

**THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
OFFICIAL REPORT**

[VOLUME 7]

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

143rd Sitting

2 p.m.

Monday, 6th March, 1978

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Speaker

Cde. Sase Narain, O.R., J.P., Speaker

Members of the Government – People’s National Congress (49)

Prime Minister (1)

Cde. L. F. S. Burnham, O.E., S.C.,
Prime Minister

(Absent – on leave)

Deputy Prime Minister (1)

Cde. P. A. Reid,
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of
National Development

Senior Ministers (8)

Cde. H. D. Hoyte, S.C.,
Minister of Economic Development and Co-operatives

(Absent)

* Cde. H. Green, (Absent)
Minister of Health, Housing and Labour

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

(Absent)

***Non-elected Ministers**

- * Cde. F. E. Hope,
Minister of Finance
- * Cde. S. S. Naraine, A.A.,
Minister of Works and Transport
- * Cde. G. A. King,
Minister of Trade and Consumer Protection
- * Cde. G. B. Kennard, C.C.H.,
Minister of Agriculture
- * Cde. M. Shahabuddeen, C.C.H., S.C.,
Attorney General and
Minister of Justice

Ministers (5)

- Cde. S. M. Field-Ridley,
Minister of Information
- Cde. B. Ramsaroop,
Minister of Parliamentary Affairs
and Leader of the House
- * Cde. C. V. Mingo,
Minister of Home Affairs
- * Cde. V. R. Teekah,
Minister of Education, Social
Development and Culture
- * Cde. R. E. Jackson, (Absent – on leave)
Minister of Foreign Affairs

Ministers of State (9)

- Cde. O. E. Clarke,
Minister of State – Regional
(East Berbice/Corentyne)
- Cde. P. Duncan, J.P.,
Minister of State, Ministry of
Economic Development and Co-operatives
- Cde. C. A. Nascimento,
Minister of State,
Office of the Prime Minister

***Non-elected Ministers**

Cde. K. B. Bancroft, J.P.,
Minister of State – Regional
(Mazaruni/Potaro)

Cde. J. P. Chowritmootoo, J.P.,
Minister of State – Regional
(Essequibo Coast/West Demerara)

Cde. J. R. Thomas,
Minister of State, Ministry of
Health, Housing and Labour

Cde. R. H. O. Corbin,
Minister of State, Ministry of
National Development

Cde. A. Salim, (Absent)
Minister of State – Regional
(East Demerara/West Coast Berbice)

Cde. F. U. A. Carmichael,
Minister of State – Regional (North West)

Parliamentary Secretaries (4)

Cde. M. M. Ackman, C.C.H.,
Parliamentary Secretary,
Office of the Prime Minister,
and Government Chief Whip

Cde. E. L. Ambrose,
Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of Agriculture

Cde. S. Prashad,
Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of Economic Development
and Co-operatives

Cde. M. Corrica,
Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of Education, Social
Development and Culture

Other Members (21)

Cde. E. M. Bynoe
Cde. W. G. Carrington
Cde. L. A. Durant

Cde. E. H. A. Fowler
Cde. J. Gill
Cde. W. Hussain
Cde. S. Jaiserrisingh (Absent)
Cde. K. M. E. Jonas
Cde. M. Kasim, A.A.
Cde. M. Nissar
Cde. L. E. Ramsahoye
Cde. J. G. Ramson
Cde. P. A. Rayman
Cde. E. M. Stoby, J.P. (Absent)
Cde. S. H. Sukhu, M.S.
Cde. C. Sukul, M.S.
Cde. H. A. Taylor
Cde. R. C. Van Sluytman, J.P.
Cde. L. E. Willems (Absent)
Cde. C. E. Wrights, J.P.
Cde. M. Zaheeruddeen (Absent)

Members of the Opposition (16)

(i) People's Progressive Party (14)

Leader of the Opposition (1)

Cde. C. Jagan
Leader of the Opposition

Deputy Speaker (1)

Cde. Ram Karran
Deputy Speaker

Other Members (12)

Cde. J. Jagan
Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud, J.P., Opposition Chief Whip
Cde. Narbada Persaud
Cde. C. Collymore
Cde. S. F. Mohamed
Cde. L. Lalbahadur
Cde. I. Basir
Cde. C. C. Belgrave
Cde. R. Ally
Cde. Dalchand, J.P.

Cde. Dindayal
Cde. H. Nokta

(ii) Liberator Party (2)

Mr. M. F. Singh, J.P.
Mrs. E. DaSilva

OFFICERS

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

Acting Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly – A. Knight

6.3.78
2 p.m.

National Assembly

2 – 2.05 p.m.

PRAYERS

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Leave To Members

The Speaker: Leave has been granted to the Cde. Prime Minister for today's sitting and to Cde. Jackson from the 5th to the 30th March, both days inclusive.

Hours of Sitting

Comrades, on the last occasion, due to failure of the electricity power we lost one hour which really was for the Government benches, the Opposition having fully utilised its two hours. At that Sitting, I intimated that I am prepared to sit today from 2 to 4 p.m., from 4.30 p.m. to 6.30 p.m., and from 8 to 11 p.m., to make up for that one hour that was lost. Unfortunately, I have not seen the Opposition Chief Whip but I am informed that he was down to speak today. I don't know what will be the position. However, the hon. Member Mrs. Elinor DaSilva will be given half an hour and the other half an hour will be divided as the Opposition sees it fit.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

MOTION

APPROVAL OF ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 1978

BUDGET DEBATE

Assembly resumed debate on the Motion moved by the Minister of Finance on 27th February, 1978, for the approval of the estimates of expenditure for the financial year 1978, totalling \$476,515,775.

The Speaker: When the adjournment was taken Cde. Minister of Works and Transport was speaking. Cde. Naraine.

2.05 p.m.

Cde. Naraine: Cde. Speaker, when I last spoke, I pointed out that because of expansion in development and because of the growing demand for improved transportation facilities, it became necessary for a number of things to be done and a number of things to be planned. I spoke about the building up and expansion of the bus service and I spoke about the very large volume of work which was done in relation to road construction. But still, the demand for more travelling facilities continued and in some cases it became necessary to look at transportation facilities not in terms of merely expanding existing services but as an integrated transport service whereby air, water and land transport can be looked at the same time.

With this in view, Government embarked on a programme of construction of additional roads in the Essequibo linking Linden with Suribana, and on the other side of the Essequibo, linking Sherima to Bartica/Teperu and with the Upper Mazaruni Hydro Power Road. With respect to this expansion, a number of bridges were purchased and these bridges are presently in the country to be erected across the Essequibo River and across the Mazaruni River. For the time being, ferries have been introduced on the Essequibo River between Suribana and Sherima and on the Mazaruni River between Teperu and Itaballi. One will see from this development that Bartica is becoming rather pivotal in terms of hinterland development because Bartica will stand at a junction or meeting point of all these roads which I have mentioned as well as the water connection between Georgetown and that point. Presently, road transportation between Georgetown and Bartica is possible and is being used extremely using the Sherima/Suribana crossing. Cde. Nokta is perfectly right when he said that steps are being taken to have another look at the Georgetown/ Bartica steamer service but I would like to assure this house that is

completely foreign to my mind, that anything will be done to close that steamer service unless a better service is provided in its stead. Whatever services is provided the users of the services and the people living in the hinterland, in the Mazaruni/Potaro area and the Bartica area will be consulted.

Also, we already have two steamers plying the Georgetown/Vreed-en-hoop ferry service. Government has taken steps to construct a bridge across the Demerara River; this bridge is in an advanced stage of construction and will be opened some time during the first half of this year. This bridge will facilitate travelling between the two areas West Demerara and the East Bank/Georgetown and East Coast area. When that bridge is opened, one of the steamers will be available for re-allocation or redeployment to some other place where there is need for additional service. When the West Demerara Road is completed and the additional buses about which I spoke arrive in the country, then it is planned for the ferry service to be suspended and the road service and bridge service used in its stead. That would mean a second ship could be available for re-allocation.

Cde. Speaker, to give some idea of the growth of traffic, of the growing demand for transport services, I think it may be useful to use the figures of the Guyana Transport Services over the period 1970 to 1977. In 1970, that service, handled about 536,000 passengers. That is, the number of fares paid or the number of times someone got on the bus to use the service during that year amounted to 536,000. By 1977, that service had grown and the number of passengers carried by that service went to 15,596,000. What is more, between 1976 and 1977, the growth was from about 10,000,000 passengers to 15.6 million passengers, a growth in one year of over 50 percent.

2:15 p.m.

As it is for the bus service, so it is in varying degrees for other services. It may be useful, therefore, at this point, Cde. Speaker, for us to look at what was done in relation to other services. But before doing so, I would like to mention that the expansion of the public bus system and the improvement in its efficiency is expected to provide a viable alternative to most passengers. Obviously, in places like the North West, this cannot be done. But as we build bridges and as we improve the roads, the bus and road transport services will be playing a greater role.

In 1977 steps were taken to regulate the fares charged by hire car drivers. Further, regulations will be necessary not only to ensure that transport services are provided at reasonable rates, but also to ensure that the public system does not suffer from any unfair competition and that there is a balanced distribution of services throughout the country. Controls will also be extended to commercial vehicles, especially with respect to overloading and to the publication of tariffs by carriers. The new Ministry of Transport will place emphasis on safety in driving and will seek to co-ordinate plans on road construction and maintenance, limit on vehicle dimensions and weight, tariff control, driver education, certification of drivers and vehicles to ensure that the system is as safe as possible. But, as I said, it may be useful to look at water transport also.

During the period 1972 to 1977, the Transport and Harbours Department spent about \$1.6 million on the construction of wharfs and stellings and about \$1.7 million on the acquisition of vessels. Major work was done at the Demerara Ferry Terminals, at New Amsterdam, Adventure, Rosignol and at Parika, while the expenditure on ships was to acquire three coastal vessels. Those are cargo vessels. Two of these vessels have been used in local and one on West Indian trade. In domestic trade the department remained stagnant. Here I agree with Cde. Nokta again. He is on the Advisory Board. He is perfectly right that there are a number of antiquated vessels which have long out-grown their useful life. But as I mentioned, it is not just a question of

retiring these boats, it is a question of providing new boats relevant to the total thrust in transportation.

