyanese and sectors of the society can share a piece of the cake.

Mr Speaker, this Budget has in it quite a lot of money, \$64 billion, and despite that I want to say, it is not enough money. That is the point and although it is not enough money, I want to admit that even what is allocated, has now presented a challenge to this Government and all the sectors to absorb budgetary allocations designed for twelve months and to fulfil it in six months because this Budget is coming, when half of the year has already passed. So we have six months to implement a twelve months budget and that is a challenge. But we faced challenges before, we will surmount and overcome these challenges again.

Mr Speaker, recognising that, I already had discussions with the Hon. Minister and his Senior people in the Ministry that when this Budget is passed, we must speed up warrants and disbursements of money, so that the various entities and sectors can draw down on time in order to implement the programme. That is discussed already.

In addition to that, concerning the ten Regions, only today I called in Mr Munroe and his team of people from Region 4 and the Chairman and others from Region 3 and discussed with them also this aspect of drawing down and implementing. We advised them long before to start doing their paper work, get your quotations, get your designs and when the Budget is finally passed next week, draw down your money and run with your programme. So the challenge is there and we are going to face it.

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Mr Speaker, the money allocated, as I said, is plenty but yet not enough. When we look at history and see the amount of money that those who were sitting over here were allocating to the ten Regions, we can see that what they talk about discrimination and inability to run government is what they had been doing.

The PNC, I have here figures from 1992, their last budget; it was \$31 billion for the whole of Guyana. I calculated three years' budget for the ten Regions, 1999, 2000 and this year, capital and current expenditure and it is \$20 billion and \$244 million respectively. So what we are allocating in three years for the ten Regions, the PNC in their last budget had only been one-half higher. In other words our allocation is two-thirds of your last budget which was in 1992 for the whole of Guyana.

Despite that, Mr Speaker, we hear the talk about *some Regions get more than some*. You all have to see things in a holistic view. This is what the Budget entails, we must not look at it in sections, because Guyana is one country and a Minister allocating funds has to divide the cake so that health, education, transportation and all will get. And when we talk about Regions 4 and 10, not getting as much as the others, we must see in other sectors what those same areas are getting.

I come now to the Hon. Member Mr Kadir who talked a lot about LIMINE and Linden. LINMINE and Linden are not the whole of Region 10, that is only a part of Region 10. What happened to Berbice River and the Demerara River? I will deal with that later on, but just to say, you talked about water, the water services will be taken over by GUYWA by September. But Mr Kadir has a fear as to what will happen. If he doesn't know, I have the Estimates for Region 10 in my Ministry - \$50 million as a subvention for water, we have been giving LINMINE every year. No other Region in Guyana gets that, none, but you get it every year - \$50 million in water.

He talked about inequitable distribution. The PPP/Civic

Government is giving LINMINE this year, \$1 billion in subvention - one thousand million dollars in subvention. Which Region is getting that? US \$400 million, calculate that.

Mr Speaker, we mustn't come here and distort things. Let us be factual. When I listened to them over there, I am convinced that regardless of what this government does, regardless of how much development, progress and successes this Government makes, they will never speak the truth and I pity them because from now on, you have to sit there and say what is not reality because the day you speak the truth about this Government, *you gon get the Haslyn Parris treatment. [Applause]* So you are condemned to live a life in distortion, half truth and soforth.

Mr Speaker, I do not want to bore this Parliament with figures. I think we get tired of it, tired of figures and when I listen to the lies and half truths - not lies, the distortions and the untruths - sometimes you get pregnant with it, like what is in the New Nation. When you read it, you get pregnant with it. Mr Speaker, that is why they can't learn because all of them are reading the New Nation and the more they read it, their behaviour will continue.

Region No. 10 - Mr Speaker, the Hon. Member, Miss Sandra Adams talked about the Regions not getting ... I want to let this Honourable House know that Region 10 has been defaulting every year in their absorption of money. *[Interruption: 'Because the money is not coming in time' "How the other Regions could complete their programmes? A students' hostel at Kwakwani took three years to complete. The present abattoir you started over a year ago, it is there hang up. The Health Centre at Amelia's Ward, it is four years now and it can't be completed. Well, you must answer, you have a Regional Council, go to your Regional Chairman and then inquire why. Mr Kadir was Mayor, no wonder they couldn't keep him as Mayor any longer. But if you want to ask specific questions about Bermine, you have the opportunity to come here with questions to the Minister responsible; and I will not go any further with that']*

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Now we must talk about the Hon. Member, Miss Sandra Adams, talking about Region 10. *The Chairman not getting any transportation and wants vehicles.* Region 10 had some Chairmen who wanted special land rovers to come and see cricket and the last one, there have been so many crashed up, hearsay, it came back to the Ministry. So my friends, let us see what we have allocated for Region 10:

Radio sets for Berbice River. The Hon. Miss Sandra Adams talked about the eight Amerindian Villages. I told them long ago those are isolated areas, let us budget for radio sets. This has come very late because you have places like Kimbia, Weruni, Ida Sabina and Calcuni that need radio communication but they don't know where those places are.

Land and Water Transport - \$4.3 million, twenty-four 5-horsepower engines, one 40-horsepower and an ambulance for Linden. We have to look at priorities. Should we buy an ambulance for sick people or should be buy a land rover for the Chairman? What do you want? I want to say the Government doesn't allocate vehicles specifically for a Chairman, we allocate vehicles for the regional administration and whenever the regional administration or the Chairman or Vice-Chairman need transportation, they get it through the Administration. The same thing goes for Lethem.

Roads - Mr Speaker, \$10 million for roads - The project entails the rehabilitation of Linden/Ituni Road.

Buildings - Health \$12 million - construction of health post at Riverview, construction of Health Centre at Calcuni, construction of nurses' quarters at Kwakwani. This is development, this is improving the people's lives but you come here and you sing.

Region No. 4 - Mr Speaker, the Hon. Member, Miss Peterkin, talked gloriously about milk. The Budget showed you that milk production has increased. And Why? It is because the PPP/Civic

Government is now building the road going into De Hoop from Biabu and from the main road to Wash Clothes so that the farmers can bring out fresh milk every day to the city. It never used to happen under the PNC, and if you don't know, let me tell you. A milk pasteurisation plant at a place called Zandi will be set up and by year end it will produce pasteurised milk to serve the people of Guyana.

Mr Speaker, the said Member of this House talked gloriously about Hope, East Coast, but we mustn't forget those people who used to ride horse in Hope Estate and have Civil Servants running behind them. National Service - working whole day to plant black-eye and reap cassava and collect half pint oil in the afternoon. That was despair, that wasn't hope. PNC made that, Sir. I was in Hope the other day, water pipes have been extended from Clonbrook right into the Scheme. You never thought about that.

Coconut Industry Mr Speaker, there is a recession but there was a prominent Pomeroon coconut farmer who bulldozed all his coconut estate to plant rice. He was a PNC man. So don't cry about coconut estate.

Morawhanna Fish Complex - I used to live at Morawhanna and I know the history about that fish complex. You had a man named Mansi, he had a little fishing boat and some other PNC people. When the people started to quarrel with them, they said that they were going to build a salt-fish factory. You know what it was, sixteen boards along the Stelling and then the Canadian people said, they are going to build a fish complex. You built a fish complex where there are no fishermen. Fortunately GUYOIL had to come in and reconvert a fish complex to sell fuel to save Morawhanna and to give the people a bit of employment.

Region No. 3 - The Hon. Member spoke gloriously about Region 3. Of course he didn't know some of those places and I want to warn, don't represent what you don't know. Don't do that, because you are going to make mistakes and when you talk about Den Amstel,

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Stanleytown and all these places, this Budget must be seen as a holistic entity and monies are available at different places; and while you do not see anything on roads, Ministry of Public Works for the West Coast of Demerara has been allocated \$42 million for sea defence work and agriculture at Met-en- Meerzorg, Tuschen, Zorg, De Kinderen, and Hague. If you don't protect the place from the river, what happens? The road will be washed away. What is more important or what is of priority? The sea defence comes first So money is here to be spent in Region 3.

Mr Speaker, \$750 million for Cornelia Ida, Hague and Stanleytown - rehabilitation of sea defence again. Mr Speaker, again Region 3, we have to tell them the facts because sometimes they don't read the book, they read the cover.

The Hon. Member, Mr McAllister, \$340 million project which includes the rehabilitation of sea and river defences in critical areas such as Johanna Cecelia, Zorg, Parika, Vriesland, Schoonord, Clonbrook, Mahaica, Sisters and Glasgow. So the Budget spreads, including Region 3, Region 3 is not left out.

Let us go again - \$125, million, construction of a market at Parika. Have you ever been there on a Sunday? Do you know what it needs? \$740 million to do roads - miscellaneous roads - and this also includes Parika to Moreschi, Region 3 again.

Mr Speaker, when you travel in the steamer, you think it is only one set of people is travelling, only PPP people travelling in a steamer? You have money allocated here. Stellings - \$55 million to rehabilitate Parika, Leguan and Wakenaam Stellings. All in Region 3.

