

THE  
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
OFFICIAL REPORTS

[Volume 09]

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE SECOND SESSION (1982) OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FOURTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA.

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11<sup>th</sup> Sitting

14:00 hrs

Thursday 1982-08-12

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MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (75)

Speaker (1)

\*Cde. Sase Narain, O.R., J.P., M.P.,  
Speaker of the National Assembly

Members of the Government – People's National Congress (62)

Prime Minister (1)

Cde. Dr. P.A. Reid, O.E., M.P., (Absent)  
Prime Minister

Other Vice Presidents (4)

Cde. S.S. Narain, A.A., M.P.,  
Vice – President, Works, Transport and Housing  
Cde. H.D. Hoyte, S.C., M.P., (Absent – on leave)  
Vice – President, Economic Planning and Finance

Cde. H. Green, M.P.,  
Vice – President, Agriculture (Absent)

Cde. B. Ramsaroop, M.P.,  
Vice – President, Party and State Matters

Senior Ministers (7)

Cde. R. Chandisingh, M.P.,  
Minister of Education

Cde. R.H.O. Corbin, M.P.,  
Minister of National and Regional  
Development

\*Cde. F.E. Hope, M.P.,  
Minister of Internal Trade and  
Consumer Protection

\*Cde. H.O. Jack, M.P.,  
Minister of Energy and Mines

\*Cde. Dr. M. Shahabuddeen, O.R., S.C., M.P.,  
Attorney General and Minister of Justice

\*Cde. R.E. Jackson, M.P.,  
Minister of Foreign Affairs

\*Cde. J.R. Thomas, M.P.,  
Minister of Home Affairs

Ministers (7)

Cde. U.E. Johnson, M.P., (Absent – on leave)  
Minister of Co-operatives

Cde. J.N. Maitland – Singh, M.P.,  
Minister, in the Ministry of Agriculture

\*Non-elected Ministers

- Cde. Sallahuddin, M.P.,  
Minister, Finance, in the Ministry of  
Economic Planning and Finance
- \*Cde. Y.V. Harewood – Benn, M.P.,  
Minister, in the Office of the Prime  
Minister
- \*Cde. H. Rashid, M.P.,  
Minister, in the Office of the President
- \*Cde. R.A. Van West – Charles, M.P.,  
Minister of Health
- \*Cde. K.W.E. Denny, M.P.,  
Minister of Labour, Manufacturing  
and Industrial Development

Ministers of State (2)

- Cde. M. Corrica, M.P.,  
Minister of State in the Ministry of  
Internal Trade and Consumer Protection
- Cde. R.C. Fredericks, A.A., M.P.,  
Minister of State for Youth and Sports,  
In the Ministry of Education

Parliamentary Secretaries (3)

- Cde. A.W. Bend – Kirton – Holder, M.P.,  
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of  
Works, Transport and Housing
- Cde. D.A.N. Ainsworth, M.P.,  
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Education
- Cde. B. Bhaggan, M.P.,  
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Other Members (26)

- Cde. M. Ally, M.P.
- Cde. M. Armogan, J.P., M.P.
- Cde. B. Beniprashad, M.P.
- Cde. J.B. Calderia, M.P.
- Cde. A.A. Chin, M.P.
- Cde. J.P. Chowritmootoo, J.P., M.P.
- Cde. O.E. Clark, M.P. (Absent – on leave)
- Cde. E.B. Davidson, M.P.
- Cde. H. Doobay, M.P.
- Cde. A.B. Felix, M.P.
- Cde. E.H.A. Fowler, M.P.
- Cde. P. Fredericks, M.P. (Absent)
- Cde. E.F. Gilbert, M.P.
- Cde. J. Gill – Mingo, M.P.
- Cde. A. McRae, M.P.
- Cde. J.M. Munroe, J.P., M.P.
- Cde. S. Prashad, M.P.
- Cde. R.N. Primo, M.P.
- Cde. P.A. Rayman, M.P.
- Cde. C.G. Sharma, J.P., M.P.
- Cde. H.L.B. Singh, M.P.
- Cde. S.H. Sukhu, M.S., M.P.
- Cde. B. Tiwari, M.P.
- Cde. C. Vandenburg, M.P.

\*Non-elected Ministers

Cde. H.B. Walcott – Nacimiento, J.P., M.P.,  
Government Chief Whip (Absent)  
Cde. R.E. Williams, M.P. (Absent)

Members from the National Congress of Local Democratic Organs (2)

Cde. R. Bishop, M.S., M.P. (Absent – on Leave)  
Cde. B. Latchminarayan, M.P.

Members from the Regional Democratic Councils (10)

Cde. K.N. Jones, M.P. (Region No. 1 – Barima/Waini)  
Cde. K.V. Jairam, M.P. (Region No. 2 – Pomeroun/Supenaam) (Absent)  
Cde. C.A. Singh, M.P. (Region No. 3 – Essequibo Islands/West Demerara)  
Cde. W. Bipat, M.P. (Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica)  
Cde. H.I. London, M.S., M.P. (Region No. 5 – Mahaica/Berbice)  
Cde. I. Chowritmootoo, M.P. (Region No. 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne)  
Cde. N.R. Charles, M.P. (Region No. 7 – Cuyunui/Mazaruni)  
Cde. D. Abraham, M.P. (Region No. 8 – Potaro/Siparuni)  
Cde. A. Dorrick, M.P. (Region No. 9 – Upper Takatu/Upper Essequibo)  
Cde. D. Hinds, M.P. (Region No. 10 – Upper Demerara/Berbice)

Members of the Minority (12)

( i ) Peoples’ Progressive Party (10)

Minority Leader (1)

Cde. Dr. C. Jagan, M.P.  
Minority Leader (Absent)

Deputy Speaker (1)

Cde. Ram Karran, M.P.  
Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly

Other Members (8)

Cde. J. Jagan, M.P. (Absent)  
Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud, J.P., M.P.,  
Minority Chief Whip  
Cde. Narbada Persaud, M.P. (Absent)  
Cde. C.C. Collymore, M.P.  
Cde. S.F. Mohamed, M.P.  
Cde. I. Basir, M.P.  
Cde. C.C. Belgrave, M.P.  
Cde. Dalchand, J.P., M.P.