It is worthwhile to mention here, also that during the years 1972 to 1977, the subsidy on the transport service increased from \$2.3 million to \$4.3 million and it is anticipated that during 1978 there will be further increases in this loss. It is proposed, therefore, to review the entire rates and tariffs for all the services provided and to make adjustments wherever necessary. This review will include the revision of rates and tariffs on new services such as the transport of bulk cargo.

For the period 1978-1981, it is proposed to construct a passenger vessel and two cargo vessels for the North West District Berbice and riverain areas, and pilot launches and dredging equipment. There is a loan from the British Overseas Ministry from which funds may be made available for these vessels. I would like to point out, however, that work on the vessel for the North West passenger service has already been started and it may be useful for Cde. Nokta to visit Guyneq to see that work is in progress.

I would like to point out also that the country does not depend only on public vessels for carrying cargo. There are a number of private persons operating boats, small passenger services and cargo services throughout the country. Although it is proposed that transport generally should be controlled by the Ministry of Transport, encouragement will be given to some of these small private operators to improve the efficiency and to increase the service which they provide as found necessary. In addition, in the field of international shipping, Guymine has joined with a Norwegian shipping firm and formed an international shipping company called GUYBULK and they have been transporting bauxite products overseas for some time now.

In the Caribbean the Government has been participating in WISCO, that is, the West Indies Shipping Corporation. Although Guyana shares with other territories in the subsidy given

to this Company – our subsidy is to the tune of about a quarter million dollars – we feel that this is justified because of the importance of this shipping line, in terms of keeping the freight rates down on other shipping lines that operate in the area. Because the rates provided by WISCO are very reasonable and the others, if they wish to keep in the area, would have to keep their rates reasonable as well. We feel that that is justified also for the promotion of trade between the Caricom countries. Plans are also afoot for a joint shipping company to be introduced whereby imports and exports to the United Kingdom and Europe can be handled.

2:25 p.m.

So far, Cde. Speaker, we have talked about land and water transportation. In the field of air transportation the Guyana Airways Corporation has, in addition to running the internal service in Guyana, introduced a freight service to Miami and up to 1976 there have been some small surpluses made by this Corporation. Towards the end of 1976 there was a small deficit of \$1,000. However, because of the need for replacing old aircraft which were no longer serviceable, because of the increased cost of fuel, spare parts, and other operational costs, there was a deficit in 1977 of \$2.3 million.

Fares were last revised in 1973 just before the inflationary effects were felt throughout the world. It will be necessary therefore to have another look at the fare structure of this Corporation so that as we provide a better service for the hinterland, at the same time, we run this Corporation so that it can reach a breakeven point. It is proposed during 1978 – 1981 not to increase the fleet of aircraft because only last year we added two #5-748s. It is proposed that during this period to spend about \$6 million on the improvement of air strips and navigational aids in the various air strips and air fields. It is proposed during this same period to improve Ogle Airstrip. Now this is planned for the period 1978 to 1981.

In the field of telecommunications, Cde. Speaker, it is worth noting that in 1960 when the telephone exchange was modernised, there were 5,300 lines but here again expansion was at a very rapid rate and, therefore, during the period 1969 to 1971 it became necessary to expand the service. By 1971, that service had been expanded to 12,000 lines. Still, there is a fantastic demand for more telephone services and right now the Telecommunication Corporation is embarking upon a programme of about \$15 million whereby services in Georgetown will be increased by 7,400 lines, Cove and John by 500 lines, Vreed-en-Hop by 500 lines, Charity by 100 lines, Wakenaam by 100 lines, Leguan by 100 lines, Tumatumari by 100 lines, Moblissa by 100 lines, Yaracabra by 100 lines, Long Creek by 100 lines, No. 51 by 500 lines, Rockstone by 200 lines.

Cde. Speaker, there is need also for a national trunk network. To improve Guyana, it is not sufficient only to concentrate on development of our telecommunications system in the already relatively developed and highly populated areas. The establishment of reliable communications of good quality to the population in remote and border regions is essential if the social, education, cultural, political, industrial, and commercial interests of the people are to be maintained, developed and co-ordinated either from the central administrative or at the regional basis. The Government has therefore approved of the establishment of high-grade communication with the direct dialling facilities to many parts of the hinterland. This expansion is to take place in this development period from 1978 to 1981.

In addition, you will remember that during last year the Government took over Cable and Wireless and that Company was renamed GUYINTEL. But here again, because of the lack of initiative by Cable and Wireless to introduce expansion in that service, the Government had to take immediate steps in order to provide a better service at GUYINTEL. I would like to point out that the present system is to send the messages from here via Trinidad or Barbados or Bermuda where they are sent by satellite to North America, Europe and other parts of the world. This means that a great part of the revenue out of those calls goes to another country which

services part of the transmission. Furthermore, Guyana takes second place in terms of the transmission of those messages because those countries will send off their own messages, their own long distance telephones before they give Guyana space.

We have therefore taken steps to introduce an earth station in Guyana whereby overseas telephone calls will be made directly by satellite to the countries for which the calls are intended. In this way we will have several benefits:

1. Additional revenue will accrue to us with those calls.
2. These calls will be quicker.
3. We couldn't have to go through a third country when making the calls and therefore in terms of security and efficiency Guyana will be in a better position.

2:35 p.m.

Although we are not at the present moment thinking of television, it should be pointed out that this system will allow for us to be linked to the international network for television broadcasting when television is introduced in this country. This project is estimated to cost over \$6 million and I am pleased to state that in this project financing will be done out of revenue derived from the new system. The Executive Chairman of this Company is presently overseas for final negotiations for the purchasing of the necessary equipment and if everything goes well that system should be introduced in about twelve month's time.

Cde. Speaker, at this point I would like to state that it is true that it became necessary from about 1965 and particularly from 1966 onwards for there to be some change in priorities and for certain projects to be taking a little bit longer than they ought to have been taking and for some projects to be temporarily suspended. I would like to point out that this has not been through any fault of the Government because we all know that when inflation in the world took over, Guyana was affected like any other country. Furthermore, Guyana depended for its foreign

exchange from the sale of its primary products to countries abroad, large countries which control the prices of these materials. And furthermore, Guyana experienced some unfavourable weather conditions which affected both the bauxite industry and agriculture during 1976. We also know, Cde. Speaker, that during last year, because of some political misguidance given to part of the working population, there had been a decline in the production of products.

Cde. Speaker, with all these setbacks, government still intends during the period 1978 to 1981 to spend \$74 million on transport and the Minister in his Budget Speech pointed out the areas in which this money will be spent. I would just like to repeat a few of them: the completion of the West Demerara Road; the completion of the Demerara Bridge; the farm roads will absorb \$17 million. There will be \$22 million out of the amount I mention, that will be spent during this period on buses and workshops, etc., the ferry boats, the cargo boats, and the dredging equipment. All of this will go towards the improvement of transport facilities. I know that more than anything else, maybe our comrades who find great difficulty in road transport will be pleased that, included in this programme, is a sum of money provided for the increase of the bus fleet by another 200 buses. The people of Guyana can look forward to better times and better things as they have seen over the past fourteen years.

I have no doubt that all the utterings which attempt to keep our people in a disturbed state of mind will serve of no avail because the people are daily seeing that money is well spent. Maybe **we do not have sufficient to give more but what is spent is being well spent. We do not say - -**

[Interruption]

Cde. Speaker, the people are satisfied. I do not say that we have made no mistakes. We have made mistakes but we have benefited from our mistakes and this is what our comrades on the other side do not have the capacity of doing. Cde. Speaker, I think in so far as the transport sector is concerned and in so far as all the other things this Government has been doing and will

continue to do, our people, though anxious for even better things will be kept satisfied and all the agitations that may come from the other side will soon fall on deaf ears.

[Applause]

The Speaker: The hon.Member, Mrs. DaSilva, half an hour.

Sir, last Monday we had the long-awaited, much discussed 1978 Budget. It has been the cause, I think, of more rumours in this country than even any well-known Guyanese rumour-monger has ever had the opportunity of doing before. We heard some fantastic forecasts of what was to come and what would happen to us. Some of them were true, some of them were just laughable but sir, be that as it may, the day arrived when we had the hon. Minister speaking to us for almost 120 minutes and of the 120 minutes he took 100 minutes to explain away the mess that this country was in. The last 20 minutes we got the backlash of how the hardworking taxpayers of Guyana are going to have to try to get the country out of the mess it is in.

2.45 p.m.

Sir, this Budget has caused a lot of talk, too, because for the first time we have been told that we have a four-year projection. I will deal with that in a little while. But in the Chronicle of the 1st February, 1978 when everybody was wondering when we were going to get the Budget – because it was much later than it normally is – we had this short release from the Minister of Information. It states:

“The budget statement has been delayed to enable the conclusion of a number of bilateral and multilateral arrangements affecting the finances of the capital programme over the next four years.”

This reason, if you wish to call it that, for the delay in the budget presentation is not a sufficient enough reason to meet with the approval of everyone because it is not by way of an excuse. But the budget was well within the statutory time. Be that as it may, the budget will still be a question of guesstimates and not estimates and we feel sure that not so very long from now they will be back with a supplementary paper asking for additional expenditure.

The four-year projection in the budget is one of the most arrogant aspects of the Budget Speech. We know that the People's National Congress has assumed and taken upon itself many ridiculous and far-fetched claims. For example, it claims that it represents the wishes of all Guyanese and has a right to speak on their behalf. It also claims that it has brought about the unification of all the races in Guyana, just to name about two of its claims. But this most recent claim that it can see into the future, I think, is the most arrogant and presumptuous of all. After all, does it claim to have omniscience, that is, knowing everything, or to be omnipresent, to be present everywhere? Or, maybe, it has the faculty of being a clairvoyant, of seeing what is out of sight. Or, it has the assistance of a good obeah woman or a better see-far man. You have got to have some sort of assistance to be able to see what is going to happen four years from now I would like to know if we are supposed to accept that four year projection. Are we really serious that the P.N.C. knows what will definitely happen four years from now? I think the facts really are that it is trying to tell us it is preparing to rig the next elections even more than they were rigged in the past, and the machinery is all set already for the next elections so that it will be able to manipulate things and have them the way the P.N.C. wants them. Other than that, there can be really no reasonable explanation. Nobody can see what is going to happen in four years from now.