Non Coastal Areas - Mr Speaker, I would not want to go more on the coastal regions, but I would wish now to go a little bit away from the coast because I become very surprised when I hear so many people talking about Amerindian brothers and sisters. All the time

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of the PNC, we didn't recognise that they were brothers and sisters? My God! Then you starve the people and they had to run away to Brazil and Venezuela to get food and now you say, they are our Amerindian brothers and sisters.

Mr Speaker, *Region 9*, if you don't know, let me tell you. It covers 22,640 square miles - one Region. It has fifty-one villages – *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Mr Alexander, you are disrupting the speaker.

Hon Harripersaud Nokta: Mr Speaker, \$3 million on water supply to dig hand-wells. GUYWA drilled forty-two. El Nino is now drilling and the Region is doing hand-dug wells at Quatamang, Achiwuib, Katoka, Kaikumbay, Quimata, Riwa, Krashwater, Shirriri Small Sand Creek and Bitune. Is a pity that the Hon. Member from Region 9 is not around.

What about Health? You try to make heavy weather about Lethem Hospital, but we have here last year, monies allocated to purchase ECG Machine, Ultra Sound Machine, Surgical Kits and other equipment for the Lethem Hospital. They are there, you can go and see them. We don't, but and put up.

Mr Speaker, \$4 million, Tractor and Trailer for Karasabai. Today, the people can transport their produce, they can help the farmers to bring out lumber to build their houses. You mean PNC couldn't know or didn't know the people need some transportation?

\$16 million, Construction of Roads for Lethem/Aishalton, Toka/ Karasabai, Lethem/Kuyuwini and Karanawa. This is last year. Mr Speaker, let me place on record that of the fifty-one villages existing now, forty-three have brand new schools and health centres with zinc roofs, concrete walls and concrete floors. *[Applause]* Mr Speaker, gone are the days of mud floors, mud walls and thatched roofs under the PNC. I challenge anyone to go to any village in the Rupununi and of the eight that are left, Krashwater, Kaikumbay, Shirriri, Bitune,

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Katur and the others, they will get within now and the next two years.

Mr Speaker, I listened very attentively where the Hon. Member tried to make some heavy weather, telling us that Rupununi residents do not get contracts, accusing the REO. Is not that they don't apply, in fact let me say, prior to 1992 there was no capacity there, but over the many years we built capacity and I have it here.

Contracts for the year 2000 - seventy contracts were given out last year, fifty-seven to residents of Region 9.

What is striking is, that the name of the same Hon. Member who said that Region 9 residents don't get contracts, is being called, Shirley Melville and she got a contract. *[Applause] [Interruption]*

The Speaker: Time, Hon. Member

Hon. Reepu Daman Persaud: Mr Speaker, I wish to move that the Hon. Minister be given fifteen minutes to conclude his speech.

Question **put** and **agreed** to.

Hon. Harripersaud Nokta: *Road* - Mr Speaker, there is one little thing that I want to touch on in Region 9 and that is the road. About two years ago, we started to construct a road from Toka to Yarumpari. I sat in this same House and listened to Members sitting over there from Rupununi criticising the road. *[Interruption: 'Manzoor Nadir'* "Yes, he did it too, but his Member of Parliament from Tiger Pond, Matthew Charlie, when he sees the virtue of the road and the benefits the people are getting, he said we must put more money on the road and I was glad to hear the Hon. Member from the Rupununi saying yesterday that we must continue the road. And let me say the road has gone past Karasabai, Tepuru, Rukumota, across the rivers going past Karabaiko, past Morabaiko and now approaching Yarumpari. Before that, Mr Speaker, those people had to fetch everything on their backs"]

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I talked the last time about the man who first got transportation to bring his produce to Lethem and the man said that he never held so much money in his hand at one time. He sold a thousand pounds of peanuts and got all his money at once. I said so in the Parliament.

But while we are pushing the road, now going towards Yarumparu which is the northern-most road in Region 9, we are also moving the road and the Hon. Member knows. Last year and previous years, we voted money and what is more, in order for the money to be spent in the Regions, the Government has made arrangement for the small people in the Rupununi to bid for contracts and as a result we suspend the requirement of Tender Board Procedure to have income tax compliance and NIS clearance because the Amerindians can't get that. *[Applause]* The villagers are now doing the road.

Mr Speaker, I am happy to report that last year we sent in a tractor and trailer to Paramakatoi because of not having a road in Region 8. That tractor and trailer had to go all the way into Brazilian territories and cross at a place called Motung and then drive into Paramakatoi. In this year, we have another tractor and trailer and we will provide this tractor to the Villages of Kopenang, Maiquack, Kamana, Kaibarupai, Wifa and Orinduik.

I am looking forward for the day when we would not have to drive these vehicles in Brazilian territory. We are linking Region 8 with Region 9 and once we get at Yarumparu, the last **port** would be to cross the Echilebar River into Region 8 along the Tawailing Mountains. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, Region No. 8 needs help and I must compliment the Hon. Member, because she said it, as it is, the people need help. Garamperios are coming in. The Amerindians must be blamed, too. They encouraged them to come, they work in partnerships, and then the problems come. Chenapowu has them, Madhia has them and all around has them and it is a problem. I already discussed with the Minister of Home Affairs. We spoke, and we have to put things in

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place now to secure our borders, because it is not garamperios alone.

The fact that we have gotten certification of foot and mouth, we have to prevent the cattle from Brazil to come across. They are crossing Ithabak, Kanapang and Orinduik and Kaibarupai too apart from Lethem and the South Savannahs. We already discussed the proposals that we must beef-up the agriculture extension service not only in Region 9, but all the four Regions, 1, 7, 8 and 9. Myself and the Minister went to Lethem and we had a meeting in the guesthouse with some officers from Brazil. We are looking at that and we hope with the support of the people in Regions 8 and 9, we will be able to have some successes and to avoid what is happening. Region 8 needs help and that is why, we are trying our best.

What about Region No.7? The Hon. Member spoke gloriously but Bartica is not Region 7. We have seven villages in the Upper Mazaruni, brand new secondary school with dormitory, every village has a brand new school, a radio set, a health centre. We trained nurses and health workers and we have already discussed with the Hon. Minister of Health to build a brand new hospital at Kamarang and to see whether we can station a doctor there because that's an isolated area and it needs ... and to do so we would be saving quite a lot of money every year to refer patients to Georgetown where you have to fly them in and out and keep them a long time at the Amerindian guesthouse.

Region No. 1 - Mr Speaker, I must compliment the Hon. Member, Mr Khan. He is a son of the soil. I knew him from childhood and he is honest. He knows that Region 1 is having problems, farmers can't have their produce sold because of markets but he didn't say that under the PNC time, steamer time was any time; now we have scheduled service every fortnight. *[Applause]* He didn't say so. I want to say, too, that regarding Medical Service in Region 1, although we still have malaria, we still have tuberculosis, from Imboterio right in to the last village to Wakaima Mountain, Yakishuru, Kariako, Waikerebi. Every village has a health centre with a health worker.

[Applause]

Let me refresh this Honourable House about what happened during the PNC time. You have that isolated community called Yarakita. Yarakita is an agricultural community, you can either get there by road through the Arakwai River or you go through the road from Wauna. Farmers producing peanuts and other crops can't transport it. PNC council gave the farmers a tractor and trailer and the people were so happy. They named it Yarakita Pride, less than a year after they took away the tractor and trailer and Yarakita loss the pride. My friends, I want to say, in this year's Budget, the PPP/Civic will be restoring the pride of Yarakita. We are buying a tractor and trailer for them. [Applause]

I don't want to talk about *Water*, but let me tell you now about what is happening. Since GUYWA put a bigger pump at Wanaima, of course the Hon. Member don't know the difference between Hosororo and Wanaima, he thought the water was coming from Hosororo, but the well is at Wanaima, where you have a bigger spring and the water is now distributed right into Kumaka, and, my friends, during the Election campaign we were told, PNC boys bathing three times per day. Before that it was salt water.

Mr Speaker, I want to be a little bit more serious. One of the reasons why Region 1 is run down, the PNC must hold blame for that. There was a farmer by the name of Mr. Bazruddeen Khan, they used to call him BK. His grandfather had the biggest citrus estate and in those days, the Chan-A-Sue, the Solomons, the Hercules and all the people were producing so many oranges, they were pressing the Government and I was living there and I was pressing too, to put up an orange juice processing plant and I don't know where the PNC went and they bought an old plant and they set it up at Mabaruma. They eventually found out that the plant could only crush one size of orange. [Laughter] Mr Bazruddeen Khan whom I used to talk to, to share some jokes, said, Hari, I got to go now to the orange tree root and ask it, *Ow tree, bear one size of orange only.* [Laughter]

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What about the *Roads* - In those days, and not long ago under the PNC, in their late days, only five private people owned motor cars. His grand father was one, the Chan A Sue, I can call them. Today, we got twenty-three minibuses plying from Wauna to Mabaruma anytime, any day, because you have a road now. Matarkai road is being maintained. BARAMA Company maintains the road and the Region puts money too, okay. The problem with that, is that when the rains fall, BARAMA Company is restricted because they do not want small vehicles to trespass on the road when their big heavy dump trucks come in with all those heavy lumber. That is understandable, BARAMA Company is helping.