( ii ) United Force (2)

Mr. M.F. Singh, C.C.H., J.P., M.P. (Absent – on leave)  
Mr. M.A. Abraham, M.P.

OFFICERS

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

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

PRAYERS

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

The Speaker: Leave has been granted to Cde. Hoyte, Ramsaroop, Chandisingh, Jack and Clarke and to Mr. M. F. Singh for today's sitting, Cde. Fowler up to 1982-08-21 and Cde. Bishop until 1981-09-15.

PRESENTATIONS OF PAPERS AND REPORTS, ETC.

The following papers were laid:

- (1) (a) Statement of Guarantees given by the Minister of Finance under section 3 of the Guarantee of Loans (Public Corporations and Companies) Act, Chapter 77:01 for the quarters ended 31<sup>st</sup> March, 1981, 30<sup>th</sup> June, 1981, 30<sup>th</sup> September, 1981, 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1981 and 31<sup>st</sup> March, 1982, and Statement of Guarantees which remained expired for the period ended 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1981.
- (b) Annual Report and Accounts of the Guyana Co-operatives Agricultural and Industrial Development Bank for 1979.
- (c) External Loans (Limitation Increase) Order 1962 (No.33) which was made under section 3(7) of the External Act, Chapter 74:08, on 29<sup>th</sup> April, 1982, and published in the Gazette on 29<sup>th</sup> May, 1982.
- (d) Loan Agreement dated November 6, 1981 between the Caribbean Development Bank, Guyana and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, and Caricom Corn and Soyabean Company Limited.
- (e) Financial Paper No.2/1982 – Schedule of Supplementary Provision on the capital Estimates totaling \$475,000,000 for the period ended 1982-08-10. /The Minister, Finance, in the Ministry of Economic Planning and Finance, on behalf of the Vice-President, Economic Planning and Finance/

In terms of Standing Order 68(1), the Minister, Finance, in the Ministry of Economic Planning and Finance on behalf of the Vice-President, Economic Planning and Finance named Thursday 1982-08-19 as the day for the consideration of the Financial Paper.

- (2) Report and Accounts of the Guyana Sugar Corporation Limited for the year 1981. /The Vice-President, Works, Transport and Housing, on behalf of the Vice-President, Agriculture/.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS – FIRST READING

- (1) Georgetown Chamber of Commerce (Amendment) Bill 1982-Bill No.6/1982.
- (2) Public Corporations (Amendment) Bill 1982 – Bill No.8/1982. /The Ministry of Internal Trade and Consumer Protection/

- (3) National Assembly (Disqualification) (Amendment) Bill 1982 – Bill No. 9/1982. /The Minister of Home Affairs/
- (4) Shops (Consolidation) (Amendment) Bill 1982 – Bill No. 7/1982. /The Minister of Labour, Manufacturing and Industrial Development/
- (5) National Archives of Guyana Bill 1982 – Bill No. 10/1982. /The Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister on behalf of the Prime Minister/

PUBLIC BUSINESS

Bill – Second and Third Readings

MISCELLANEOUS ENACTMENTS (AMENDMENTS) (NO.2) BILL 1982 – BILL NO.5/1982

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to amend certain enactments”. /The Minister, Finance in the Ministry of Economic Planning and Finance on behalf of the Vice-President, Economic Planning and Finance/

The Speaker: Cde. Sallahuddin.

(The Minister, Finance, in the Ministry of Economic Planning and Finance) (Cde. Sallahuddin):

Cde. Speaker, I beg to move that the Miscellaneous Enactment (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 1982 be now read a second time.

Essentially, this piece of legislation follows what we have been doing in recent months and that is to conduct an examination into the administrative cost of the various licences which we issue and the fees which we charge for the issue of those licences. So that the administrative cost could be brought into closer relationship to the cost of the licence.

Cde. Speaker you would recall that we have brought similar pieces of legislation from time to time. Essentially, this aims at that objective in that it would increase fees prescribed by the Fire Arms Act, the Registration of Births and Deaths Act, the Marriage Act, the Tax Act and the Indian Labour Act.

Cde. Sallahuddin continues.

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

14:10 hrs

There is another aspect of the Bill to which we should direct our attention and it has to do with the insertion of a new provision into the Intoxicating Liquor Licensing Act which empowers the Comptroller of Customs and Excise to grant an off-license to an applicant in possession of a certificate of safety from the Chief Fire Officer in respect of his premises and which relate to the adequacy of provision as to the means of escape in the event of fire and safety in general.

The Bill also prescribes a fee that is payable for the issue of such a certificate so that I just want to point out, in introducing this Bill, that it follows a sequence which we introduced some time last year and we hope that it will see the usual passage through the House this afternoon.

Question proposed.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Cde. Speaker, the first observation I wish to make on these amendments is the very fact that they are brought under miscellaneous legislation. I am sure you will agree with me, sir, as a practitioner yourself that when our laws were revised and new volumes introduced the intention was that amendments from time to time would have found themselves within those bound volumes that allow such facilities, so that perusing the legislation would be easy. It does appear from the type of legislation we have been having in the House that though you may be in possession of these “flexible volumes” – it I may use that term – you will have to refer to miscellaneous legislation to be convinced that there is no further amendment to any of the sections that appear in these bound volumes.