In the Budget Speech and at the National Park, to name a more recent utterance of the words, we have been told over and over again that foreign aid alone is not enough to get us out of the mess we are in and that we need to produce more, to work harder. We wish to state quite clearly that we support this very statement all the way. Unless we can work more, unless we can

produce more, no amount of foreign aid will be able to help us. But how are we going to produce more, how are we going to work more if the people are not behind the Government? The Government assumes that the people are behind it. That is the trouble with this budget. The Minister outlined the hopes and projections of the Government to be achieved from Guystac. But first and foremost, the people's will and the ability to produce have got to bear fruit. A Government cannot take it for granted that the people will work and will produce because it says so. Industrial unrest, work stoppage, sit-ins, people off the job for the fake illnesses, time wasted, material wasted, all of these, you know, can play havoc with the best of plans. We have seen it happen so often in the past. What makes the Government think it would not happen again? What guarantee has the Government got that it would not happen again?

People, especially because of this latest gimmick of the Government's proper labour placement – that is what I think they call it, everybody knows it as redeployment – feel insecure in their jobs. There is nothing to make a man less productive than to be insecure in his job. Does he know that when he comes to work tomorrow he will not be handed a little slip saying that he is redeployed, to be properly labour placed? Does he know that this will not happen to him? Does he know that if he does not accept the redeployment that that is another word for being retrenched, for losing his job and with it he will lose all the services and benefits that might have accrued to him for the years of service? Is this making him feel fit and free to work in the interest of Government? We were told in the budget that we were having democracy imposed upon us. That seems to be a contradiction in terms, the imposition of democracy. Now we are having an imposition of work. Is this what the people understand freedom to be all about? Everybody knows, it is no secret, that our finances are in a very bad shape. We talk about the weather; we talk about world prices falling. Do we look to see where we can help other than taking it out of the small man by redeploying him? Do you continue to have a lot of high-salaried people?

Incidentally, we have to pay additional salaries of other technocrats. I make it quite clear that I do not wish to cast any slur or any aspersions on the two new Ministers who have just joined the Government. The hon.Member Mr. Shahabuddeen and Mr. Rashleigh Jackson are very fine, capable, honest and upright men. They are very good men for their jobs. But the fact remains that we have had to get two men in the place of one because we did not have a person suitable who could be Minister of Foreign Affairs and who is also a legal man. I can only think of one at the moment and for some reason or the other the Government did not want to move him. As a result, the Government has to pay two salaries.

I heard on the news today that we have got another new embassy. This new one is in Russia. Mr. Elvin McDavid has gone on the band wagon. He is our first Ambassador to Russia and here we start with another set of top-heavy salaries at the top of the bureaucratic scale.

Why don't we start seeing where we can cut at the top instead of cutting at the bottom and getting the poor man who can ill afford it, least afford it, to tighten his belt even harder. I heard one man say he has no more notches on his belt to tighten.

2:55 p.m.

What about the wastage we have? If you go down to Ruimveldt you will see a bond with thousands and thousands of dollars' worth of radio parts and equipment not usable. From what I heard I think it is something like \$84,000 worth of equipment being wasted and things are so bad in the country. We don't have foreign exchange and this is the way it goes on all the time. Instead of that we have the wastage continuing, the unproductivity continuing and we don't seem to be able to get out of the mess that we are in other than to have nice words thrust upon us by the Minister which he hopes will be consoling to people.

For example, on page 68 of the Budget Speech, in the second paragraph, line 7, we see these words:

“All the indications suggest that with the correct developmental policies and thrust, and with the co-operation of the people, Guyana’s problem cannot be anything else but temporary.”

We suggest that is the theme and recurring theme in the Budget Speech. But, sir, what will happen to the ordinary taxpayer, and I mean all Guyanese, the small man who will feel the hardships of the Budget even more than anyone else.

Somebody has said, “Oh, what would you do if you had to balance this Budget? Tell us what your Party would do?” First of all, anybody with any sense at all would try and get the people on their side, would try and get the confidence of the people. But until this Government gets the confidence of all Guyanese, it cannot get anywhere; it cannot hope to achieve what it is trying to without the big stick methods it is trying to use. Because what is this redeployment but a big stick method. We are told and the Government boasts of the fact that it increased the minimum wage. I quote now from page 15 of the Budget Speech, the second paragraph, first line:

“... since the last budget was presented, the Government minimum wage was lifted in two steps from \$5.50 per day as at December, 1976 to \$11 per day as from January, 1978. The cost of the increase to the Central Government was approximately \$15 Mn. in 1977 and will be an additional \$23 Mn. in 1978. When account is taken of the whole public sector the cost rises to \$50 Mn. in 1977 and \$65 Mn. in 1978. This has meant that for most workers – particularly those nearer to the minimum – pay rates have nearly doubled, and when account is taken of all workers whose pay has been adjusted by reason of the change in the minimum wage, the average increase is about 36% since December, 1976.”

It makes very good reading but it is quite a different matter when we go with this 36% increase to the market. And how is the Government going to meet this increase in this basic wage of \$11? The Government hasn't got the money. It is a gimmick it is trying to put across to the people. It had to introduce another gimmick to cover up that one. That is what redeployment is all about. Because when the people are redeployed and they report for duty, they are told: you have got to cut cane, which seems to be the main thing. You are going to take a typist from GUYNEC or GNTC or one of the Georgetown group of GUYSTAC and send her out in the cane field; she doesn't know one end of the cane from the other; she is not capable of cutting cane. How are you putting her into something more productive? Just by saying: you have to do it. As a result, she leaves the work, resigns, and that ends the matter, because she is completely off the Government's payroll. That is how the Government is going to find the money. I do not know the figures; maybe somebody could tell me the figures of how many people have actually been unemployed because of redeployment. In that way the Government will be able to get the money to meet the minimum wage.

I don't have very much time left and I want to deal most of all with the hardships that will be presented by the increased taxation, the new taxes we have to bear. The worse of the lot is the increase in the charge being levied on motor vehicles. This charge is going to be doubled on every licence and form of certificate. Then, of course owners of motor vehicles will also be subject to the increased amount of money that they have to pay for the rise in the price of gasoline. The Minister need not tell me the Government is not getting revenue from the increased cost of gasoline because it is going as duty to some other country. Wherever it goes, sir, as far as the housewife and the family are concerned they have got to pay the increased cost in gasoline. The hire-car drivers have got to pay the increased cost. The cost of their licences will be doubled; the cost of their certificates of fitness will be doubled, and the cost of their drivers' licences will be doubled.

What is going to happen? Obviously, the cost of transportation will go up and apart from the cost for transportation for the people who use the vehicles, including the new 200 buses which the Minister told us about some time ago, the cost of the provisions that come from the country area must be passed on. Everybody knows the country areas supply Georgetown with the majority of foodstuff. The farmers will have to pay more to transport their goods to town and in so doing the fares will go up and naturally the cost of the goods will go up. The cost of the provisions will go up. Who is going to feel it most of all? The small man!

There is one thing I would like to ask the hon. Minister to give very careful consideration to, and that is, if the Government is really serious about its concern for people. What I am asking is something very simple. The government has nothing to lose by it and I don't really see why it cannot be done. Would the hon. Minister please state if the Government would give some consideration to reverting to what used to pertain a couple of years ago, that is, that the licences for motor vehicles be issued in half yearly periods? You can take it every six months instead of once a year. You remember some years ago, I cannot remember the exact time now, that used to be the case. You could get a licence every half year. And then Government stopped it and you can only get your licence once within the year, and that is that. Now, in view of the hardships that exist, the hard conditions of life nowadays, the problems that people have to meet and to bear, could the Government not give consideration to reverting to having their licences every half year? The Government has nothing to lose; it is going to get it and it would at least be an easing on the people. If the government wants to give the excuse that it has already got the licences printed and they are made out to cover a year's period, a very simple way to overcome that is to get a rubber stamp properly authorised, stamp them, initial them and let them have the licences for half year. Of course, you won't stamp the whole lot. There are still people who want to pay for a whole year, while there are those who will want to take the opportunity to have a half year licence. Surely the Government will do this for the people whom it says it has their interest so much at heart.

3:05 p.m.

I am going back to this question of the motor vehicles which is the worse of the taxes because it is going to increase the cost of living. We have already had it in anticipation of the Budget, the subsidies were taken off flour, milk, within the last four to five months previous to the Budget. So, there is nothing else to come out now. The people have already been taxed so the members of the Government can say now: “Oh, the Budget was not so bad; it could have been a lot worse.” But there is nothing more left for them to tax.

We come now to the favourites of the tax people and that is tax on cigarettes and liquor. Here again we have the increase in liquor, on rum, the bottle of whisky, gin and so on. Let us talk about rum most of all because rum is our national drink. Each bottle of rum will be subject approximately to 50 cents increase. Fifty cents increase to some of my friends along there does not really matter but I am thinking of the poor person in the lower income group. When a woman has a husband who probably drinks two or three bottles of rum a week, there is that much less money for that poor woman who has to feed her children, because, make no mistake about it, it does not matter if you say that the husband must not drink. That is ridiculous: If he is a drinking man, he will not stop having his drinks. He will have his drink, his rum and his beer, and it will be the poor wife who will have that much less money. There will be that much less money to feed him and his children. He will still take it; there is nothing to stop him.

Then we come now to the cigarettes. There are those who have been reading a bit and getting afraid that they will get cancer of the lung so they say they won't take more. But I wonder if the hon. Minister of Trade knows that one of the most profitable aspects of black-marketing is in cigarettes. People have been paying 60 to 75 cents and as much as a dollar for a pack of cigarettes. Therefore, because of the shortage – there is a genuine shortage but there is also an enforced shortage – I would like the hon. Minister of Trade to get the price control people to look into this matter of black-marketing of cigarettes, to see what they are doing about cigarettes,

if they are not imposing conditions of sale. You go to a person selling cigarettes and you are told, “We don’t have”, or, “you have to pay a dollar.” If there is some poor little person coming along for the cigarettes who does not have a dollar, he does not get, and that is what is going on. And again, like with the rum and the beer, the poor housewife is going to have to pay the penalty because she will have that much less to spend. Only God knows how the lower income people are going to cope with the ever-rising cost of living. We have the new set of hardships which will result because of the increase on the tax of motor vehicles. We have the hardships that will arise because of the tax on liquor, rum and cigarettes. Most of all, the taxes that had already been imposed long before the Budget because of the removal of the subsidies on the rice, flour and the milk hit people hardest of all.