Mr Speaker, what happened to the *Citrus Industry*? It went down and down and Mr Khan recognised that. The man couldn't stay. He had a lime oil producing mill to produce lime oil and it used to be sold to D'Aguiar and it had a label, *Pure Lime Juice* (PLJ) was the label. Unrecognised they killed the industry. Mr Khan sold his lime juice factory to the PNC and they carried the lime juice factory and set it up at Kwebana where there is no any lime. I can't understand that, no lime at Kwebana, but they carried a lime juice factory and set it up there.

Mr Speaker the gentleman got so frustrated, he abandoned his citrus estate, the best in the North West District and he is living in Brazil now.

Mr Speaker, the past has gone but the time has come now when we must look and see that those who make mistakes must be bold enough to correct them. Those who want this country to go forward must all do the right things to go forward. Threats and all those kinds of things would not carry Guyana forward. The time has come when we have to be much more serious. It is out of unity, out of understanding that we will carry this country forward. We are prepared, at least in my Ministry, to work with the people in every Region, especially the Hinterland to go with them - to walk the walk, and to talk the talk, because I do it. I go to village after village, discuss with the

people their needs and to see how far we can help.

The future holds good for Guyana under the PPP/Civic Government, Mr Speaker, and once we can unite and with this Theme, Working Together for an Improved Standard of Living, Guyana can move forward and make progress. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, I think we have a great future and we must unite this country to move forward. Thank you very much. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Hon. Member.

The Hon. Member Miss Lurlene Nestor.

Miss Lurlene A. Nestor: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I must say, I enjoyed that story by Mr Nokta.

Mr Speaker, I rise tonight to add my contribution to the Budget Debate of 2001. Before I attempt to specifically deal with the topic area designated to me, may I take the opportunity, for I think it pertinent, to make a few observations I have noted in this Honourable House.

Mr Speaker, I wish therefore to commend particularly some contributors from the Government side of the House and I would like to refer to the contributions made by Mr Odinga Lumumba, Mrs Sukhai, Mr Nadir, Mr Ramjattan, Mrs Sahoye-Shury, Miss Rodrigues and Mr Baksh. They were all good contributions. But Mr Speaker, I have one concern with those presentations, and that is, they all reflect one thing and caused me to reflect on the period running up to the March 19, Elections.

Mr Speaker, I think that the time has come for us to stop the campaigning and get serious with the business of running this country properly. *[Applause]*

I think as a new Member coming to this Assembly, Mr Speaker,

that it is time that we put all partisan politics aside and focus on dealing with the issues in the Budget [*Applause*] for the citizens of this country, I believe, can no longer be subjected to the views of a few partisan persons, who are saying that they can run this country with their own myopic believe.

Mr Speaker, I therefore wish to remind the Members on the Government side that emotions, sympathetic gestures and inappropriate budgetary allocations will not solve the infinite problems of the Guyanese people.

Mr Speaker, I now turn to the Budget which was presented by the Minister of Finance, Mr Saisnarine Kowlessar. I wish therefore to compliment the Minister for attempting, and I must note *attempting*, to produce a workable plan for this country. I commend you, Mr Minister.

Mr Speaker, the Budget presented to this Assembly on June 15, 2001, has been in the public domain and the public has given their views, a view we must respect and we must listen to. That view, Mr Speaker, largely indicates that the Budget is generally void and therefore does not bring any major tangible benefits for the people of this country. This view, Mr Speaker, if we are all honest citizens in here, we would all agree with. I, therefore, would like to associate my self with this view.

Youth Mr Speaker, *Youth* is the area which I am responsible to speaking on and may I point out to you, Sir, that I took great time, carefully perused the Budget Speech of the Hon. Minister of Finance, looking specifically for the sub-heading on Youth and to my amazement, it was not there.

Mr Speaker, the Budget should indicate directly how the Government plans to improve the lot of young people in this country.

Mr Speaker, the only place the word *Youth* was mentioned was on page 34, under the heading *Poverty Reduction and Employment*

Creation in the last line which states,

Youth initiative - \$240 million for projects identified by youths.

Mr Speaker, that was the only time the word Youth was mentioned in the Budget and we must be surprised by this.

Mr Speaker, the draft report of the Caribbean Development Bank and the Government of Guyana on the Needs Assessment for the Establishment of Youth Training Programme Guyana, April 2001, in the first line page 1 states:

Over sixty per cent of Guyana's population comprises youth below the age of thirty.

In the ensuing line it states:

... forty per cent who leave school are unable, until after age twenty, to find jobs.

Mr Speaker, I now turn to the theme of the 2001 Budget which says *Moving Guyana Forward Together*, a theme I welcome highly, but I ask a question:

Mr Speaker, how do we intend to move Guyana forward together, when more than sixty per cent of the population is left behind?

This, Mr Speaker, might clearly be cited as marginalisation, a word (concept) which the government is most unwilling to add to their vocabulary.

Mr Speaker, looking at Volume II of the Estimates of the Public Sector, page 123, which deals with the Mission Statement of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport, it was that Strategy No.2 adopted by the Ministry for achieving its mission. It reads:

↓ *Enhancing, physical, geographical and socio-economic*

accessibility

and on page 124,

one of the key responsibility of the Ministry is to facilitate development of human resource capabilities through the implementation of policies and the provision of learning opportunities.

Mr Speaker, I wonder who is the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport? I sit in this Hon. House and I am told it is the Hon. Miss Gail Teixeira, but listening to her presentation as she pointed out that she is the Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, should I take it that the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport has no Minister? I am not surprised because had there been a Minister, the Hon. Minister of Finance, must have had some caption in his Budget Speech on how the Government intends to improve the lot of young people in this country.

Mr Speaker, I endorse these statements in the Mission Statement of the Ministry of Youth and was therefore amazed that in the 2001 Budget no funds were allocated for the establishment of a National Youth Council, an independent body where young people from across the country will be engaged in the formulation of policies and programmes geared towards financing their own development and therefore improve their socio-economic condition.

Mr Speaker, the National Youth Council that I propose, and note, I am here to make suggestions and I hope the Minister is taking notes, is not a new phenomenon in the Caribbean. It is established in Barbados and other Caribbean Countries and is working well. This body, I think, will assist greatly in formulating, the proper programmes and policies for young people of this country. We are constantly led to believe that the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport is solely responsible for Sports and Culture in this country, and I got that impression after the Hon. Minister spoke. That issue was already

dealt with by the Hon. Mr Deryck Bernard and Mr Andy Goveia, but this is definitely not the case.

Mr Speaker, the status of young people in this country and all over the world is changing and the government therefore adapts itself to help, to facilitate those changes. The Ministry should therefore be implementing policies to reflect and to accommodate these changes.

Mr Speaker, I now refer to page 33 of the Budget Speech under the caption, *Housing*, where it is stated that,

In 2001, about \$650 million is provided to continue land distribution programme among other things.

Then on page 34, line 3 to 4 the Hon. Minister states that,

US \$30 million Low Income Settlement Programme will start this year

Mr Speaker, with the absence of a housing policy for youths, this provision clearly excludes the ambitious young man or woman who is more eager to acquire his or her own home [*Applause*] since the current criteria put forward by the Ministry of Housing, which require in most cases three children et cetera, are more than frustrating

Also frustrating is the requirement that young professionals pay as much as \$1.2 million to acquire just a plot of land. This, Mr Speaker, is frustrating on the part of young professionals in this country and I want to say, it may encourage them to leave even more quickly.

Mr Speaker, the PNC/Reform remains committed towards the total development of young people in this country and is therefore prepared to work towards this end.

At this stage, I must reflect on the intervention made by the Hon. Mr Stanley Ming, on this issue of providing low cost housing for young people. This, I think, is most welcomed and should be

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immediately taken on board by this government.

We have been reminded by most of the Hon. Members of this Assembly that a stable political environment is important for the economic development of this country, a view I also endorse. But equally important, is the government's obligation, I dare say, to provide a favourable environment for young people to acquire basic necessities, which will not only raise their socio-economic status, but also contribute towards the general development of this country. For, Mr Speaker, if we continue to have more than sixty per cent of the populace living in extremely frustrating situations, the concept which has become so popular in this House of slow-fire, which the Hon. Members of the Government continue to use as a weapon might very well be replaced by a more treacherous one.

Mr Speaker, I now turn to the economic situation which young people find themselves in. It is a known fact that the sky seems to be the only limit for unemployment in Guyana, a situation which affects a significant portion of our young population and with a continued lack of foreign investment, the situation will continue to soar. Recognising this fact to some extent, the government has embarked on a programme it calls the Youth Initiative, a programme which has its own question mark and suspicion.