I want then to criticise very strongly the way these amendments are being brought. I also wish to make the point that I have spoken to a very senior member of the Bar Association who had a look at this kind of legislation and he shares the view that I am expressing here this afternoon. I should like to appeal to the Government not to continue with this kind of legislative process and to bring distinct amendments to the various Acts when the necessity arises, not to compound them, not to put them together in miscellaneous legislation, the whole purpose of the revision that we had some time ago is now being defeated.

Dealing with the increases in fees generally, I wish to make a very strong point –

The Speaker: Let us deal with specifics.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: I am not touching the first amendment that increases dealers’ licences, that is, those who are going to be licensed to sell fire arms, from \$40 to \$500. I move to searches, birth certificates and so on, that is, the amendment to Chapter 44:01, sections 33, 35 and 49. The Government can speak of administrative costs. I want to be as fair as I can this afternoon to say that if the Government finds that the cost of issuing of documentation from the Registrar General’s office has increased over the years which would necessitate increases corresponding to the cost currently, I would have no objection, but then the Government must also take responsibility of giving proper and efficient services to the public who would probably be willing to pay the increased costs. Without dealing with all the searches, I have looked at them and seen what they apply to in absolute detail, that is, if a birth is going to be registered within 12 months, or subsequent to 12 months, there will be an increase from 25 cents to \$2; to look at the indices: for every general search the increase is from five to ten dollars, for a particular search it goes from twenty-five cents to one dollar and the fee for a certified extract moves from sixty cents to three dollars. Birth certificates will be increased to two dollars.

The position with respect to the issuing and obtaining of birth certificates has reached scandalous proportions. Everybody in this country is complaining that it is virtually impossible to obtain a birth certificate and equally a marriage certificate within a reasonable time. We have been reading the

Government newspaper, the Guyana Chronicle.

The Speaker: I take it that you are dealing with both birth and marriage certificates.

Cde Reepu Daman Persaud: Yes, sir. I would refer to one specific case in respect of marriage. I am dealing with the issuing of the certificates. As I was saying, it has reached scandalous proportions because people cannot get them for as long as a year and in some cases for two years. What is more, there are a number of touts that line the corridors of the Registrar General's office and people have been paying up to fifty dollars, and even more, for a single birth certificate. Something is radically wrong with the system there and it needs immediate action if possible. I call on Parliament to mount an enquiry tomorrow to bring to an end this scandalous situation which exists there, so that even if we are inclined to say that over the years the cost of the issuing of these certificates has risen, I am saying the services are rotten and far from expectation and must be strongly condemned.

I go to this office very regularly. I have to go because I am a Marriage Officer. I know what takes place there every day. I would then strongly urge that the new Minister – he has recently taken over – give immediate attention to this department and that, if it is necessary, now that you are getting a little more money for the services that will be given to the public, they increase the staff and provide better facilities. People ought to be able to obtain certificates, marriage certificates and death certificates without the kind of harassment, the difficulties and hardship they are currently going through in this country.

What is more, there are a number of people who have set themselves up as self-appointed agents in various parts of this country. They have become illegal sub-registrars in various places. People go to them and make payments of the sums that I have already referred to and they come to Georgetown and apply for birth certificates in bulk and go back and exploit poor people who can ill afford these kinds of expenditure simply to obtain birth certificates which are so vital for education, for passports and for other purposes.

I hope that with my appeal this afternoon in this House we will see an early change in this department and that the public will be given the services which I think they are entitled to.

I want to move to the other aspect and refer to the Tax Act, Chapter 80:01. As I said earlier – and you agree with me, sir – the points relate to both aspects with respect to certificates generally. To obtain a marriage licence currently the fee is \$10. That is now being increased to \$25. I want to draw to the attention of this House something which I think is discriminatory in the Marriage Act. I feel that all religions in our county ought to be treated equally and I belong to a political party which, when it was in the government, advocated equality of all religions.

14:20 hrs.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: I would like to believe, speaking this afternoon in this Assembly, that time would have shelved that belief. This existed even before this Government and even the P.P.P. Government came into office. I think the Amendment was in 1957 during the interim Government, where Hindus and Muslims were appointed marriage officers. The only way they can contract marriages under the general laws of the country, is after obtaining marriage licences from the Registrar General. It would mean that on each occasion the Hindu and Muslim marriage officer of the Hindu or Muslim couple would have had to pay a revenue fee – a stamp duty of \$10. Now they will be called upon to pay \$25 whereas – not that I am opposed to what facility the Christian Community enjoys, but simply, I am drawing to your attention what I see in the law – so far as the Christian churches are concerned, they are permitted to publish bans. That is simply announcing the marriages for three weeks in their churches, and subsequent upon the announcement, to contract the marriage under the general laws of the country, which I think would be Chapter 45.

Now, there is an increase for the premises that are licenced to publish bans for marriages. It used to be \$2.50 – I am referring to the First Amendment page 3, Section 22:3 to Chapter 45. The licences for the places that have been identified to publish bans will go up from \$2.50 to \$5. They will be permitted to carry on the same way whereas the Hindus and Muslims in each case will have to pay \$25. A raise from \$10 to \$25. I want to ask the Minister concerned to look at this piece of legislation and probably bring to Parliament an amendment to permit Hindu and Muslim marriage officers to contract marriages without applying for licence which should be used as was expected and envisaged as legislation from time memorial for civil marriages, if I may describe those marriages in that way. Let the Hindu or Muslim marriage officers, since their marriages are contracted outside of temples and Mosques – Marriages are also conducted in temples, but most marriages are conducted outside of Temples and Mosques – get the couple getting married to make a simple declaration saying that they were not married before and affirm that declaration by oath and that would be enough for the marriage to be performed. At the time of submission of the marriage certificate by the Hindu or Muslim Officer, the declaration can be submitted at the same time, but I think it would be wrong - -

The Speaker: Cde. Persaud, are you really accurate in your accusation in saying that the Christians do not have to pay \$24?