Sir, we look forward to what is going to happen in the next four years. We have all these assumptions that there will be better times ahead of us. As I say, the members of the Government seem to know what is going to happen in four years’ time. Probably they have got the services of a good obeah woman or a “see-far” man because nobody knows what is going to happen in four years’ time. There could be rain, industrial unrest, or anything. No one knows of the problems we are going to have. But if Guyana is to progress, we can only hope for the sake of all Guyanese that Guyana will not suffer unduly from the things that the Government cannot foresee, that we will have some progress, and that, as the Minister said in his Budget Speech, the bad times will only be temporary. The Budget is based on assumptions, hopes and dreams and we know that the whole fact of reality is that miracles do not ever happen and dreams very rarely, if ever, come true.

The Speaker: Cde. King.

The Minister of Trade and Consumer Protection (Cde. King): Cde. Speaker, history will record the Budget which was laid before the National Assembly on 27th February, 1978, to be the most vital and important budget of modern time. Not because of our present economic

situation but more particularly because it comes at a time when there is a will and determination by this Government and I am happy to say, many other loyal citizens, to reconstruct our economy which hitherto was designed to stagnate our people and enrich foreign investors. Far from being a Budget of hopes and dreams, this is a serious attempt to plan the course of action within the framework of our objectives to attain those goals which are most desired in Guyana. To use such terms as using the foresight of witchcraft to see into the future is nonsensical thinking. Indeed, Cde. Speaker, the four-year plan in the context of a nation is a very short plan. We would suggest to the Opposition that not only nations plan, but we have had, many of us, to do with multinational corporations which did not plan for three or four years but, in some cases such as mining industries and the petro-chemical industries, planning must be done as far ahead as twenty years in advance. Do we ask them if they are looking through the eyes of witchcraft? No, we respect them. Let me assure this House that there are no motives other than the welfare of this nation at heart which would urge the Minister of Finance to set a plan for that short period of four years. **[Applause]** We have the support. That the support of more of our people in this plan is going to be evident, we have no doubt. Therefore, we move forward on that very confident assurance that we must produce to survive. We must produce or perish.

Before attempting to review and state the Government's policy on trade, I should like to quote a part of the Budget Speech taken from page 4, paragraph 2:

“The initial endowment of political independence was an economy geared to survive only in the closest colonial association with the very metropole from which that political independence was won. All of Guyana's production mechanisms, in their form, their content, their annual objective and their overall mission, were geared towards economic dependence.”

3:15 p.m.

Cde. Speaker, may I say that for many years, even for some time after our political Independence, Guyana's involvement in international trade was hardly within the control of this Government. Until very recently, the presence of multinational corporations dominated the field of trade and, indeed, our major exports were more of the nature of intra-company transactions rather than in real terms. On another level, the private sector conducted its affairs with little or no Government involvement or control and, therefore, our trade policy was dictated largely by external priorities. On the economic front little attention was paid to the country gaining benefits from trade beyond obtaining very often too high a level of non-essential and luxury supplies and also meeting its export requirement, the level of which was largely dictated by external forces. In fact, gains from trade were seldom translated into the purchases of capital equipment for further economic development. It is therefore true to say that our trade policy then was directed away from rather than towards the widening of Guyana's political relations and economic advancement. It must by now be clear to all that with the attainment of Independence and the adoption of a policy of non-alignment, the trade policy operating against the best interest of the Government and the people of this country could not possibly be allowed to continue. Appropriate measures have been taken and further measures are also proposed to take firm control of all imports and also to widen and diversify our trade relations globally.

I do not wish to reiterate some of the things so eloquently said by my distinguished colleague the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade but may I simply mention in passing that Guyana's signature, for example, to the Lome Convention and the International Sugar Association Agreement, and other international agreements both bilateral and multilateral, to which the distinguished member of the Opposition referred, with countries in various parts of the world is ample manifestation of the Government's intention to chart a course in international trade which is based on national priorities and intended to maximise the benefits to this country. It is of vital importance that our trade policy should relate to the peculiar economic realities and, indeed, the needs of our country.

In essence, therefore, we see the objective of our trade policy as set out in the Declaration of Sophia, first, seeking consciously to embark on a course of trade diversification and, secondly, to secure the best possible returns for such expenditure of foreign exchange, the pursuit of which must inevitably be for the total benefit of our Guyanese people. This policy, if it is to be fully appreciated, must be viewed against a background of international trade, against a background, perhaps, of the dialogue, the rhetoric, very often in the various political forums of the world.

Permit me to refer briefly to the expanding north and south dialogue which was essentially set up to deal with commodities and which resulted from the call for a new international economic order. Its philosophy is set out in a declaration and a programme of action, both adopted by the United Nations Assembly on the 1st May, 1974. The whole purpose of the new order was intended to redress injustices and to make it possible to eliminate the widening gap between the developed and developing countries. Thus we got before us some rhetoric, a number of slogans which spoke of trade and not aid for development. The platform of the new international economic order, we accept, is not complete and comprehensive but certainly among other things it seeks to provide greater access for exports from developing countries of manufactured and raw materials and also of agricultural supplies to the market of the developed world. It also seeks to provide stabilisation of commodity prices and commodity export earnings.

This dialogue, this rhetoric has indeed continued for far too long and it has reached a stage where the hopes of developing countries seem to be diminishing. It is clear to the developing countries, at least, that the problems are as universal and oppressive as the pollution of the atmosphere and the ocean and it is apparent that there is a serious absence of political will on the part of many rich countries to give realisation to the purpose and to the objective of such a new international economic order. In fact, reading very recently, one writer had this to say, and he expressed it in these words:

“The new development sought in this world cannot be created by rhetoric or by good intentions.”

Says he:

“The north and south dialogue will extend to the end of this century and perhaps beyond.”

It is within this framework that I would ask Members of this National Assembly to accept that the course chartered for our trade policy is not only sound, but it is sensible and logical.

I am sure that I am, at this state, obligated to say something to this National Assembly about the state of Caricom relations. Unfortunately, over the past few months there has been considerable negative comment about the state of Caricom. A large amount of this comment has come about largely because of the difficulties which have arisen from the action taken by some Governments, action which we have been forced to take because of the continuing impact of the serious economic crisis. Guyana has indeed been one of those Governments. Let me, however, make it clear to this Assembly that the action we have taken under Article 28 of the Treaty of Chaguaramas is fully in conformity with the provisions of the Caricom Treaty. We have indicated to our Caricom partners that we have done so reluctantly and only because of the extraordinary balance of payments difficulties which have confronted us.

3:25 p.m.

We have also assured them that we remain fully committed to the development of Caricom both as a trade and as a wider economic arrangement and will continue to play our part in the integration process. We have also assured our friends that we have undertaken to put the import position currently under review so that appropriate changes can be made whenever the situation improves. We stated clearly that even with our limited capacity for imports of essential goods, consideration will be given to the less developed countries. We have kept and will

continue to keep that promise. We must however remember that Caricom is not the only integrated grouping which is experiencing or has experienced a period when some members are in balance of payments difficulties. This is happening in many such groupings. It was in anticipation of such circumstances that Article 28 was included in the Treaty of Chaguaramas. While we cannot be complacent about our present economic situation and balance of payments problems because of their implications for Caricom and even more fundamental for the standard of living and the levels of employment for our Caribbean peoples, we must be very cautious not to destroy the institution and economic association which would be of untold benefit.

Cde. Speaker, I can only at this stage express the hope that the Heads of Government Conference so urgently needed and felt will be convened at the earliest possible date. May I now say that this Government has within its stated policy to diversify trade taking positive measures to redirect part of its imports for essential items to non-traditional sources and while I don't wish to burden this Assembly with too many figures and statistics, it is necessary that I draw the attention of members to some of those developments?

As you know, we had traditionally imported from North America and the United Kingdom. I quote these figures to indicate that no longer would some people tend to say that trade in certain areas is suffering as a result of our diversification. It is not entirely true. From the United States for example in 1976 we imported \$263 million and between January and November 1977 we imported \$200 million. Taking into consideration our over-all economic situation, it is not bad.

We similarly in 1976 exported to that country \$136 million, and in 1977, \$104 million to the end of November. From the United Kingdom we imported \$213 million in 1976 and to the end of November, 1977, \$156 million. From Canada we imported \$38.6 million in 1976 and to the end of November \$28.1 million. From Japan we imported \$41.2 million in 1976, and to the end of November, 1977, \$25.5 million.

Having reaped and while continuing to reap benefits from the enlarged European Economic Community, we have had to give serious consideration to our trade with other members of that community. For example, from West Germany we imported in 1976, \$21.3 million, and to the end of November, 1977, \$33.9 million. Similarly, we exported to that country \$40.1 million in 1976, and in 1977 \$21.3 million. From the Netherlands in 1976 we imported \$19.4 million and in 1977 we imported \$24.3 million. Exports were \$4 million and \$3 million respectively.

We have also heard that this Government has failed to diversify its imports from Socialist countries. We have recognised the need to develop such trade relations with Socialist countries with whom we have a common interest and although it is taking time to adjust and learn about each other's commodities, we have certainly made some progress. When one compares that with 1964 position, total imports from the Socialist bloc countries amounted to \$5.3 million and exports to \$5.8 million. In 1976, for the entire year imports from those countries moved from \$5.3 million to \$33.8 and our exports, unfortunately, did not do as well, it only moved from \$5.8 million to \$6 which virtually stayed fairly static. It is anticipated that as a result of very recent discussions and also discussions shortly to take place, that further progress will be seen in this area during the current year.

I believe it is apposite at this time that I should tell our friends in the Opposition that any sound trade policy must be pursued in logical and realistic terms. I would ask them to note that we have been able to move our exports from factories in certain countries to other areas. And let me say we can make no apology for it. We are dealing in a time and a period of realism and must face the realities of our times.