Mr Speaker, the programme identified and ventured into by the young people under this Youth Initiative Programme cannot, and let us not fool ourselves, cannot sustain economic viability due to a lack of non-collateral loans for young people. I think, the young person or the young entrepreneur, who is embarking on such a programme is only capable of acquiring a meagre sum of \$30,000 to run the business.

Mr Speaker, how in this time, day and age could a person effectively run any viable business enterprise with a mere token G\$30,000? I would have thought, that if we are encouraging young people to become entrepreneurs, that appropriate systems be put in

place to facilitate same and not have them subject to becoming mediocre businessmen, who operate economic activities that have no positive end to any of them.

Mr Speaker, apart from the inadequate plans for the Youth Initiative Programme, I also wish to point out that this project brings its own political lop-sidedness, since it is largely perceived as an initiative being used as a political tool and therefore for political mileage. No Member of the Government can dispute this. There are complaints about this project in Regions 7, 3, 4, 10, about the way it has been implemented and the person who is operating or pushing the programme.

Mr Speaker, it is my firm belief that the Youth Choice Initiative Programme can work if the following steps are being taken. Again I say, I am here to offer solutions and possible answers to some of the difficulties. I am proposing therefore that the Ministry puts systems/procedures in place for young entrepreneurs to acquire non-collateral loans from specific financial institutions. This, I believe, will help the Youth Choice Initiative Programme to be more meaningful to those young people.

Secondly, I propose that the Ministry puts someone to manage the system who is non-politically biased that is, not affiliated to any political party. I think that a neutral or an independent person might be able to better run this programme.

It is my hope, Mr Speaker, that with these recommendations the project would be of great benefit to those involved.

Mr Speaker, the Budget, failed to address specifically the question of unemployment, while the crime situation continues to escalate, and scores of young people continue to loose their lives for crimes allegedly committed by them.

Mr Speaker, there is one school of thought which attributes the **increase of crime to industrialisation and capitalisation, while on the**

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here with us. Corruption. He said clearly in his statement that they were spending monies in their specific Ministries without authorities. For that Mr Peter D'Aguiar was booted in 1968. He resigned as a matter of fact. He went back to his business and the rigging took place. You have rigged every election from 1968 until 1985 - every election. Know your history and do not attempt to take the saw dust out of people's eyes unless you take the beam out of your eyes.

History! And after that, Mr Speaker, alliance came.
[Interruption]

No, I must tell you the facts. You want the facts? Here are the facts.

Alliance came with ASCRIA, and you should know that Hon. Member, Mr Vincent Alexander. There was an alliance with ASCRIA - you broke up a lot of meetings in Georgetown, *sweep them out and keep them out.*

Can you remember the famous statement by Mr Eusi Kwayana? *The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord.* You know why he said that? Because marginalisation started and let me explain to you what has happened.

Mr Speaker, Buxton, Plaisance, and Den Amstel they were the largest producers of swine. Guyana started and opened the Ham and Bacon Factory. They did not open it on the East Coast at Buxton where the produce was, they opened it on the East Bank where no produce was, so people had to carry their commodities there. What do you think they did with Burton? The WRSM got into the pig rearing, a special pig, some white looking pig, they never go into a sty, they don't know anything about a sty, they used to push their heads through a hole and eat out of the sty, they used to get a bath every day, Mother Limpy used to work there. He had carried away one of the pigs and got into trouble. [Laughter]

Mr Speaker, pigs then were graded. They had Nos. 1,2,3

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Mr Speaker, with this suggestion, I hope that the Minister responsible will implement such a system quickly so as to ease the crime situation. Very often we hear people attribute crime to just the nature of the person. I think, this should be dismissed since crime can result from a number of complicated situations emerging.

Mr Speaker, with the increased intrinsic and juvenile delinquency, the Ministry of Culture Youth and Sport in collaboration with the Social Service Department, should have effectively lobbied for the Ministry of Finance to allocate funds for the establishment of a juvenile court. This, I think, is most relevant for the society. At the moment, juvenile cases are being tried in the Magistrate's Chambers and because of the fact that the Magistrate has to deal with a number of cases, the juvenile matters are usually hurriedly tried. So very often persons are sent off to the New Opportunity Corp which by now is overcrowded.

HIV/AIDS - Mr Speaker, it is important that the Members of this Assembly think seriously and reflect how devastating this disease is. Everyday we are losing a lot of young lives. I must compliment the many NGOs who are actively involved in the fight against AIDS. I must also compliment, to some extent, the government for its intervention which I think should be up-beated. I am giving you solutions. I think the government needs at this stage to play a more pivotal role in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Let us take a look at what is happening in Barbados, where the Hon. Prime Minister Owen Arthur in demonstrating his government's commitment to the fight against HIV/AIDS has taken this directly under his purview. We need this kind of commitment coming from the very top of the Government. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, the US Congress has also declared AIDS a national security threat. This is intervention at the highest level of Government. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, I believe, with these interventions, we might be

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able to help more in the fight against AIDS.

Further, I believe that the strategies employed by the Government in this regard must be structured in order that it could be more meaningful and effective.

Mr Speaker, the Budget certainly did not provide hope for young people and this was even made more evident when the Hon. Prime Minister, Mr Samuel Hinds made his presentation. I am sorry he is not here tonight. The Hon. Prime Minister, while delivering his speech a few days ago and blaming the economic stagnation on Guyana's new proposed motto *slow-fire* said, ...

[*Interruption: 'That is Guyana's Motto' "Yes, because the government is proposing that"*]

He said that we - and he meant here, I think, his government - we are not ready, that I think, ready for development. This, I think, should be more than concern to all of us, particularly the young people of this country, at a time like this when we hear all the concepts of globalisation and integration and all of that. The Hon. Prime Minister said to us that we are not ready, intending that his government is not ready.

Mr Speaker, I wish to refer to a statement made by one of the Hon. Prime Ministers of the Caribbean in a conference, where he was lobbying for Caribbean Integration and he said at that meeting that the Caribbean cannot afford not to integrate and he urged that if we fail to integrate we will perish. I say to the Government, if we fail to be ready, we will be buried. And that's the message, Mr Speaker, I want to send to the Prime Minister, for I think, the young people of this country are indeed ready for rapid economic development and we cannot afford a government which I think, might not have all the solutions, but has indicated its unwillingness to propel this economy further. We cannot allow them to keep us back.

Mr Speaker, I think this statement made by the Prime Minister

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shows either a lack of confidence or incompetence but I may more want to believe that it shows clearly a lack of intellectual depth and a lack of political and economic wisdom. *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Time, Hon. Member

Mrs Clarissa S. Riehl: Mr Speaker, I rise to ask that the Hon. Member be given ten minutes to conclude her speech.

Question **put** and **agreed** to.

Miss Lurlene A. Nestor: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I am almost finished. Mr Speaker, I listened carefully to a number of Hon. Members on the Government's side, who made their presentations and in almost all the cases, they propose or they want to make us believe that the Government is fair, transparent and very effective in what it does, but I would want to encourage the Government that careful planning, consultation and proper management should be considered.

Mr Speaker, I looked at the Budget and I recognised that some seventy-six miles of road were done in some areas in Georgetown, in some twenty-eight areas in Region 4 and one of the areas identified was Sophia, but for the record of this Assembly, I would like to bring to the attention of this Assembly the situation as it relates to Sophia.

Firstly, point No. 1 deals with the V-Field Road. That road started early last year and work was stopped in November last year with less than forty per cent of the work being completed. To date the work is still incomplete. Residents continue to ask the question, what is wrong? The answer given is, it will soon be completed. It is six months and the road is still incomplete.

As it relates to the C-Field Road, it was completed. June 21 marks three years of its completion and already it is in a deplorable state.

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As it relates to B-Field, no work was done and according to the residents, the indication was that because they are perceived to be a people representing the People's National Congress/Reform, the road is left undone.

Mr Speaker, words like discrimination, marginalisation and so on are words that Members of the Government do not like, but the reality of the situation is that these concepts are very much alive in our society.

In concluding, Mr Speaker, I wish to say to the Hon. Minister, Mr Collymore, who seeks to exclude the population of Georgetown from the expenditure per capita calculation in Region 4, I wish to ask him that by the same token, he would have to include the capital allocation of Corriverton, Rose Hall and New Amsterdam in the calculations of the expenditure per capita of Berbice. His contention was therefore lop-sided and statistically inaccurate.

Mr Speaker, lastly before I take my seat, I wish to say that when I talk about youths, I not only talk about the youths in Regions 4, 5, 6, or 10, but I also speak for the Amerindian youths. Currently the Amerindian youths, the females in particular do not have birth certificates, they born, they die and their births are never recorded. I think the Amerindian Affairs Minister should look into this situation quickly.