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: If it is a marriage in which the ceremony is done in the church you will have to pay. That is what I am saying, and the point I made there if I may made it more clear so that we can reach clarity, is that even if the Hindu or Muslim marriages are performed without the ceremony they will be compelled to pay \$25 which was formerly \$10. That is not so with respect to the Christians. Not that I am opposed to it, I just want to draw it to attention. I feel that - -

The Speaker: I do not think the Minister could answer you neither would I, but only for clarification so that members would know, there is a special reason why Hindus and Muslims have to go to the Registrar Office to get certificates. They have got to get a non-impediment which does not apply to the Christians. That is why they go there.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Sir, if you would allow me to explain something?

The Speaker: I have to.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Now you are referring to the Indian Labour Ordinance for which there is an amendment. With respect to the general laws of the country, there is no need to get the N.I.C. which is the non-impediment certificate. I am not discussing that at all. So far as that Act is concerned, there is an amendment which simply affects the issuing of certificates which will now call for a higher fee. I am not dealing with that at all. I am dealing with the general laws of the country as they relate to

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14:20 – 14:30 hrs.

everybody. So there is no need for the Hindu or Muslim couple to go for the N.I.C., if the marriage is going to be contracted under Chapter 45 of our laws. That is the slight distinction I want to draw to your attention with the greatest respect.

I say then, sir, the Indian Labour Ordinance is still on statute and people can utilise that, but people generally, have been going for the general laws of the country currently, for several reasons. One reason being that the certificate is issued at the time of marriage whereas if you obtain a N.I.C., the marriage is performed after the issuing of that document and then the Pandit or Moulvi takes the document to the Registrar General's Office and waits for the marriage certificate for two months, three months, six months or a year as the case may be. And so they opt for the other one which is under the general laws.

There is also a second consideration why people go for the general laws of the country. That is, it carries the seal whereas the certificates under the Indian Labour Ordinance, do not carry the seal. So those are the reasons why we have got more marriages today, sir, under the general laws of the country. If that is so, then I think we should bring the law where it will be equal to all religions so that unnecessary hardship or burden ought not to be placed on one community. I think it should be equal and I am calling for that kind of legislation as I discussed this afternoon.

Cde. Speaker, the increase of the marriage licence now is from \$10 to \$25. That licence could remain there, but it will apply only for civil marriages probably performed by the Registrar General, the Superintendent of Marriages and in the earlier days, by District Commissioners.

Under Chapter 45:02 sir, a couple goes – under civil marriages – and apply for what is called a Superintendent Certificate, but it will be necessary in those cases to give 21 days notice with a payment at about \$100 or \$125, roughly. It has been increased currently to probably double or triple that amount. It might be \$5.00 now. I have not looked at it in details. I hope you will see why I advocate that amendment. So I am saying this afternoon, if the Government speaks about administrative cost, we as an opposition do not want to say we are unreasonable and if we feel that the cost is so much and these fees were fixed several years ago, hence probably, several years after there is need to revise them bearing in mind that we are doing the revision at a time when people can ill afford to pay. That point must also be made and what must be borne in mind is the kind of financial burden the people face currently in the country. This will bring additional burden. In any case we might not see \$3. as a big thing from sixty cents. Some people may not see that, but I can tell you, Cde. Speaker, with the greatest sincerity that in many homes and in many families the increase from sixty cents to \$3. will affect them gravely and severely. So I would like this afternoon to call for that increase. I have found too sir that under the Tax Act there are several other increases like, before a child is put on the parent passport with no payment. There is a provision now for \$5. This is more taxation on the people and several other areas are being increased.

14.30 hrs

(Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud)

Several other areas are being increased. I want in conclusion to say on these aspect that Government is obviously in search of money and probably as the Minister said they are not only looking at the administrative expense but they are looking into every area where they can squeeze out money from the taxpayers.

With respect to the Intoxicating Liquor Licensing Act this is a licence where people will buy and take away the liquor. I see this is to have fire prevention to ensure the building is properly secured. The certificate is issued by the fire chief. If I may add I think we have got too many liquor shops. I think I have said it and I hope Members can see my sentiments on this issue.

The Speaker: Cde. Ramkarran, you want to speak.

Cde. Ram Karran: I merely want to observe that as my friend said there is so much discrimination in the religious aspect, that is the Christian, Hindu and Muslim that I can well imagine what will happen to the poor Communist or Atheist who tries to get married. My friend the Minister said in his opening remark that some examinations will be conducted with respect to inquiring into the constant issue of these licences and so on. If there was such an examination one would have expected the honourable Minister to let us see the results of this examination. I hold strongly to the view expressed by my colleague at the back that this is a tax-raising enterprise. How is it, for instance, if the Minister can explain to us, that a passport which originally cost \$5.00 today costs \$50.00. Isn't it a tax-raising arrangement?