Having given this Assembly a global view of our trade policy and relationships I propose now to deal with some of our local and domestic arrangements and the many problems which beset them. I have said earlier in my presentation that until recently the private sector dominated

the field of marketing and distribution with little control by Government. Such control commenced only during the past two years and must of necessity experience a period of growing pains. Many of the problems, many of the difficulties are largely due to the direct opposition by most traders to the system of control, and, regrettably, in many cases, to the lack of understanding or tolerance and of co-operation on the part of consumers. We have had many reasons advanced to give cause and to show cause why shortages continue occasionally. I want to say that many of these are without foundation. It is also currently said that many of the shortages are due to the inefficiencies of the public sector and very often the External Trade Bureau and the trading corporations are identified for serious criticism and unnecessary slanderous accusations. But, Cde. Speaker, I would attempt to deal with these very thorny subjects under two very heads. First of all, I want to talk about the existing distribution system and proposals to improve it, and secondly, some of the identified causes of shortages and ways and means by which they can be resolved.

3:35 p.m.

In the Government's early attempts, efforts were made to distribute through a number of G.M.C. outlets managed by untrained supervisory staff with very little success. Since the acquisition of a few well-organised trading companies, steps have been taken to develop these to meet the needs of our people, to modernise and to integrate the G.M.C. outlets within the trading groups and also to progressively establish new outlets in the various regions. The objectives of these community shopping centres are not intended, as a Member of the Opposition would seek to suggest, to close down the private sector but they are intended to supplement, to give support to, to give greater effect to those existing sectors of the distributing trade. And therefore, Cde. Speaker, these community centres, in addition to seeking to supplement the existing service, also seek to provide supplies and services to our consumers and citizens with emphasis on essential commodities at the best possible prices.

There are plans this year, I am delighted to say, to broaden the range of supplies within the scope of our financial resources and in order to edify my friends in the Opposition, may I say that we now have twenty of these outlets. The capital used in 1977 amounted to \$577,707. Note the “7”, the symbol of perfection. Thirdly, the number of staff employed totalled 275 and, finally, and fourthly, the sales in these outlets excluding those in the city amounted to \$3.9 million. My friend says “Only!” That is eloquent manifestation that in fact these outlets are not intended to rob the private sector of their rightful distributive share and I am grateful to him for having drawn to my attention that we have not really made the impact which the public seems to think that we have made.

Much care has been taken – and I want to emphasise this – in selecting the areas of greatest need to place these community shopping centres. We have considered the whole spectrum of our people and we have considered the needs on a geographic basis and so, these outlets have been placed in such places like Albion, Blairmont, Rose Hall, Manchester, Canal No.2; also in the Essequibo at Anna Regina, at Dartmouth, Mahdia, and as we go the other way, to Wismar, Bartica and of course with less emphasis than some people say, at Beterverwagting, Buxton, Golden Grove and Melanie Damishana. Cde. Speaker, the Committee is now actively engaged in examining the establishment of suitable outlets in the Rupununi and other parts of the interior.

Cde. Speaker, I am sorry to do this, but I believe that if I am to nail the lie about the inefficiency, alleged by many people, of the corporations in not anticipating and forecasting needs of this nation, I would be failing in my duty. And here, I wish to crave the indulgence of this august body to give some comparative figures of sales of some of the essential commodities. I appreciate that I can only take a total number because time will not allow. But, in 1976, we imported – and here I am dealing in quantities and not money because we must appreciate that the values of these commodities have gone up and it would be foolish of me to quote money. In 1976 we imported five million pounds of onions; in 1977, we imported 6.2 million pounds. In

1976, we imported eleven million pounds of salt; in 1977, we imported 11.7 million. In 1976, we imported 951 pounds of Cheddar cheese; in 1977, we imported 1.2 million pounds of that cheese. Tomato paste: in 1976, we imported 803,000 cartons; in 1977, we imported 1.4 million. In 1976, we imported 24,000 pounds of cooking butter; in 1977, we imported 212,200 cartons. In the case of rolled oats, we had imported 336,000 cartons of rolled oats in 1976; we imported 576,000 cartons in 1977. Skimmed milk: in 1976, we imported 123,500 pounds of skimmed milk; in 1977, we imported 184,000 pounds.

[Interruption]

Let us, Cde. Speaker, as we approach this very serious matter, have some tolerance and patience as we examine these figures. I want to say to my distinguished friend on the Opposition that when one brings figures to this House, one brings figures in good faith and these are figures provided by the Statistical Department of the Government. As a lawyer, he knows that he can challenge them when they become part of the record. So, Cde. Speaker, may I continue with your permission. In the case of milk, in 1976 – and this will surprise many – we imported 332,252 cartons; in 1977, this was more than doubled, we imported 767,876 cartons. Cde. Speaker, I can keep this House for the time beyond my allocated period but I believe that I have convinced not only the Opposition but citizens of this country that the Government has kept faithfully its promise to import essential items during 1977 and that in face of our serious economic problems. But Cde. Speaker, I will tell this House that part of the difficulties, part of the problem, is and has been due to unscrupulous people who have continued to re-export items which were brought in for the legitimate use of our people.

3:45 p.m.

The figures for 1978 January clearly show a reduction, for example, in flour since we have imposed a licence control for that massive outlet at Springlands. What we want the Opposition to do is not to come to this House and to pick holes and to accuse the corporations of

not doing their job. They do it on a scientific basis, they analyse on historical data. But when we have unscrupulous people who are prepared to export through Surinam and by a number of ships that come to our ports, at agreed black-market prices, what can we do? We cannot use the whole police force to go and hunt down all these dishonest people. We need their support and co-operation.

Having disposed convincingly of that aspect, I believe, Cde. Speaker, I now wish to assure this Assembly and the citizens that even in the face of our difficulties we have done and will continue to do our best. There has been the cause and scope to the continuing shortage and I wish to tell this House some of the real difficulties, some of the real and factual positions. At the moment there is a shortage of chickens and one accepts that there is a shortage of chickens. This country is not being well served with poultry. This is not necessarily due to the question and difficulty of foreign exchange only but it has to do with the supply, and I am sure the Minister of

Agriculture will deal ably with the difficulty with eggs overseas. The other difficulty relates to the hoarding by shopkeepers who are always playing the speculative game and hoping for an increase in price. I have already said that one of the other reasons is the re-export illegally of essential items and we have already taken steps and will impose further measures to curb them. The other difficulty is that some shopkeepers who apparently see skeletons in the cupboard have elected by their own choice to go out of business, but we welcome them to continue.

I want to touch very briefly on one area that the Opposition and the hon. Member and distinguished friend Mrs. DaSilva mentioned today. She spoke of high prices. Guyana has done well, extremely well, to be able to keep its inflation within a reasonable control. Let us take Argentina, and here I am quoting from the Finance Development, June 1977. It states:

Argentina, in 1974, an inflation rate of 24 percent moved in 1976 to 447 percent. I will skip Chile, Grenada, which is nearer home, in 1974 was 30 percent and they have only been able

to bring it down to 17 percent. In Mexico, 1974 was 24 percent and in 1976 it was 16 percent. Guyana has been able to bring its inflation rate in 1974 from 39 percent to 8 percent, in 1975, to 9 percent, in 1976, to 10 percent, and it is estimated that it will be only 10 percent in 1977.

[Interruption] I have the book here, I did not write it. I am not a doctor of economics.

Let me assure this House that not only have we kept our inflation within reasonable bounds having regard to the cause and scope which are external. What are the causes and let us think about the scope. I have gone to the trouble to extract, for example, out of our main industry, which is the sugar industry, some indication of the inflation which is imposed upon this country. And I take, for example, one place which I understand is a standard steel basket which, in 1972 was imported for \$2,390. In 1977, for that same piece we paid \$7,300, an increase of 485 percent. Let us take steel tubes for which in 1972 we paid \$45.90, and in 1978 we paid \$212, an increase of 578 percent.

The position is this. We, in order to try to contain our inflation rate locally, are under pressure from high inflationary trends from outside, so that the clarion must be sounded loud and clear. Not only must we produce to survive but we have to produce or perish because of these very serious pressures on us.

Now that I have dealt with the serious inflation trends, I want to deal briefly with the question of trading corporations which come within the responsibility of my portfolio. I will select just two of these trading groups, the Guyana National Engineering Corporation and, perhaps, Trading Group No. 2, and merely indicate that in both cases these trading corporations have done very much better than when they were owned by the persons who owned the buildings and the businesses before. For example, let us take Guyana Stores as part of Trading Group 2. In 1977, the unaudited figures already show that the surplus after tax amounted to \$7.5 million and, as I understand it, the figure which we have returned was not obtained by the predecessors. We can go all the way down the line and find that in each case, except for the Demerara Sugar

Terminals, which, due to acts of unkindness, did not have its quota of sugar, all the Companies did extremely well.

3:55 p.m.

Cde. Speaker, it is more than profit that we look for. This Company is in fact, attempting very seriously to train our Guyanese citizens to take over the responsibility of running efficiently the businesses which they now manage and to understand in greater part the involvement of worker participation and also to understand the concept of management through workers and by workers.

I wish now to refer to the Guyana National Engineering Corporation and to say that this Corporation did extremely well and according to the figures I have, these are some of the highlights. Not only has it given reality to the objective of this Government but it is currently pursuing the policy of surplus generation which is necessary. It is attempting seriously to service the industrial sector with the view to working towards self reliance within the economy and to train and improve skills to move towards our Socialist goals. This Corporation, as in the case of Guyana Stores, had done remarkably well and despite its difficulties has generated revenue in excess of \$51 million and the surplus before tax was just below \$10 million, which is 90 percent better than the former owners did in 1975. Therefore, when anyone talks about the inability of the public sector to manage businesses, I think he is really walking with water in a basket.

Cde. Speaker, I must move having regard to the constraints of time but I would now like to deal very briefly with the task of the consumer division of the Ministry of Trade. I want to say that we did, in 1977, set up a very efficient consumer desk and one accepts that it is not doing all that we expect it to do, all that is required of it. Certainly they are doing what they can under the given constraints. They receive and investigate and report on complaints by consumers. They

recommend steps for ensuring that consumers obtain essential supplies for their well being. They work very closely with the price control squad to ensure that complaints are monitored with a view to keeping a check on prices. I would like to say that we are keeping a record of those companies which continue to charge unrealistic and exorbitant prices for items not falling within the ambit of price control and we shall deal with this in another way and at another time. They visit super markets along with price investigating officers and try to ensure that hoarding is not carried out.