Mr Speaker, this being my contribution, I would urge the Members of the Government's side to recognise the possible solutions I proposed and find it fitting to implement same wherever necessary. Thank you, Mr Speaker. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Hon. Member.

The Hon. Member Mr Cyril Belgrave

Mr Cyril C. L. Belgrave: Mr Speaker, it is recognisable that there are times when there are budget debates, there are some trying to

score points and in trying to score points, sometimes many of the Members lose their focus as to what is the real issue. The issue is the presentation of a document by the Hon. Minister of Finance, which cannot give every detail, which will whet your appetite, wake you up to understand that the government in power is running the country, making available scarce commodity, finance, to ensure that everybody, all the regions, all the people get a slice of the cake. That is a fact. Whatever size it is, you have to slice off a bit and give everybody. But unfortunately, presentations in this House, are losing that focus, it seems to go on one specific area that the development of this country start from October, 1992. Every speaker that gets up to speak seems to be only having the history of this country beginning in October 1992, that is when the PPP/Civic in free and fair elections acceded to Government and it would be amiss of me not to travel a bit into the past, take a peep into the window of the past, to convince you that all was not well. It was not well. We took over a government where everything had crumbled. Why do you think the PNC, they call themselves Reform, is on the western part of the building? It is because of the inability of the PNC, when it was in government to service, to deliver the goods for the people in this country. [Applause] I did not hear in October, 1992, after the Elections Commission's Office was broken down in Linden, Zaro break up the place; over the West Coast, Region 3, Elections Office broken; I didn't hear in 1992, that there was rigging. I understand in 1992 that the then Hon. President called off the dogs of war and said *I accept defeat*, but in this dispensation it is most unreasonable that people who are sitting here, Members, do not know the history.

History is lost. I am going back to history and I must, with your permission, Mr Speaker, speak of the broad based arrangement in 1953, when the people were united for one just cause and that was to defeat colonialism and to give our people the right to survive. Some of you who are here might not understand it because some may have been in liquid form, some who are here may have had their fingers in their mouths, in their napkins. But after we won that particular aspect in our history, a united people, division came in

1955, a split, and a lot of you may not know there were two People's Progressive Parties fighting the 1957 elections. You had two factions, you had the Jaganite faction and the Burnhamite faction.

Mr Speaker, the first alliance with the PNC was born in 1960, when the defeated United Democratic Party, which was a middle class party joined with the Burnhamite faction of the PPP to become the PNC in 1960, who contested the elections in 1961. We went through this scenario of aggression, attacks, demeaning. You are talking now about unity. We were talking then about unity, but unity was not in the People's National Congress favour, because like a tiger, they saw the opportunity to kill its prey, but a tiger doesn't eat all its prey, it would eat a little bit and put the rest in a hole and finally, it smells. He doesn't go back there.

In 1961, after defeat of the PNC by the PPP, alliances started again., the alliance with United Force Party not The United Force. United Force Party made them unite. There is a distinction. Mr Peter D'Aguair was then the leader. It was the *United Force Party* not *The United Force*. I want to make that distinction, so you will understand it clearly. The alliances came together, and you know how the alliances comes, the alliance come where you all actually burn down this whole city. You are forgetting your history. Fire! fire! from one end of Water Street to the other end of Water Street; one end of Regent Street to the other end of Regent Street, fire and looting, which came out of actions from the People's National Congress because they were not elected in 1961. [Interruption: 'The PNC again do that' "Is they does do that all about you like that thing man, that is your culture, that is your attitude"]

Sir, again history. After United Force Party and the PNC got together as an organisation, something else happened - you know something else happened? D'Aguair as Leader of the United Force Party dismissed two of his Ministers for corruption and as they were dismissed D'Aguair asked them to withdraw from the government. The PNC adopted them, *Mr Kassim and Mr Cheekes - come over*

grades. That is what pork had in this country. *[Interruption: 'Belgrave' "Belgrave ent meet there yet, he is going to meet there now']*

All the pork that was reared by the WRSM which was controlled by the First Lady, Viola Burnham has to take first preference. She is the First Lady, so she got the first hit from the pork and do you know what happened? It ostracised Buxton, it destroyed Plaisance, it destroyed Den Amstel. You must know the history, and you are talking about marginalisation. You have started the marginalisation process in this country, *[Applause]* you have destroyed communities and you stand in this Honourable House to say, you all destroy Buxton. This is what the Buxtonians do not know. If you had opened the Ham and Bacon Factory within the region of Buxton and Plaisance, those persons in that specific area, would still have been producing the commodity because ham and bacon are still being used. *[Applause]* Nuff Chinese shops, plenty, plenty Chinese shops.

Buxton had pigs, brooms, mangoes - Buxton spice, you can't remember in one of our folklore, Satira girl, it is because the commodity was there, she wine like a Buxton bore. It is inside there because Buxton bores were productive animals which used to give the country the known commodity. Viola and her big system - all the pork gone. *[Laughter]* Mr Eusi Kwayana ran away - the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. He was a Buxtonian. *[Interruption: 'Ask Bernard']*

The Hon. Member, Mr DeSantos can tell you, he suffered, too, because of the attitude of the PNC which down-sized this society and you cannot insight this Honourable House. Bring strangers to the truth in telling us that the People's Progressive Party since 1992, has caused the demise of the various communities in this country! Comrades, wake up! wake up! wake up!

Do you know what else you did? After ASCRIA was dismissed, they took on a new kid in the block, Rabbi *[Laughter]* You can't

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other hand, there is another school of thought, which draws a direct link in criminal activities to unemployment and bad socio-economic conditions and the general breakdown of law and order and immorality in society.

Mr Speaker, I am sure that the Hon. Members, if we are conscious of our approach to moving Guyana forward, will undoubtedly recognise that Guyana's crime situation can clearly be attributed to the latter view and not to industrialisation and capitilisation since it was reiterated by numerous speakers on both sides of the House that there was no major industrial development in this country for the past eight years.

Mr Speaker, with the increase in crime, taking the economic situation into account, the prisons of Guyana are crowded with more than sixty-five per cent of the inmates being persons between the ages eighteen and thirty-five. Almost ninety per cent of these persons, as alluded to by the Hon. Member Mrs Backer, are expected to be released from prisons because they are not on death row. Mr Speaker, I listened to the Hon. Minister of Home Affairs, Mr Gajraj's presentation earlier and was pleased to hear him inform this Assembly of the skills training programme the prisoners continued to be engaged in while in prison, but I was disappointed that he mentioned no after-care system, to take off those persons after they would have been released into society, having acquired the skill during the stay in prison. Where do they go after coming out with a skill? This, Mr Speaker, I think, is important and I therefore suggest that the Ministry of Labour and Social Security should implement a system whereby these persons after coming out of prison can be meaningfully engaged in some activities.

To this end, I recommend that a canning industry be established where those prisoners can be engaged in some kind of economic activity, as this, Mr Speaker, I believe, will reduce the level of recidivist that we have going back to the prisons.

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remember that? The chap with the big shirt, who used to carry the guns all over his waste. They used to protect the various Ministers' children at various schools and create mayhem in this country. Yes, it happened. So this is your history going down the line.

Mr Speaker, out of it, they are telling us here that we destroyed Linden. How you think it got the name? He is right next to me, there, *[pointing to the painting on the wall]* he used to say Linden is mine, nobody can go up there to campaign - Linden is mine. It was named after the Hon. Gentleman, who today has passed on and has been the President of this country - First Executive President. LINMINE came out of Linden, it was Demerara Bauxite Company, McKenzie. Linden took over. There it is. Over that period of time this society was destroyed; it aint destroyed from 1992. Since 1992, Linden is trying to come back. We are putting money into the system to ensure that those workers, those people ...

Every year this Government in the Budget is giving subventions to that area so that we can keep them alive, an area that you have destroyed. *[Applause]* You are coming to this House and you are crying crocodile tears all over the place, saying how we destroyed this place, how we destroyed Linden, how we destroyed Buxton, we did nothing. Oh Comrades! Comrades! Comrades! Let's get the act on and this is why the young people are not here to understand the history, because if we don't look at the past, where we were and if we don't look at where we are, it is obvious we cannot move to another area. This is what history is about, but you are saying, don't talk about those twenty-eight years, only talk about the eight years in which the PPP/Civic ruled as a party.

Comrades, let me tell you this, I have stood in this House for twenty-five years *[Applause]* and I was sitting over there. On many occasions, an undemocratic Speaker, prohibited me from speaking despite I had my rights in this House. None of you are getting that problem, you are talking even more than your time, democracy is back, we have brought democracy back to this country, *[Applause]*

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within this House, the respect and the responsibility of Parliamentarians to go ahead and carry out the works of this country. *[Interruption: 'You know dem boys didn't want to bring you here']*

You know what used to happen? You had policemen outside there who used to search your briefcase when you came through there. You had other people there, because you wanted to intimidate and demean us as we entered the Chamber, because the Hon. Sir, was sitting at the end of this table. But we had to suffer that. You are suffering that today? You are suffering any obstacle or interference, entering and leaving this Parliament today? *[Interruption: 'Good life']* You are not, because we recognise the democratic process is important to bring this country towards unity and understanding. We give you the right. We say, you must get the right. You see, you wouldn't want to hear this. You were not even in liquid form when I was doing this. *[Laughter]*

Mr Speaker, I say further to the PNC, you talked about destruction of electricity, we destroyed electricity - a little more history.