Similarly, there are many others. For instance it costs the immigrant, Hindu or Muslim \$10.00 extra to get married. But the man who marries in church nothing is added to him except the premises where the banns are published pays an additional \$2.50. It seems to me it is an evening-up. The Minister sought to make an evening-up to obtain something from the participants in these various exercises or applicants for licences. But it is not so. If it were so then the chap who marries out of church, that is by licence or the Hindu or Muslim Act, should not be made to pay more unless it can be proven in that type of exercise that it costs the Government more. The Parliament must be told how is it. Does it require additional staff? Have you paid higher wages bearing in mind wages have not gone up since 1978. Where is the excuse? How is it the costs have gone up? You are retrenching people – 6000 have been retrenched. The costs have gone down. The licences should go down. But we are carrying it up in relation. What costs? The honourable Minister must be misleading the House when he said that an examination has been carried out and these are the costs. What does the Government do? Does it raise Licences every other year or every five years as costs go up? One knows that in the normal running of things increments and so on, everything go up. But licences except for tax purposes ought to remain constant for as long as possible, maybe \$25 or \$30 before you look at that sort of thing. This is a hand-to-mouth Government that looks to even-up and put the squeeze on the people. Every little nook and cranny is being searched for a penny here and a penny there.

It is for you people to resign and let the Government be run by people who are competent to run the Government.

Cde. Sallahuddin: I want to observe that neither of the honourable Members of the Minority party objected to any of the increases although they have had at great length sought to explain those circumstances and difficulties which are attendant to those services discharged by State agencies and for which these charges are required. It should therefore, be recorded that the Minority Party has not raised a single specific objection and therefore it could well be construed to mean that they support these increases.

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14:30 – 14:40 hrs.

The second point is that while I will not be led off, as perhaps the honourable Member thought I might have been, into diversions that have to do with statements like, “wages have not been increased”, which I want to say in passing is not true because in 1980 there was an increase by 5 and 7 percent. Then last year there were increases for the public service by 7 or 10 percent. Then for certain public agencies it was 10 and 12 ½ percent. I want to reply also to some observations made by the first of the two speakers in the Minority. We take the point that we should reconsider and possibly discontinue the practice of bringing matters of this nature under the Miscellaneous Enactment Procedure. We take that point for consideration because we recognise that we all come to this House to be of mutual assistance to each other. We also take the point that the ‘green volumes’, if I may borrow the term are not necessarily as useful as we would want them to be at a moment’s notice. There is need for some form of up-dating and I want to assure that on the advice of another agency, another Minister of Government that some efforts are being made to effect this kind of up-dating of records.

Finally, I want to say that the Minister who has responsibility for Home Affairs and therefore had responsibility for those departments which issue birth certificates is in attendance. Surely we would recall that his predecessor did explain to this honourable House in some considerable details those measures and procedures which are in the process of being introduced to improve the services rendered to Members of the public. I want us to go on record as saying those efforts are still in process and to some extent the service has improved although what is apparent though not very real is that the volume of requests has increased and therefore there has to be this constant process of adjustment. In conclusion I want to say that these measures aim at what I said originally, that is, essentially to bring the administrative costs in line with the fees charged for the issue of licences and documents. Thank you.

Bill read a Second time.

14:40 hrs.

Assembly in Committee:

Clause 1 and 2 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Schedule

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: I have one short question. I am referring to page 3. It is section 13 of the Tax Act. This paragraph I am referring to is coming under amendment of Chapter 80:01 (c). It states: "In paragraph (29) for "10.00" substitute "50.00." This is simply for a collective travel certificate. That is, is a group of people were to go abroad on a cultural sport, mission or what have you and they are not in possession of passports and travel documents, they can put all their names on one list and a documentation is issued. I notice that that increase is substantial from \$10 to \$50. I wonder if the Minister would care to explain the reason for that because it will not entail so much cost. It is a collective thing, it is one documentation and this facility is really used. It is done as a goodwill gesture on the part of this Government and on the part of any other Government.

Cde. Sallahuddin: I simply wish to say that there cannot be an imposition of any difficulty because the hon. Member himself has said that the facility is very rarely used. I wish simply to reiterate that it is against the general background of increased administrative costs. It takes time to go through the documents which the applicants present, it takes time to list their names, it takes time to process those names and, therefore, in the light of all that we have been doing in this respect we felt it was necessary to add this increase to the charges.

Schedule agreed to an ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Assembly resumed.

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

#### MOTIONS

##### AFFIRMATION OF THE EXTERNAL LOANS (LIMITATION INCREASE)

##### ORDER 1982 (No. 33)

"Be it resolved that this National Assembly affirms the External Loans (Limitation Increase) Order 1982 (No. 33), which was made under section 3(7) of the External Loans Act, Chapter 74:08, on 29<sup>th</sup> April, 1982, and published in the Gazette on 29<sup>th</sup> May, 1982. [The Minister, Finance, in the Ministry of Economic Planning and Finance on behalf of the Vice – President, Economic Planning and Finance.]

Cde. Sallahuddin: Cde. Speaker, I wish to move the Motion in the name of the Vice President, Economic Planning and Finance in this honourable Assembly and to say, essentially, what the Motion proposes is to increase the external loans limitation from \$1.5 billion to \$2 billion.

Essentially, one has to recognise that there is need for inflows of development finance, finance which has to be procured from lending agencies overseas. Because there is need for additional financial resources from overseas it has become necessary for this measure to be enacted. There are at present several development projects; agricultural, mineral, forest. Apart from that, one has to recognise that the cost of these projects would have increased in recent years because of inflationary tendencies which now sweep the world so that it has become necessary to find additional finances even for those projects which would have been conceived and the implementation of which would have begun several years ago. Therefore, we have found it necessary to raise the level from \$1.5

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billion to \$2 billion.

This figure has not been constant. We all recognise that sometime ago the limitation was placed at just \$500 million and then 11<sup>th</sup> November, 1977, for example, it was increased to \$1 billion. On the 25<sup>th</sup> January, 1980 it was moved upwards again to \$1.5 billion. So that, essentially, it amounts to an increase of \$500 million to enable the Government to borrow to meet its obligation in terms of finding external finances for developmental purposes.