Also of some significance is that work has been done not only with the bureau of standards but the Minister of Health gave reality to the Food and Drugs Regulations which now can bring some relief to consumers not only with regard to quality but also with regard to the composition of food, cosmetics and medical supplies. We are also dealing actively with the need to prosecute those who violate the price control regulations. For example, in 1976, we had 252 prosecutions and in 1977, 329 prosecutions. So far for this year, we have had 42 prosecutions. I am sure that one would expect me to say something very positive with regard to what we shall be doing in 1978 to further control trade. Let me say - -

The Speaker: It is 4 o'clock. Maybe this is a convenient time to take the suspension. We will resume at 4:30. The Sitting of the House is suspended for 30 minutes.

Sitting suspended at 4 p.m.

4:30 p.m.

On resumption - -

The Speaker: When the suspension was taken the hon. Minister of Trade Cde. King was speaking. Cde. King.

Cde. King.: Thank you, Cde. Speaker. When we adjourned, I was about to tell this House about further measures which this Government proposes for the year 1978 and onwards. I believe that it must be generally accepted that at the present time there are far too many persons importing commodities into Guyana. That list of importers, quite apart from those who get simple gifts and small items, runs substantially to about 650 importers. Such a weighty and large number of importers make the system very difficult for purposes of checking and properly monitoring imports and, indeed, very often, exports.

The Government has, during the past two years, moved towards a system of control and it is the intention of Government to expand that control to give effect to a reduction in the number of organisations importing into Guyana. The mechanism to give reality and fulfilment to that direction is now being worked out and opportunity will certainly be taken to discuss new proposals with the Chambers of Commerce and other interested parties.

Cde. Speaker, I wish to assure this House that any new measures which Government may take to give effect to proper control are not intended to deprive the private sector from being fully involved in the distributive trade and also and more particularly in the field of manufacturing and light industry. Those who wish to remain in the retail business and those who remain in the distributive trade, provided they continue to demonstrate those virtues of honesty, integrity and fair-play, will be allowed to continue at a certain level in the distributive arrangements. But, Cde. Speaker, this Government would certainly wish that those investors who have the interest at heart and the benefit of Guyanese at mind will make a determined effort to become more involved in the field of manufacturing and industry.

Having said that, I want also to assure this House that many of the problems raised by the hon. Member Mrs. DaSilva should be eliminated by the type of consolidated forecasting to be employed, as compared with the present disjointed system of forecasting the needs of the nation when one must operate under a very restrictive budget. For example, I share with her the

concern in relation to the shortage of cigarettes and I wish to give her the assurance that my Ministry has already taken steps in collaboration with the Bank of Guyana to make more funds available for tobacco since we realise that this is one of the many sedatives that the little man depends upon. Cde. Speaker, I believe that the question of paying excessive prices for cigarettes will be removed entirely when the supply of cigarettes becomes normal again which we hope will be realised within the next six weeks.

Having said that, may I now say one other thing, and that is, that we on the Government side have been always very concerned about the dependence upon foreign goods. One of the things that the new method of importing would take and the new method of control shall establish is based on priorities being given on the basis of essentiality, that is to say, we shall give priority to such items as clothing that we still have to bring in within a certain value, footwear, building hardware which we must still bring. But one hopes that all Guyanese will seek to take the opportunity during this period to become more dependent upon indigenous products and I have no doubt that the Minister of Agriculture, when he speaks to this National Assembly, will deal with this aspect.

I did faithfully defend the situation in so far as essential items are concerned in 1977. I am afraid that having regard to the deteriorating economic situation that that assurance to bring in that level of supplies cannot be given for 1978. I have within the time at my disposal attempted to tell this National Assembly something of the Government's trade policy and also to inform Members of the measures being taken to bring about further improvement in the translation of that policy to the economy and to the citizens of Guyana. Cde. Speaker, because of the numerous complexities and uncertainties, there is always the temptation to adopt a completely pragmatic approach but we believe that this Government must however continue a positive course in directing and implementing our policy by firm and decisive measures. We believe that what is required is a framework of action and a general strategy which will provide that sense of direction and guidance for the handling and solution of our problems.

Cde. Speaker, may I conclude by saying that this country and its national economy are at the present time undergoing fundamental changes which must inevitably enhance and improve our economic, social and political situation. Cde. Speaker, I started out by saying that this Budget will go down in history as being vital and important. May I, in conclusion say that man remains the maker of his own history and that by understanding the forces that are at work and by co-operative action we can indeed influence the on-going transition towards our social and political goals. While we accept that the transition period to our objectives and our goals is characterised by increasing complexity, by misunderstanding and uncertainties, we must be prepared and willing to act in close co-operation with others and to this end I would appeal to the Opposition in this National Assembly, to those national organisations like the Chambers of Commerce, the Guyana Manufacturing Association, the Consumers' Association and the Trades Union Congress, to play their important role towards improving the quality of life of all our citizens through our national and our international trade relations. [Applause.]

The Speaker: Cde. Persaud, the Opposition has 1 ½ hours. I don't know how you propose sharing it between you and Cde. Mohamed.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: I will not take more than half that time.

The Speaker: Well, you will give your colleague the other part of the allotted time.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Cde. Speaker, when the whole idea of the Budget came up, it was rumoured that it would be a four-year Budget. **[Interruption]** The Minister said so. **[Interruption]**

6.3.78

National Assembly

4:40 – 4:50 p.m.

4:40 p.m.

The Speaker: Comrades, if we start to get this you know what will happen. I will not stop him when he starts to reply.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Cde. Speaker, you will agree that the Constitution and the Financial Regulations make provision for an annual budget and so, we could not have had, in the true sense of the word, a four-year budget. Thus, the Budget before this House is for the year 1978. When we look at page 7 of the Budget Speech we see that there is an attempt to reduce that budget from one year to six months because the Minister, in presenting the budget, said that there will be review of the budget by the 31st August in this year. The fact is that the review of a budget is an annual exercise but I thought of making the point to show the confusion in which the Government has found itself in the year 1978. It only saved itself by a few days when the budget was presented because, according to the regulations, the budget has to be presented within sixty days from the first day of the year.

Cde. Speaker, the budget, in effect, has as an addendum a mini development programme. We are aware on this side of the House that this Government has in the past failed to honour its own development programme and from time to time, of itself, has abandoned those programmes. For us, we are not re-assured at all by what the Government may consider to be an innovation in the current budget. It is talking about projection, not for the year 1978 but taking us to the year 1981. That is a clear attempt again to deceive this nation for the misgivings and, indeed, the inefficiencies and squandermania of the Government in dealing with public funds and the general administration of this country.

Before I confine myself to agriculture, I wish to say that the economic depression in this country is due to the wrong priorities of the Government, that is point one, secondly, the lack of planning and programming. There are countless programmes in this country to which any speaker can point to show how, in the establishment or execution or development of those

programmes, there was no foresight, no vision and no planning. In fact, when this Government assumed power by whatever way or whatever means, when it became the Government, it changed the emphasis from one of development. It changed the emphasis from agriculture and the history and the records will clearly show that the greatest expenditure went in the field of infrastructural development, not to mention the rise in the bureaucracy and the large sums expended in administration. This being so, we have had a number of years of wild expenditure with no plan for real development of this country. Several excuses can be imported; there can be talk about inflation, there can be talk about economic trends in the world. But though there is inflation – and one must also acknowledge international economic trends – one must not fail to look into the potential resources which this country has. The Caribbean – probably beyond the Caribbean region – has conceded that Guyana can truly become the food basket of the Caribbean.

The Minister of Trade dealt this afternoon with the extent of imports. When he pointed to certain items, specifically milk, I thought he was making out a strong case for the immediate dismissal of the Minister of Agriculture. All previous economists and all those who have looked into the potential of the country have pointed out that the import bill was too high and we must produce to reduce that bill. It is a fundamental principle which the Opposition does not take issue with at all. The fact, however, is that in 1978 the bill has skyrocketed, not only in so far as inflation and other considerations are concerned but because of the lack of the production, and it is clear evidence of the failure on the part of the P.N.C. Government. There has been talk and there could be no doubt that there will continue to be postulations on the part of the Government with respect to production and productivity. But until the problems are come to grips with and tackled positively, there can be no real production or productivity in the country.

Forcing the heads of Corporations, public servants and teachers, who, probably, do not have the aptitude and the necessary skills to till the land and produce, will not help this country.

As the point can be properly made in so far as redeployment is concerned, you cannot redeploy someone to do a job which he is not capable of doing, which he is not made up for. You will be putting a man there to waste time. It is like the Government which has got a history of employing people without the correct skills, employing them under all types of considerations apart from ability and skills. I have no doubt that the heads of departments, generally whether in the public Service, in the Corporations, or in the other areas of Government operation, if they were permitted free licence to speak, would say that they always have objection to directions coming from high persons in the Government, to take on a man because he has a green card or because he is a good party comrade. Many of them are not able to work. They have not been working, and in fact, they have contributed and this Government has contributed by allowing that to happen so that the country has found itself in this state of economic depression.

What has been the emphasis? Roads and roads! Nearly \$200 million has been spent in the last ten years and the greater portion of that expenditure was expended on the Upper Mazaruni Road Project. Let the Government deny that that project has been halted. Nobody is working on it now. We had to draw attention to Government machinery being misplaced and Government members will recall that I called for an inventory of Government property. It was then that the Committee was set up headed by the same comrade who seeks to heckle. I was giving advice to the Government to save the nation's coffers which we can hardly afford to waste. Thus, we have a situation where so many millions have been thrown down the drain. He cannot deny that. He is not capable of denying that the road was not timed properly, that the road was wrongly planned, taking into account the hydro project. The Government knows that they are without financial and economic resources to continue and to complete that project. Hence, at this late stage, it has decided to abandon it.

4:50 p.m.