The Electricity Corporation now was owned by the Demerara Electric Company which was a Canadian firm (DEC). We bought it over and you know who we had running it? The Chairman was a tailor, he is dead now; the Secretary is still alive, he is Attorney-at-law, Moriah and they were able to pay off for GEC in a shorter time than was anticipated *[Applause]* because they had the interests. As soon as the PNC took office, they knocked off Moriah. They brought a man named Proctor, who used to hold current and smell it for it to stop. Smell current, stop here. He was one of the main electrical engineers then in what you called the Demerara Bauxite Company. He hold the wire, he smell, he seh, current stop yah ... *[Laughter]* and he bruk down the Electricity Corporation, he mash it up. He was on contract. They took him over to the Guiana Telecommunications Corporation, he mash that up. They knock him off. You know what he did, he actioned the PNC government for

breach of contract.

It is not me, it is history, it is your history and you are attempting in this House to use your ridiculous history to paint us black [Applause] How can you do that? If you sit down and look at your past, you can work with us so that we can move into the future, but you are not doing that. Every minute, you are ostracising and destroying the People's Progressive Party/Civic. You didn't row when D'Aguair went with the PNC, but you are quarrelling now because Manzoor has come over here to do a good job. [Applause] It was a happy time for D'Aguair to sit with you, but it is ugly for the Hon. Member to answer the call; and it is not beside the Constitution that somebody from the outside become a technocrat. He is a technocrat or rather he came over with his party. Whatever it is, he is here; and then the ridiculous behaviour of the PNC when the Hon. Attorney General was making his presentation - you all walked out of this Chamber. Childish! [Applause] Childish! Childish! Childish! You brought a man from England, who was enjoying it, to do what you wanted him to do here in 1968! [Interruption: 'Please sit in your seat when you are speaking to me, Sir. You cannot speak to me away from your seat. Where you are, you should be silent. And don't let me open the cupboards where the skeletons will come out. I will advise you to sit quiet']

Roads - Mr Speaker, as I was saying this is what has happened. Roads were nightmares in this country.

[Noisy Interruption: 'Of course, before 1992, we have rehabilitated roads all over this Guyana beyond mention. We built all the roads. You built it or you wuk it to bruck? Because you did not maintain what you should have done. That is the important thing. You built it with the people's money. You didn't build it with your cash. You built it with the people's money and you had a right to maintain it. You did not']

Sea Defence - The Hon. Member Madame Shadick told you all

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about the Harbour Bridge that used to float in the Demerara River with passengers in it. You know why the bridge floated, because of the lack of maintenance. Today the bridge is useful to all of us. The Hon. Member, Mr Anthony Xavier has been doing an excellent job.

Comrades, there are only two Members of the PNC in this House that have ever admitted faults. I spoke to one yesterday. The Hon. Member Mr Deryck Bernard, when he first gave his budget speech in this House, with the Hon. Dale Bisnauth as Minister and he said clearly, check your Hansard in 1993, that we made mistakes in education. He admitted it. *[Noisy Interruption]*

The Speaker: Gentlemen, please don't have cross talking in the Assembly. Mr Belgrave, I am speaking. Could we have less cross talk so that we can conclude our discussions. Mr Alexander, don't let your enthusiasm get the better of you. Proceed, Mr Belgrave.

Mr Cyril C. Belgrave: The other Member is the past Prime Minister, Dr Ptolomey Reid, when he said, the Government made a mistake when they sold the train. *[Interruption: 'Not sold' "They sold it, they sold it - it went to Zambia ... the rails went to Zambia. He said, we made a mistake, all the rest of Members of the PNC never made a mistake. You are right, so right, this is why you are on the western wing of this building. You are so right.*

Water - Did you see in this country, so many barrels and trucks used to fetch water in the past when you were in office? No! They hadn't water. *[Interruption: 'They hadn't water? I'm sorry for you. Apparently you were looking wrong for water, because other people finding water, because water is going now right up in people's two storeyed building. Up to last night there was a commentary - upstairs, water is going']* We had a man in here, we used to call him *Aggressor*, he used to speak of aggressive water, Mr Seeram Persaud. The amount of aggression water had in this Chamber, it would have flooded this country, hard water, soft water, aggressive water, water, water, water, and yet still people walking all over the

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streets with buckets and tubs seeking to have water. Comrades, this is the PNC. I ask of you, the Minister of Finance projected his theme *Moving Guyana Forward Together*, he didn't say, moving Guyana forward the PNC's theme, he said *Moving Guyana Forward Together*. Cut out the rhetoric and half-truths and stop being strangers to the truth. The Hon. Member Mr Jerome Khan deals this House with one long situation which had no relevance to us. [Interruption: 'The thing is basic economics']

Well if you were teaching basic economics, you would not have done some of the things that I know you did. [Laughter] I will keep it quiet, that is between us, but if it is basic economics, you would not have done some of the ugly things which you did in the past, but you are taking shelter under the PNC/R.

Mr Speaker, we have a good future for this country. I have had the distinct privilege of making some travels abroad, and I have travelled east, west, north and south. What I saw in those countries, despite some are developed, is not close to our opportunity, if we can get together and tap the potentials we've got in this country. Surely, we will make a hallmark that our children behind us will respect. We've got children to think about, we've got grandchildren to think about. I am on it, grandfather of sixteen and I want to secure their future and I ask of you ...

I just talked about the injustices. Don't go to the police because I would challenge you. It is the PNC who made the Police Force what it was. You could remember the Bongo Squad? Do you know that the Bongo Squad arrested political people in this country? You know that? I was arrested by the Bongo Squad, a lot of us were arrested. Rohee was dragged by the Police when he was coming to this Parliament - till to Brickdam. You know what they said? They said that he did not put on his *peaceful armband* and he was saying something which he shouldn't say. He shouldn't speak. Today, you have the protestors which you have adopted before the PNC/R, before the Reform. You got the protestors striking police, attacking police

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and you come to this Honourable House and say that the police is bad. I would admit, there are some sections of the police that have to be looked at of which the Hon. Minister made mention that all is not well, but I am telling you clearly, that you have brought Mr Laurie Lewis. You have made him the Top Cop. *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Time, Hon. Member.

Hon. Reepu Daman Persaud: Mr Speaker, I move that the Hon. Member be given five minutes to conclude his speech.

Question **put** and **agreed** to.

The Speaker: Hon. Member, could you please remember to direct your remarks in this direction. That's not the direction. If you continue doing that, you will continue to engage the Hon. Members on that side of the House directly.

Mr Cyril C. Belgrave: Yes, Mr Speaker, it is the same Police Force that you have organised, and you used to use the Police to attack people. Now, today, you are ostracising the Police in this House, every Member gets up and attacks the Police. I could remember Mr Patrick Yarde, in his attack on the Police, I remember he said that if the Police come close to me, in my building, I will arrest them and it was the same Police which had to go and protect him, when the protestors turn on him. So don't attack the vehicle that you will have to use. You talk about the Police Force, if there are individuals, that you feel in the Police Force that are of no good calibre, you attack those persons, but do not attack the Police Force. The Police Force is for all of us, it is working for all of us and please do not ...

You know what you are doing when you attack the Police Force? You are sending a signal on the outside to the criminal elements, who will feel that you are part and parcel of the attacks on the Force. Do not do that.

Mr Speaker, the criminal elements infiltrated the political stream

and they created a lot of problems for the Policemen. Do not let us continue to create more problems for them. Let us try to see if we could work out ways and means to ensure that we have a proper Police Force to give us the necessary service and protection which is their Motto. *[Interruption: 'That is not an inquiry']*

I'm going to take my seat, Mr Speaker, but I will say once more that there are errors which have been made by some people. I understand that the very good Member of Parliament, the Hon. Miss Nestor, has been making a lot of un-substantiated charges. You are young in this system. I will ask of you to mellow some more before you can come within this public area and make such statements. I am giving guidance

I understand and I heard that the Hon. Member, Mr McAllister, has been doing the same thing. Mellow some more. I do not expect my Hon. Friend, Mr Vincent Alexander to change. As a tiger, he wouldn't change his spots, but I am asking that let us get together, work out systems, so that at the end of the day, our children and our children's children will look at us and say, a job well done as you have been permitted to do. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Hon. Member.

The Hon. Member Mr Heeralall Mohan

Mr Heeralall Mohan: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Hon. Colleagues and Members of this Honourable House, I stand to support the Motion for the approval of the Budget for the year 2001, as presented by the Hon. Minister of Finance, Mr Saisnarine Kowlessar. I feel very much honoured to be part of this Debate. I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to the Hon. Minister and his team for a job well done.