Motion proposed

Cde. Ram Karran: The first thing I ought to do, sir, is to compliment the hon. Minister on being able to present such an empty bit of contribution to such a very heavy pressure on our country. The hon. Minister has said absolutely nothing that any lay member of the community could not have seen from this bit of paper, that we are increasing our ability to borrow from \$1.5 billion to \$2 billion. The hon. Minister does not even attempt to tell us why.

He said, sir, in his empty presentation that the necessity for this is because we have various types of development taking place; agricultural, forest etc. But one would have thought, one with a very simple mind like mine, that the hon. Minister would have told us something about the massiveness of the agricultural development that is taking place, something that is taking place with respect to forestry development and the reason, perhaps, for the sale of the glass factory. But the hon. Minister did not seek to enlighten the Assembly. Perhaps it is the Government's prerogative for the Ministers to keep everything in their heads and to use this Assembly as a rubber stamp to get authority. He tells us that this amount which we are going to put around our necks was not always as heavy as he claims to make it today, but in 1977 it was a mere \$500 million, then in 1980 it went up and it is not going up again, two years after. If any other Government increases its ability to borrow with the speed that this Government is doing, I do not think that that Government will last very long.

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(Cde. Ram Karran continues)

This one goes on like..... river, forever and ever, it keeps on going. Where is all this

development taking place? Where are the profits or the surpluses that accrue to the Government to make the people's lives more meaningful or happier. In fact, what we can see is constant, continued pressure. If the honourable Minister had said that this money was being borrowed to buy some flour or to buy some food for the starving Guyanese people, perhaps he might not have had to put the motion formally either to this Assembly or the people outside on the street. But, where is it going to. All these massive sums of money. What sort of development. You are developing agriculture and rice production is going down and sugar production is going down. Where is this money going to – the Demerara River. It would have been full up by now.

The honourable Minister is talking about forestry development and other developments. Can you see any developments Sir? I do not and I go all over the country very frequently. I think, as I said in a previous address to this Assembly a few months ago that the Government has done its complete incompetence in every field and particularly in the financial field. It talks about the inflation that is going all over the world. I am the last to admit that there is no inflation. We must measure the inflation and we must measure our own incompetence which has been very very great indeed. We must try – we should have been trying a long time ago. I think the time is past now for that.

It is time now for you to dress down, move out because you have failed miserably. To come to this Assembly and to say that the money that we had in 1980, we have passed it and we now want authority to borrow more. Nobody is going to lend this bankrupt set of people, this bankrupt Government additional money.

The other day, they went around town like a traveling circus raising bonds. They go to Enmore to raise bonds. They go to Soesdyke to raise bonds and they carry the bonds buyers in motor cars like a circus and they buy the bonds and fool the people that they are raising money at Uitvlugt and on the Sugar Estate. That cannot be.

Which Government with any dignity (Yes Abel bought some bonds) they ought to have some dignity in going about this thing. Sell your bonds at the bank where the bankers are. I remember being in the bank one morning and a man came up and say he wanted to buy some bonds. Everybody looked at him as if his head was not screwed on properly. It was a scorn. Even the people working in the bank said this man's head is not good. I am sorry the honourable Vice President for Economic Planning and Finance is not here and he has left this unsavory task to his colleague. I do not believe he is ill. Even if he had read the record he would have been able to make a far better presentation. Even that he has not done properly.

On the strength of that, that we who regard ourselves as the guardian of this country ought to give licence to the Government. I wish to appeal to my friends over there on the other side of the Assembly not to be way-laid by party allegiance and threats, but to express their views very strongly. Why are you going to burden yourself further in the mire when you cannot raise anything out of the heavy burden you have already to burden yourself a little more and to put the burden on your children.

I remember in 1965 and in 1966 we were warning this Government from this side of the Assembly, not to indulge in expenses, in indebtedness that you cannot repay. The spokesman for Finance at the time said what are you talking about. We have moratorium for forty years, but the forty years are going to catch up with you and you will have to pay. Already the Vice President for Economic Planning and Finance said that they have to seek a re-scheduling of the debts. A country that is as bankrupt as that that seeks a re-scheduling of debts ought not to go willy nully into increase loans. I would be the last to say that I would agree with it unless the honourable Minister or his boss can come and satisfy the entire

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Assembly that you cannot avoid this situation.

You are only piling up debts for other people to break their brains for. You are only piling up debts for your children to be involved in it and when are you going to find the money. When a man is bankrupt and they say they are. When a man is bankrupt and he seeks to get additional loan as they are trying to do, he has to be a smart man. No bank, or no organisation or no individual with money is going to lend a bankrupt unless he is able to give additional security.

The Hindu legend has a lot of that and my friend who sits in the front bench alone today – I am sure he feels lonely is aware of the situation in the hindu legend and you ought to tell your friends how to get their feet out of the suck sand. You cannot go on pledging yourselves, your wives, your children and your country into debt forever and ever. Who is going to take you out. You are not going to be independent. The legend today is that the Venezuelans will take you over – or you are borrowing the money from Venezuela. You are denying the Venezuelans. You do not want the Venezuelans or the Brazilians. You are giving them the right to come and take you over. That is what you are doing because there is no need to take your country physically. All you need to do is to get your resources, what you work for, pay them over and you are behaving as irresponsible. I am saying that advisedly that the Government is behaving as irresponsible in carrying out your own limitation from 1.5 to two billion dollars without saying one single word in explanation. Why is it so. For you to say that you are going to continue development in agriculture, I will say and any reasonable person will say you have failed already.