My complaint, Cde. Speaker, is that if that money was expended in the productive sector then surely today we would have been in a better position in so far as the economy is concerned. Indeed, let me point you to Madhia. We know of countless people who went on excursions into the so-called self-help exercise. All sorts of comedy took place in that project. You go and see it now. Bushes have taken over that road now.

And I can point to yet another project; you want to hear them? Is it not true that a wharf has been built at the back of Leguan to link Phoenix, Success, etc., and that wharf was built with the idea that the boat that will leave Vreed-en-hoop and go to Adventure, that same boat will go to Leguan and then go to Wakenaam? You deny it. You go and have a look at it now and you will see that the wharf is falling to pieces.

Cde. Speaker, people have become politicians overnight and people indulge in volumes of quotations and are not coming to grips with the realities, with the truth of this country. And that is what is happening on the Government Benches. When they should be in the areas working for the development of the country, they spend their time reading books to come here and bore us with countless quotations. I have no time for that.

The fact is we had to have more proof to link that area with other areas so that the wharf can really serve the purpose. That Regional Minister talks about the wharf being in use. How can you use the wharf effectively when there is no road between that wharf and other areas in Leguan? I want to say to the Minister, question yourself and see how you are thinking.

Cde. Speaker, having pointed to those areas, I thought that the Government would have been doing far better in its expenditure on roads, if it had directed its attention and addressed itself to those areas where, simultaneously with the building of roads, we would have been able to allocate lands, to have agricultural development and so provide easy transport facilities to the

farmers. One of the positive areas – and you read your own development programme if you have never read it – is the Orealla road. You start building from inside areas and when you complete 12 miles that is the end of it; that has been abandoned too. But you have got 35 miles of arable land, that is the coastal belt, comrades, and then people from the Corentyne Coast can be given land. There can be development and there can be production if you do that. And what we on this side of the House would like to do is not merely to make criticisms but we want to be very objective, to educate you so that you will open your eyes and come to grips with the realities of the problems of this country.

I was expecting the Minister of Works and Transport to be more objective in his contribution but he has failed hopelessly to impress this House. When he ruled out very easily the question of transportation in this country, he was pushing his head in the sand because no one will deny that there is great hardship in every part of this country – and I am talking specifically with respect to land transport. Cde. Nokta alluded the House to water transport. If you drive from Corentyne to the West Coast Berbice, children from areas like Woodley Park, Bath Settlement, possibly other areas nearby, they have to be on the road from 5 o'clock in the morning, and you know that 5 o'clock, with the advance of the clock by 45 minutes, in reality is quarter past four, to catch a bus to go to Bush Lot Secondary School. That is only children I am talking about and the Minister in charge of the Essequibo Region must know that children are packed like sardines in the limited Essequibo bus service.

When the Minister admitted today that consideration will be given to private people to operate buses, he admitted an obvious failure on the part of the Government to provide cheap public transport for the population of this country. Cde. Ramsahoye was talking about the conservation of energy, and he asked the population of this country that they must be prepared to

share cars in order to conserve energy, petrol, and spend less for the importation of petrol. But what he failed to take cognisance of is that his Government has not provided efficient and effective transport so that we can move to that position.

There are people who have reached the point already where they would be willing to park their vehicles before paying \$3.25 per gallon for petrol and join the public transport to go to their places of employment. It would be much cheaper. A car is not a luxury, it is a necessity, one admits that fact. Gasoline goes up to \$3.25 per gallon, of which sum the Government gets an additional 54 cents. I think the Government was getting 79 cents before. The public must know that that increase of \$1.32 will go to the Government. It is not the cost of petrol alone that has been increased, with inefficiency in public transport, there has been a 100 per cent increase in the fee for fitness, driver's licence and all other related licences as published in the Official Gazette, to amend the relevant Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Act. One sees clearly that those who are operating private services are going to increase fares. In fact, the fares have already been increased and, hence, we have got a situation where the public is further squeezed. I diverted from my usual area of responsibility because I thought that from the P.P.P. benches I must answer some of the points made by the Ministers who spoke.

Cde. Speaker, the Government has failed this country and the nation and has ruined the economy by its own misgivings, wrong priorities and wrong spending – to be very kind to them. There are other words that can be used, there are other facts that can be brought into the House but serving on a particular Committee I am not permitted to say anything, and I would wish to comply with the conventions of the House in so far as that is concerned.

I referred to Orealla but there are other areas like Better Hope, call it Ruby backdam, on the East Bank of Essequibo. If you go there, there are a number of families who are farming there. The Minister for that area ought to be called to bar and questioned. That place is without water; it is without a school; it is without a road; it is without any form of health service.

And I say this because I have gone there. Probably the Minister who was involved in preparing his quotations for this Budget Speech did not go there. I suggest that he goes there. Indeed, if those roads where the farmers live are made and other facilities are provided, production will increase.

5 p.m.

I also want to draw the House's attention and the nation's attention to the fact that we all know of migration to other countries but there will be serious internal migration in Guyana with over 25,000 people annually leaving the rural areas and coming to Georgetown. We will have housing problems, we will have unemployment problems and undoubtedly we will have other social problems. One of the pre-requisites for real agricultural development is for any thinking Government to provide the type of facilities whereby those who are engaged in this important segment of our economy will stay where they are and produce for our nation. But if staying where they are means living in sub-human conditions without normal human needs and wants being satisfied, undoubtedly such depressing conditions will force them into the already crowded city.

A second danger faces production in this country and that danger is because of the lack of these facilities, because agriculture is not remunerative and because farmers in so many sectors of agriculture have been producing at a loss, it looks to me like those who are there and who probably cannot do better might remain but new people are not going to be attracted to agriculture. So there is a great danger and it is useless for people to take a cutlass and go and hold a cane and take out a photograph. That will not contribute to production.

I believe the civil servants and the Heads of Departments who have gone to Sophia and sworn with the Declaration of Sophia their allegiance to the P.N.C. and to the Government, and who were told that they are conforming to the concept of socialism, should be able to tell those

who issue such directions and take such decisions that one of the basic elements of socialism is the right to be free to criticise and to speak one's mind. So if you are not a farmer, you are not a farmer and what you are capable of doing, you will do that. I want to call upon this Government to come out from that type of deception in this country. It will not help this country.

The deficit this year has doubled as previous speakers have pointed out. It started at \$72 million and now it is in the vicinity of \$144 million. When a budget is reduced to that level, or when a deficit rises by 100 percent or more one can see the type of economic planning and financial control by a Government.

Further, the Government must come to grips with the farmers, they must meet the real farmers; they must not in devious ways try to displace real, true and genuine farmers by people who are not basically made up for farming. That will not help. And I think that is what the Government is attempting. It is like when the government started, one P.N.C. Member is recorded in the Hansard as saying that the P.P.P. is a Coolie Government; it is a rice Government and because of that fact, agriculture must be de-emphasised. And the P.N.C. Government de-emphasised it for several years and only recently, within the last two or three years, it has started talking about agriculture.

Cde. Speaker, what are the new projects named in the Budget Speech as far as agriculture is concerned? The same old thing and if we look at a speech presented by a Colonial Governor, Sir Patrick Renison, when the P.P.P. was simply occupying office in that Government, in 1958, we will see projects like Tapakuma, Black Bush Polder and all the rest that we talk about in 1978. They were mooted and there were efforts since then to implement them. [Interruption.]

Cde. Speaker, the point I was making was that these projects have been shelved; they have pushed aside and from 1975 there was a provision in the Estimates for M.M.A. Several years ago I moved a Motion in this Parliament calling for the immediate implementation of the

M.M.A. scheme and this House should know that though the M.M.A. scheme was conceived by Hutchinson, people like Bobby Comacho and the Minister of Works and Transport worked on that scheme. We have a report on that scheme and I am sure I know the hon. Minister long enough to say that. That is reliable information and I am sure there was a period of his service in this Government when undoubtedly he must have been asking himself why this scheme is not being implemented bearing in mind what his report was.

From 1975 to 1977, the Government spent about \$11 million on that scheme. It underspent. In fact, it underspent last year by \$500,000 but the Minister knows and the technical men said when those provisions were put into the Estimates that they were ridiculous. Why has the Government failed to expend even that small sum that was provided last year? The Government got the loan; the money is there. The Government might talk about skills and in talking about skills it must bear in mind, as I see reported without quoting it, on page 7 of the Budget Speech that we were willing but we did not have the technical men or the technical skills to really effectively and speedily push the scheme. Who is it that has chased the technical men from this country? I am fearful that there might be more losses of technical men in this country. Losses in the Cabinet have started already; one has gone; others will go. Some will go voluntarily; some will be forced to go. However, the Government is going to lose. The point is, the Government has to attract these men; it has to keep them and if they are capable engineers, do not send them to cut canes; that is not their field of expertise.

In the P.P.P. budget – I don't know if you want to call it that because we must admit that the P.P.P. functioned when the Colonial Governor was in this country, people must be able to judge that and see a difference. It is a clear period; there was the Colonial Financial Secretary and so much other red tape. This country has Independence and the Government has a free hand to push this country. More so, the P.P.P. has gone down on record as saying that if the Government is going to push this country forward, we are going to be with the Government despite the few people who may criticise the P.P.P., because we are not concerned with personal

aggrandisement and selfish interest. We are concerned with the development of this country and the Government has shown by its tendencies towards hypocrisy, tyranny, and dictatorship that it has no such interest at all and thus it was prepared to let the country go down the drain.

Cde. Speaker, in the Budget Speech we hear talk again about textile factory, the shoe factory, the glass factory. Do you know that for several years now, a minimum of four year, these things should have been realised?

5:10 p.m.

Now we come in the year 1978 when these things are realisable in 1978 to hear the same old L.P. repeated in this House. No matter how much you like a tune you become disgusted with it at some time. Therefore, we would like to write off the suggestion about the textile mill, shoe factory and so on. I would like to make the point that in the Budget Speech of 1972, page 21, it states:

“This country imports annually \$13 mn. of textile fabrics of all kinds. In order to clothe ourselves, it is necessary to produce over 30 million square yards of fabric. In 1972, the first textile mill will be established to produce cotton and mixtures with cotton fabrics. As production gets underway, the importation of ready-made clothing will be reduced and ultimately become unnecessary.”