Mr Speaker, man and society by nature, in their quest for progress, changes and better conditions will never stand dormant or

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docile, they would always strive for a better way of life and a more secure future.

These very needs of our Guyanese society have been recognised a very long, long time ago by the PPP/Civic Administration. In that direction, enormous amount of work and emphases have been put in to satisfy the needs of all our people.

In Budget 2001, it has been clearly stated by the Minister of Finance, and I quote from page 2, paragraph 1 from the Budget Speech:

... much more needs to be done. The economic base of the country needs to be expanded. Our traditional industries have to become more efficient and productive, while new growth areas such as tourism, infomatics and computer-related industries will need to be started. We need to integrate our regions, towns, villages and communities; we need to invest more in our education and health systems, our sea defence, drainage and irrigation and road networks; we must devote more resources to improving policing methods, reducing crime, defending our borders and external interests, and protecting our national patrimony. Above all, we must encourage and attract massive investment to create jobs.

These are some of the tasks that all of us have to shoulder and, Mr Speaker, this Budget 2001, has made provision for the realisation of all these goals.

Mr Speaker, our dear land is going through a very difficult time both internally and externally, nevertheless, we are not alone, there are countries in the world that are far worse than we are. We must understand that there will be good times and there will difficult times, this is the law of nature.

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Mr Speaker, despite our difficult and tight situation, our learned Minister of Finance, has managed to produce a Budget that has brought *no new taxes nor added financial difficulties* to our people, instead it brings greater and renewed hope and gives greater incentives to the Private Sector that would encourage rapid economic growth in our country.

Mr Speaker, taking into consideration the many financial difficulties and limitations that faces our nation, this 2001 Budget is a masterpiece, so carefully crafted with the entire nation at heart. Our Minister of Finance needs to be highly commended for doing such a fine job. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, sound and careful economic management of our country's financial affairs and our commitments to constantly improve the standard of living of our people is our first priority, as it was all the time before.

During the past years, we have chartered an economic and social course that has brought renewed hope and tangible benefits to our people. This course is defiantly going to continue and together we are being asked to take on the responsibility to create a secure and brighter future for future generations. This year, the Budget has set the pace. Like all other Budgets for the past eight years, this nation has been exposed to very sound economic planning that gives rise to all-round development in every region, in every town, in every village and in every community, especially amongst the indigenous communities in our Regions.

Mr Speaker, at this point in time, I would like to focus your attention on Region 2 Pomeroon/Supenaam, the Region which I represent in this Honourable House.

I am talking about Region 2, Mr Speaker, I must express my disappointment in this House about the absence of my counterpart and my very good friend on the other side of this House, the Hon.

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Member, Mr Ivor Allen, whom I was hoping would have been sitting here to deliberate on that Region to which he also belongs, and I must say that we are actually living in the same village. I was hoping that he would be in this House for us to deliberate directly on our Region. So, I am very much disappointed with his absence.

Some may say that I may have a walk away with my deliberations here tonight, but that is not so because you know, I believe in the law of dialectics, that is the unity and struggle of the opposite and the Hon. Member, Mr Allen being here, we would have been exchanging our different opinions and it would have been more beneficial to the people of our Region. So I am very, very, disappointed that he is not here.

Drainage and Irrigation - Mr Speaker, coming back to my Region, I would like to say that Drainage and Irrigation is the key to our regional development being a predominantly agricultural region where rice takes the lead. For the period, Mr Speaker, over \$1040 million have been spent for the rehabilitation of the totally broken down infrastructural arrangements of the drainage and irrigation system, which we have inherited from the previous administration. To date, over 2,580 miles of canals and drains have been cleaned and desilted by machines. For the year 2000 alone, over \$130 million have been spent in the area of drainage and irrigation for:

Construction of twenty-two irrigation checks

Construction of eight tail weirs

Installation of two R.C. tubes

Construction of fifteen timber revetments

Excavation by hymax and draglines of fifty-six drains, facades and trenches

Cleaning and flushing of eleven outfall channels and sea sluices

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Construction of five head weirs with tubes

Rehabilitation of three sea sluices and installation of four high powered pumps

All of these projects are being undertaken by the Drainage and Irrigation Department of Region 2, Mr Speaker, this has brought tremendous relief and help to every farming community and has enhanced greatly the production and productivity of our rice industry.

Mr Speaker, the very good agricultural policy of total rehabilitation coupled with stricter management and supervision and also the art that we have developed through our experience of spinning the dollar to get more work done have brought about tremendous benefits and improvements in the lives of the entire farming community.

Today, we can proudly boast of one hundred per cent increase in paddy production from six hundred and fifty thousand (650,000) bags of paddy per crop in 1992 to one million two hundred and fifty thousand (1,250,000) bags of paddy per crop presently. *[Applause]*

Not only paddy yields have increased, Mr Speaker, but quality of production has also increased. Our region is now producing the best quality of rice in this country.

Today, the quality of life of our people has improved, the economic life of our people has also improved. People are looking ahead for higher standards and goals. The investment climate had improved, we are now attracting many business entities and also banking institutions. Today, we can boast of the establishment of over thirteen new rice mills that are purchasing farmers' paddy at very competitive prices. *[Applause]*

I must say, Mr Speaker, the Agriculture Diversification Drive in our region is moving ahead. The people are now looking at new areas such as,

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Fish

Cattle

Organic fruits and vegetables, and

Cash crops

These areas of productions are developing gradually in our region and are getting the full support and help from the Ministry of Crops and Livestock.

Health and Education - Mr Speaker, health and education are priorities in our region. For the period, over \$650 million were spent in the area of health facilities, that is, the construction of seventeen health centres that are fully equipped with medicals supplies and trained health staff. These centres were constructed mainly in much needed remote Amerindian areas in our region, not forgetting the complete rehabilitation of the Suddie and Charity public hospitals at a cost of over \$125 million. Health care and attention are ongoing activities in our region. Mr Speaker, for the year 2000, the health team in our region has completed over twenty medical outreach programmes. These programmes were done mainly in remote Amerindian areas. *[Applause]*

Education - Mr Speaker, as we all know, education is first priority all over the world today and in Region 2, it is no exception. In order to enhance learning and make the teaching profession more comfortable, for the year 2000 we have spent over \$19 million for:

Repairs, extension and painting of schools

Construction of Head Masters' quarters

Building of libraries

Construction of dormitories

So far, Mr Speaker, we have constructed thirty-four new schools and rehabilitated twenty-eight old school buildings in our region. These include nursery, primary and secondary. Even remote areas of our region are receiving the blessings of secondary education. Kabakaburi, for instance, a remote Amerindian village has just received a secondary school that cost over \$78 million *[Applause]* that would be delivering the highest quality of secondary education. This school will enable the children of that entire district, who are mainly Amerindians to access full secondary education very easily.

Mr Speaker, I would not like to over emphasize or boast about the importance of school buildings or educational facilities that we have acquired in our region as some may argue, but equally I am proud to say that education standards in our region is about the best in Guyana. Schools in our region have acquired top places in the country for several consecutive years in passes with high grades in the SSEE and CXC examinations. The C.V. Nunes Primary School at Anna Regina has been one of the top ten primary schools in the country for passes in the SSEE examination for several years. And you know the name C.V. Nunes rings a bell in this Parliament. He was once the Minister of Education in the PPP Government in the 1960s. Mr C.V. Nunes, most of us can remember that individual. He was the Headmaster of that school and the new school built by this Government to the tune of \$45 million, is named C.V. Nunes. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, information technology will be offered for the first time at the C.V. Nunes Primary School in Anna Regina, while at the Anna Regina Multilateral School, a computer laboratory is being established at the cost of \$2 million by guess who? The Parents Teachers' Association, Mr Speaker, the PTA in our Region, and members of the community are playing a very high, supportive role in the delivery of education and this is very encouraging in our Region.

The very first educational management programme is being piloted in the Region. This started since October last year and will

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conclude in October of this year. Included in this programme are twenty-seven Head teachers. The aim is to equip the teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge in the management and the delivery of quality education in our region.

Two very great facilities that we can boast and sing praises about are the establishment of a branch of the Cyril Potter College of Education based in Anna Regina, where our teachers can access full training, right at home, and the establishment of a Technical Institute where Region 2 youths are happily benefitting from technical skills training. *[Applause]*

GUYWA - Mr Speaker, water is life and we all know that. The year 2000, has seen the completion of phases I and II of the GUYWA's Programme in the Region 2.

For Phase I, we have seen the complete installation of seven new submersible electrical pumps. The pumps have the capacity and the interconnection mechanism to deliver water supply to the entire coast lands of Region 2, that is, from Charity to Supenaam, thirty-eight miles.

For Phase II, over ninety-eight per cent of transmission main have been installed, including,

5 Km of eight-inch mains

38 ½ Km of six-inch mains

47 Km of four-inch mains

To date, every village, every housing scheme and every area is receiving pure water supply. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, GUYWA is servicing over 7,500 consumers, that is, a total of over 38,000 people of Region 2 are receiving efficient water supply.