Agriculture has gone down to the – he bruk up. For you to say that you are going to develop forestry resources, I would say that the forests are still there and there will be no development. I would say – if the Government is not too ashamed – to sell some of the facilities or some of the things that you have built as you are trying to do with the glass factory. Sell the Textile Mill and raise some money. Even if you sell it at a loss rather than to further put your hands in the lion's mouth.

Cde. Ram Karran continues  
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NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

15.00 hrs

Perhaps in the reply the hon. Minister will not add new matter but will seek to enlighten the House and to give the House some good reason for this unprecedented step in further bankruptcy. It is true that when a man is bankrupt – they say a drowning man catches at a straw. The Government is bankrupt and it does not know what to do, so the members of the Government are doing anything. If any old Jew offers to lend them \$5 they will borrow. So they want to extend the limits, but I expect that as a Government which speaks on behalf of all the Guyanese people, including myself, it ought to display its character as reasonable, as honest people, but this is a dishonest move. You are bankrupt, your assets are not worth a penny and you are going to mortgage them beyond the value of what you can gain from them. This is a disgraceful act on the part of the Government.

The Speaker: Cde. Sallahuddin.

Cde. Sallahuddin (replying): Cde. Speaker, the hon. Member who just spoke has made a very important statement which went something like this: “This Government which speaks for all the people including myself.....” I am happy to quote him and the record will so reflect that at long last Cde. Boysis Ram Karran has made that kind of admission and confession, but I suspect that he has mustered courage to make it because only he sits on the front bench this afternoon.

I want to say that we have come to this House from time to time and we have explained not only the difficulties which we face now in terms of the economy, but we have also sought to amplify those difficulties as they exist all over the world. When Cde. Ram Karran makes reference to our inability to discharge fully those debt service commitments which we have, he surely recognises that we do not stand alone in that respect, but that there is another and much larger and much more powerful country, to which the hon. speaker I suppose still keeps very close affinity, which has had to seek a postponement of the date of maturation of some of its commercial debts and which country has also had to sell off a vast portion of its gold reserves.

I want to say that when we came out of this House with unanimity on the territorial question I thought that it was settled once and for all that every member of this House has resolved in his own heart to adopt certain measures to enable us to preserve territorial integrity. Among those measures is the sale of Defence Bonds and it struck me as rather a surprise to hear the hon. Member, who is also the Deputy Speaker of this honourable House, cast such an aspersion on the people who have bought bonds. I think it is an irresponsible statement coming from, shall we say, a long-standing member of this House. He ought to have taken cognisance of the fact that the Guyanese people have risen to the occasion in great measure in that the sale of bonds today exceeds \$9 million. The exercise is still continuing and we on this side of the House will continue to persuade our comrades on the other side to buy their share also.

The other statement that struck me and to which I want to reply briefly is this: “If the Government were seeking to borrow money to buy food for starving Guyanese, then we would have enjoyed the support of the minority party.” Cde. Speaker, I credit every member of this House with a high degree of responsibility but one has to distinguish between borrowing from external sources for developmental purposes and the capacity of this nation to produce food for itself. What we need to understand is that while we accept that there is either a scarcity or a non-existence of certain foodstuffs to which we had grown accustomed, one cannot deny that there is a sufficiency of food in gross terms which this country produces even though one may not be able to respond adequately to all the peculiarities of culture, but in the circumstances in which we find ourselves it is necessary to borrow money and to invest that money on a certain scale of priorities.

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The final point I want to make is this: having been given the authority to borrow from external

sources to a higher limit, the Government then has the power to do so but it does not follow that we will necessarily want to extend to the \$2 billion mark as though we were simply attempting to bring money to add to the burdens, as our friends on the other side say, of the Guyanese people. We simply seek the authority to do it and whether we find the resources easily or not, that is a matter which we will continue to pursue so that we wish to make these remarks in reply to the statements made by the hon. Member of the minority party.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

AFFIRMATION OF THE ROADS (DEMERARA HARBOUR BRIDGE) (AMENDMENT)

BY-LAWS 1982

The Speaker: Cde. Naraine.

Be it resolved that this National Assembly, in accordance with section 24 of the Roads Act, Chapter 51:01, affirm the Roads (Demerara Harbour Bridge) (Amendment) By-laws 1982, which were made by the Chief Works Officer on 20<sup>th</sup> May, 1982, and published in the Gazette on 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 1982. /The Vice – President, Works, Transport and Housing./

The Vice – President, Works, Transport and Housing (Cde. Naraine): Cde. Speaker, I beg to move the Motion standing in my name. This Motion seeks to amend the by-laws of the Demerara Harbour Bridge whereby ocean-going vessels, trawlers and coastal vessels will be required to pay certain charges to cross the bridge during certain periods. The bridge has four scheduled openings: one at 4.30 a.m., one at 10 a.m., one at 2.30 p.m. and one at 5.30 p.m. It is not the intention that during those scheduled openings vessels crossing through the bridge would be required to pay any tolls. The tolls will relate to demand openings, that is, in relation to vessels requesting the bridge to be opened outside of these scheduled openings.

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Cde. Naraine: Cde. Speaker, the by-law specify, for ocean going vessels the cost will be \$200, trawlers \$100 and coast-land vessels \$100. As you know the bridge has a raised portion and small vessels can cross at any time without any charge. But this by-law relates to those vessels requiring the opening of the retractable span of the bridge. It is hoped, Cde. Speaker, that more and more vessels will use the schedule opening for crossing because it is felt that by opening the bridge too often on demand it is disruptive of the vehicular and, road traffic; and we would like to have road traffic for as long periods as possible. Also the demand opening of the bridge, that is beyond the four openings per day, would entail additional charges for power, wear and tear of the bridge and employment cost for people required to operate the bridge and so although these charges would not in our judgement recover the cost of the additional wear and tear on the bridge due to those openings, we hope that it will be there as an inducement for vessels owners and captains to cross the bridge as often as possible during the schedule openings.

The revenue – since comrades have been raving about revenue all the time – it is anticipated that if the present trend continues, this measure would bring in about \$168,000 annually. We are hoping that this sum can even be less because we would like as many crafts as possible to use the bridge through the schedule opening and so prevent more than four openings of the bridge during the day. So I would strongly recommend this motion to the Assembly.

Motion proposed.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: I would like to make a brief observation Cde. Speaker. I have read the Order and the Minister has given clarity to it, but the Order said that: that should be paid by the owner or person in charge of each vessel. This is referred to in the first column of the Schedule. The amount is specified in the corresponding entry of the second column, “thereof by the passage of such vessels through the bridge and in receipt.” Reading this Order without looking at the Principal Act, it does appear that every vessel that passes through will have to pay. But I know the Minister said that they will not have to pay. This is so. I suppose this record will help to interpret this by-law, that is the Minister’s statement. But I want to ask this question on the passage of this Order which, of course, requires a positive resolution. It does not appear whether additional opening of the bridge will reduce or increase the serious difficulties for it to function. That is bearing in mind that we had the bridge not operating for a long period because I think either when it was opened or closed something went wrong and people had to remain there for a long period. I would like to know whether the Minister of the Government has considered the fact that if there is increased demands to open the bridge, seeing that there is now a law where you can ask for the bridge to be opened outside of the scheduled period on payment of certain tolls, whether this will not work the bridge too much and create greater hardship to commuters using the bridge and so create tremendous transportation problems for the public? That is the only point that struck my mind which I think needs consideration. The Assembly and the public at large needs to be given an assurance.

Cde. Ram Karran: My question is a very simple one you honour. The hon. Vice – President tells us that there is a schedule opening of the bridge. Those of us who use the bridge realise how long we have to wait for the bridge to be re-opened or re-closed depending on how you look at it. If he is going to add additional times to that, of course, people will have to pay for it. When they are paying, they will be paying for additional services, but they will not be paying the people who have to be inconvenienced. The Government has withdrawn the ferry services and are instituting and substituting the bridge, but those of the commuters who use the bridge ought not to be delayed unduly.

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Why doesn’t the hon. Minister – if tidal factors are not going to have any effect, and if it would, I

think that is one of the questions to be considered to keep the bridge open at schedule times when you might have problems for the very big vessels to cross – arrange for ships wanting to use the bridge at times other than schedule times, to use it in the night. That is between the hours of midnight to 3 o'clock when traffic is very limited except for the cow thieves who use the bridge to bring the beef through. That would be far more convenient for ocean going ships coming, for instance, from Trinidad and Barbados. They would be able to schedule their trips to Guyana to take advantage of the schedule time. If there is a tidal problem and these people have to come at certain tides, perhaps it might be better to vary the times to take effect in the evening or in the night rather than in the day time when the bulk of passengers or workers have to cross the ferry to come into Georgetown. Surely those are the things the Minister ought to pay some attention to and to satisfy the Assembly that undue hardship is not going to be applied to those unfortunate people who have had the ferrys removed and who have to detour and pay a lot more money to use the bridge to come into the city.

The Speaker: Cde. Naraine.

Cde. Naraine: (replying): The intention is to reduce the inconvenience to the road traffic or road users to an absolute minimum. As a matter of fact the demand prior to this by-law – the demand crossing of the bridge by ships was done free. There was no charge. As Cde. Ram Karran said this could tend to create abuses based on all kind of excuses of tides and so forth, and so it is felt that doing this would prevent these abuses. I agree with him completely that particularly for the ocean going vessels, crossing shall be done as far as possible during the night. But this is not always practicable and one has to understand that if one of the large ocean going vessels is delayed for say 12 hours or 24 hours before crossing the bridge, the de-moorage can be as much as \$4000 U.S. per day and this will be a cost to the country and so if it is used during the day on demand at high tide, for the large ocean going vessels to cross the bridge, it would not be prudent or it would not be wise in terms of financial reasons for us to delay that ship. But the whole intention is to have the bridge open as few times as possible beyond this four times per day that are now scheduled.

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15.20 hrs.

(Cde. S. Naraine continues)

It is true there is not now a ferry for car and truck traffic. There is a ferry that passengers still use. So there is an alternative if there is any delay for one reason or the other when the bridge cannot operate. In such cases vehicles are allowed to use the ferry as well. So the alternative of using the ferry is still there. I think Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud raised a very important point and that is wear and tear of the bridge. The bridge is now over four years old and one has to look very very carefully at its maintenance. The time that he referred to when the bridge operation was held up for two to three days that was not the bridge itself. What we had was a power failure in terms of the generators that ran the motor to activate the retractor span. Those generators were knocked out and so the bridge could not have been closed on that occasion.

Now the wear and tear after 4 ½ years or just over 4 years will increase and this is another reason why we have to be very economical in terms of opening and closing the bridge because the wearing part on that bridge will involve imported material. Here again we want to conserve as much as possible on our foreign exchange. So we do not run the bridge in such a way so that heavy expenditure will be incurred in terms of importing things in the country.

We appreciate the point made by the Minority Party and I would like to assure them that the observation they made are foremost in our minds and we will make every effort to see there is minimal disruption of road traffic. But at the same time we do not delay unnecessarily the river traffic whereby additional heavy cost will be incurred on de-moorage cost and also that we keep maintenance of the bridge to absolute minimum.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

#### ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, “That this Assembly do now adjourn to Thursday, 1982-08-19 at 14.00 hrs.” /The Vice – President, Works, Transport and Housing./

Adjourned accordingly at 15.23hrs.