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Phase III of the GUYWA pure water supply system in Region 2, is to look at the quality of water supplied to consumers, that is, for the coming year or two ahead. GUYWA is looking at the water purification plant that is to be established somewhere in the vicinity of Anna Regina Township.

El Nino Well Drilling Project - Mr Speaker, GUYWA has embarked on a massive El Nino well drilling project mainly in the hinterland areas of Region 2. These areas are plagued with severe shortage of water during the dry seasons and as such, the administration recognises the need for those areas to have proper pure water supply by the sinking of wells.

Over nineteen such wells are under construction in the lower and upper Pomeroon areas including Lima Sands, Capoey Lake, St Denny's Mission, Kabakaburi and in all of our Amerindian Communities.

Housing - Mr Speaker, young people entering into family life in our Region are aspiring greatly to acquire a home of their own. The Housing Department of the Region has received thousands of applications. A total of 1,752 applications have been recommended for housing in Charity, Lima Sands and Onderneeming housing schemes. Allocation of these houselots will commence within three months time.

For the period, Mr Speaker, we have established in our Region, ten new housing schemes, that is, a total of 2,875 houselots. So far, we have spent over \$19 million for infrastructure development, that is, the installation of kokers, culverts, construction and upgrading of roads, streets, drains and to some extent, pure water supply.

Mr Speaker, because of the dying need for applicants to have proper documentation of their allocation of houselots, the Housing Department has put in place systems that would cause the processing of lease, transport or free-hold title to be completed in a very swift

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manner so that applicants can receive their transports, leases or titles in a very timely manner - a document that is necessary for them to use as collateral in the transaction of business.

Mr Speaker, the demand for houselots in our Region is ongoing and as such, the Housing Department has an everyday task to ensure that this demand is met. The surveying and studying of new areas for the establishment of housing schemes are engaging the Housing Department on a daily basis.

Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDCs) - Mr Speaker, we have functioning in our Region five Neighbourhood Democratic Councils. These NDCs have the responsibility for the maintenance, upgrading and construction of all infrastructure works that fall within their boundaries. Along with rates collection, each NDC is given a grant of \$3 million to carry out its works and functions for the year.

These NDCs, Mr Speaker, are engaged in day-to-day activities offering to various communities services such as,

Desilting of drains and trenches

Upgrading of streets and roads with crusher run

Cleaning and sprucing up of the road sides and the entire area

These NDCs are assigned the responsibility for environmental safety control. As such, the public health department is being asked to play a very active and important role in the maintenance of a clean and healthy environment in our Region.

Lands and Surveys - Mr Speaker, Lands and Surveys now has the direct responsibility for:

The allocation and processing of application for leases, permission of free-hold titles to state lands within Region 2.

The issuing of leases and permission of applicants and to survey state lands and demarcate boundaries.

The issuing of notices for non-compliances of the state land occupation - squatting.

Mr Speaker, for the year 2000:

Over 400 applications have been processed and approved.

Fifty acres of occupation surveys at the cost of \$447,000 have been completed

Repairs to Charity market bond at a cost of \$700,000

Upgrading of 1000 ft of streets in Charity Housing Scheme at a cost of \$1 million

Upgrading of 2,400 ft of streets in Richmond Housing Scheme at a cost of \$1.8 million

Building of 5,000 ft of new streets at Onderneeming Housing Scheme at a cost of \$1.65 million

Building of 2,400 ft of streets at Suddie new Housing Scheme at a cost of \$1.2 million

Repairs to 1,400 ft of streets at Charity Housing Scheme at a cost of \$4.2 million.

Amerindian Communities - Mr Speaker, we have in our Region nine well-organised Amerindian Communities with a population of over 7,000 Amerindians. And speaking about Amerindian population, Mr Speaker, I would like to report that world statistics have shown that Guyana has the fastest growth of Amerindian population in the world [*Applause*] and this is happening especially in Region 2 - my Region. In 1920, Guyana's Amerindian population was a little over 6,000; by the year 1995, this figure has risen to over 54,000 people.

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All these nine Amerindian communities are equipped with all basic facilities like modern and well furnished schools, health centres and health posts with qualified health workers and health supplies, craft centres, learning centres, soup kitchens, pure water supply, playgrounds and recreational facilities to encourage sports and relaxation in spare time.

Mr Speaker, millions of dollars were being spent on a yearly basis by IICA to train Amerindian Communities in skills of management supervision, agricultural science, reforestation and soil recuperation.

Mr Speaker, each and every community has received either boat and engines for the purpose of transportation for their community especially school children or a walking tractor to help in their farming activities. Some communities received both tractor and boat and engine from the regional administration.

Sea Defences - Mr Speaker, sea defence is an ongoing operation in our region. While it is very costly and burdensome and takes a big chunk out of our national budget, nevertheless, we must maintain and pay careful attention to that area.

Mr Speaker, due to the effects of global warming and the constant rise in the sea levels, out entire coast lands have become highly vulnerable to the sea. At present, we have highly critical areas to look at.

Mr Speaker, for the period 1994-2001, the P.E.U. has constructed six kilometers of permanent riff-raff sea defence work along the sea coast at a cost of \$1.6 billion. This is in areas such as La Belle Alliance, Reliance, Richmond, Sparta, Windsor Castle, Mainstay, Henrietta, Aberdeen and Columbia.

For the year 2001, over 2 ½ kilometers of permanent riff-raff work would be done by the P.E.U. in Aberdeen/Capoey area.

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The I.R.P. maintenance crew have done work to the cost of over \$460 million, that is, repairs to access roads, earthworks, temporary rehabilitation, sand bags, placing of boulders, sealing of cavities, rising of coping and weeding of sea dams, village streets and access roads to housing areas and farm-to-market roads.

Mr Speaker, over forty miles of all-weather farm-to-market village streets and roads in housing areas have been built to the cost of over \$400 million. These roads are:

Lima Farm-to-market road

Bush Lot farm-to-market road

Red Lock farm-to-market road

These roads are widely used for the transportation of farming produce from the farms to the market.

Every village or estate received some kind of attention, not one area or village was left unattended.

Talking about roads, Mr Speaker, I am happy to announce to this House that we have seen the completion of the Essequibo public road, thirty-eight miles from Charity to Supenaam, *[Applause]* so patiently being awaited by the people, who are now enjoying the convenience of a very good road in comfort and style and they are extremely happy about this.

Mr Speaker, this year 2001, we are going to see the establishment of a new High Court Registry, where all land matters including transports will be dealt with. The Court building has already been completed and is now ready for business.

The establishment of a police training school that would make it so easy for the training of police in our Region and very important and convenient for our people.

The establishment of a Service Centre in Anna Regina. The building is already completed. This Centre will house a Customs and Excise Department, Registrar of Births and Deaths, Inland Revenue, Income Tax and Land Commission Offices. *[Applause]*

Tourism - Last but not least, Mr Speaker, I must make special mention of our great tourist attraction, that is, the *Mainstay Holiday Resort*. This is a major investment in tourism in Guyana, some \$250 million have been invested in that entity and it is now rated as the best and most relaxing holiday resort in Guyana. It is located in the Mainstay Amerindian Village overlooking the gorgeous Mainstay Lake, surrounded by tropical forests, the home of a variety of monkeys, parrots, birds and all sorts of wild animals and colourful butterflies. Mainstay is a place where people always want to go and stay.

Mr Speaker in conclusion, the Budget 2001, seeks to guarantee and secure Guyana's future. It has provision for further all-round development in our Region. Assistance from a caring government is always expected. The challenges facing our nation are many; our people have the understanding that this administration cannot do everything at the same time for everyone. No government in the world has ever done that. Everybody has their role to play.

Our county, the Essequibo Coast that used to be described as the Cinderella county has grown into a well-groomed and glorious princess, *[Applause]* it now stands out as a role model for Guyana.

Together, Mr Speaker, the Government and the people of our Region have a commitment to work together to build and improve the social and economic life of our people. We fully recognise that togetherness is the only way forward for our country and our people.

Mr Speaker, there are initiatives in the year 2001 Budget that would take this country on the road to success.

The future of this country is the future of our children and the

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future of generations to come. Mr Speaker, this responsibility is in the hands of all of us. Let us not shed this important responsibility.

I wish at this point in time to make a special appeal to all Hon. Members of this House: Our people would like to move on, let us put the interest of this country and its people above all our narrow partisan interests and objectives and work together in unity and real brotherhood for the realisation of that lofty goal and dream of one people, one nation and one destiny. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, in conclusion , I once again would like to extend warmest congratulations to the Hon. Minister of Finance and his very hardworking team for a job well done and wish to fully support the year 2001 Budget in this Honourable House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. *[Applause]*

ADJOURNMENT

The Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Member.

That brings our business for today to an end and we stand adjourn until tomorrow.

Adjourned accordingly at 22: 55 h