In fact, what this Government is saying and, in fact, what the Government said was that in 1976 we would have been feeding, clothing and housing ourselves. That could only have one interpretation in so far as feeding is concerned, that we would have been feeding on one another. Probably the return to cannibalism. **[Interruption]** The comrade over there is admitting that the P.P.P. has capacity because if a political party is able to sabotage, as he said, though I deny that vehemently, then that party would be a party of force and strength. When you have an Army whose top man swears allegiance to the party, National Service and People’s Malitia and, then

you are going to credit the Opposition with capacity to sabotage, then it shows decline on your part towards docility. **[Interruption]**

As I said, we are concerned. The thousands who are unemployed and underemployed in this country are agriculturists. If agriculture is tackled positively and the scheme of agricultural development is well conceived and properly and effectively planned, we can provide employment for all the people of this country. It is not my view; all the experts have said so. Figures might not be far out, but there are about a million acres of land in this country. Moving from that standpoint, I speak - - **[Interruption]**

The Speaker: Cde. Persaud, an old parliamentarian like you should know that when members make speeches from their seats, I do not hear. If you repeat what they say and adopt it as your own, I still would not hear.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Cde. Speaker, with my experience I decide what to hear and what not to hear. I said we can provide employment. What we need is a planned agricultural programme with the Ministry concerned immediately allocating land to the landless, to those who really want land and to the thousands who have applied. I have brought letters to this House already showing where people applied and they were refused. Capital farmers can come from agriculture. I am not saying that the Government should not borrow at all, but if you read one of the Budget Speeches, one Minister said it is a dangerous thing because those from whom you borrow will want to tell you what projects you must invest in, and they were interested in infrastructural development. If agriculture can form the base for capital formation which is basic to the economy and the country, why is it agriculture is not given greater priority? When one takes into account that the Army has a vote of some 32 percent of the total budget, does that really show an indication towards agricultural development?

Land reform has to be a basic consideration and the Minister knows. Since 1974, the Land Reform Committee gave its Report. For four years they have a Report and they are not acting on it. I do not want to repeat it but the Minister knows of Laymouth Manor.

Let us take Laluni. At Laluni, about 14 miles from the Linden Highway, there are 46 families who are involved in agriculture and those people have been rented land by the Demerara Tobacco Company. They have fifteen acres each. What is more, they are without social facilities. But this land is State land. There are two thousand acres involved. How could we stand up in this House and talk about socialism and you have right near to your door farmers being exploited? One must investigate. I have got information of what rent they are paying. I am not sure of it. It is a question of price for their production of tobacco. Moreso, they have all sorts of enshrinements in the agreement. They have all kinds of points made to tie them completely to the Demerara Tobacco Company, because they can sell to nobody else.

If you go to Skeldon and the Corentyne and you investigate, you will find that somebody very close to somebody in this House is exploiting with State land, charging people exorbitant rent. Indeed, I must further make the point that there are people in this country who have the forks and shovels to till this land, that which machinery is doing today. For over twenty or twenty-five years, those people are still tenants and there are many of them in this country who have to go to court from time to time to answer summonses either for rent or possession or for all sorts of ridiculous things. When will the Government implement a comprehensive policy of land reform in this country? That is basic. Even Britain, conservative as we know it to be, has acknowledged the necessity for certain positions within their freehold type of land and in their Holding Act of 1922. That Act aims to ensure that land is used beneficially. Those words are used in that Act. Indeed, in the Caribbean, Michael Harrison, and agricultural Economist, spoke on the need for land reform to remove these improprieties and this unjust treatment meted out to the real people who have been tilling the soil.

5:20 p.m.

I want this afternoon to cite Laluni and there are other areas. The Minister is not unaware, he will tell you that I have spoken to him privately in the Chamber with respect to one matter. I said, "Let us meet the farmers who are suffering." When farmers are occupying land and they are willing to produce and countless impediments are put in their way, then undoubtedly, by your own refusal to act, you can commit a serious breach by acts of omission on the part of the Government; it is in that way that I place them in so far as these farmers are concerned.

The time has come for us to have land reforms. You have got imbalances in holding; you have got people with 10 acres at one place, 5 acres at another place, and 10 acres at another place. There is need for the Government to look into those areas with the sole objective of harmonising this exercise of agricultural production to the satisfaction of the farmer.

There is need also, Cde. Speaker, for the legitimate organisations of the farmers of this country to be recognised. The Government should stop indulging in activities of creating violent organisations with the false hope of being able to win over the support of those organisations that have been existing by statutory provisions for so many years like the Rice Producers' Association and so many others. I am the spokesman on agriculture and I do not want to give the Minister the opportunity this afternoon to say I did not say anything about rice. Increase the price of the farmers' rice and paddy. Give them duty-free concessions. Make machinery available to them more efficiently; provide them with social facilities wherever they are. If you are prepared to do that and speak with the organisation, their own mouthpiece, tomorrow we can have a real dynamic agricultural drive and a virtual transformation of the economy beginning from the day the Government makes that decision. And I put it that way for rice.

Cde. Speaker, let me also take this opportunity of referring the Minister to certain projects which have not been mentioned anywhere. What do you intend to do with Boerasirie in

1978? You have got land; you have got external drainage. Mushrooms are taking over the place because of lack of internal drainage. Every year I tell you this and I am reminding you again this year. You know the acreage involved, I have it all here. We have got Black Bush front lands, all they have to do is to put an additional pump there and you will have large acreages of land available. These lands are on the coastal belt and you can make them available to farmers who will be willing to start tilling from the day you give them the permission. You have got all these areas that offer these facilities.

I am timing myself and I am asking my comrades to advise me so that I can leave adequate time for Cde. Mohamed. Before I conclude this contribution I want to say this afternoon, for the record, that the increase in licences for vehicles is ridiculous and the Opposition does not support it. I want to also say this afternoon - -

The Speaker: You are not leaving very much time for Cde. Mohamed.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: I am told that I have another minute.

The Speaker: I don't know there is anybody else besides me who could say that.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: The last point I want to make, and I will continue it at Estimates time, is that there is need for the Minister to look into the operation of the G.M.C. There is a lack of storage facilities; there is need for more buying centres and you need to meet the farmers to ensure that what you have announced is being put into practice, that is, guaranteed and fixed prices for their commodities. If these things are done, Cde. Speaker, agriculture can be developed. I know the Government does not like to hear this.

Let me conclude with this point. The P.P.P. has always, still is, and will forever continue to be the mouthpiece of the rice farmers because they are with us and they are behind us. Listen

to our representations and you will have agricultural development early in this country. The fact is that agriculture has failed and everything is declining. Don't tell us about a couple of pounds' increase in plantains and corn. You need to do more than that if this country is to move forward.

[Applause]

The Speaker: Cde. Kennard.

The Minister of Agriculture (Cde. Kennard): Cde. Speaker, the comrade on the other side, Cde. Persaud, has spoken with a great deal of energy and a great deal of agitation. I believe the energy has come from the abundance of food that he had over the tea break, that being an indication of the abundance of food on all tables in Guyana today. The comrade has asked the P.N.C. to take agriculture seriously. The purpose of my presentation here this afternoon is to indicate quite clearly how seriously we have taken agriculture and how successful we have been. For a long time now agriculture has been regarded as the main solution to our economic problems in this country, and for many years to come it will be so regarded as the main employer and the main provider of wealth for our nation.

The role of agriculture as our economic saviour and sheet anchor is justified. We have a large country, fertile soil, congenial climate. Our people have their origins in agriculture and when the comrade a while ago spoke of some member allegedly saying some years ago that the P.P.P. were representing only a certain section and a while ago also he repeated that the rice farmers are supporting them, I wish to say that all our people have their origins in agriculture. If at all we have a common culture in Guyana then that culture is agriculture.

5:30 p.m.

Agriculture binds us in national unity in a manner which no man can put asunder. 1977 has been a notable year for our agriculture. That year saw unprecedented increases in our

national food production. More rice, more corn, more legumes, more ground provisions, more vegetables, more fruit, more fish and more pork were among the items which were produced in abundant quantities. People took to the land as never before, placed their shoulders to the plough and their hands to the shovel with enthusiasm and energy. Abundant food supplies were everywhere. At year end, our national Christmas table was heavily laden with all types of local foodstuff and drink. Yes, indeed, even now our cup runneth over, making it possible for us to export to the world outside. Let me state our achievements in statistical terms: Rice: production of rice was a record, amounting to some 210,000 tons. The yield of 80,000 tons for the first crop was the highest ever while the second crop of 130,000 tons was among the best we ever had. So abundant was the harvest that drying and storage facilities were overtaxed and farmers in districts such as Essequibo and Corentyne had to use the highways, the roads and the airstrip to dry their crops.

And when we speak of rice prices, though prices were tumbling down since the year 1974 in the rice market, the Rice Board maintained its high prices to the farmers and even improved upon them in the case of one variety. In addition to high prices, the farmers received a wide range of subsidies on inputs and services and obtained more loans than ever before from the G.R.B. and the Agricultural Bank. High yields were present throughout the coast. In many areas because of our research and the new varieties that we have introduced farmers got, as on the Essequibo Coast, as high as 40 bags an acre. The noteworthy achievement of our rice industry in 1977 is adequate testimony to the fact that the Government has the support of the rice farmers because they have responded as never before to the Government's programme and the Government's call for increased production by producing this mammoth and record yield. Comrades, I think, therefore ...

The Speaker: Cde. Narbada Persaud, do you only know the word "Why?" It is the only word we are hearing from you.

Cde. Kennard: Because our rice farmers performed so well and have set so great an example, I think that this House should salute our rice farmers. **[Applause]**

I shall deal with corn. Corn or maize is to the river farmers what rice is to our coastal farmers. Production last year was a record increasing from five and a half million pounds in 1976 to 8 million pounds in 1977. The high yield made it possible for Guyana to stop all imports of corn after the first crop was harvested in 1977, thereby saving the country's valuable foreign exchange. Congratulations are in order for the corn farmers of Guyana. **[Applause]**

The output of plantains rose from 31 million pounds in 1976 to 43 million pounds in 1977 and ground provisions from 48 million pounds in 1976 to 54 million pounds in 1977. So favourable were the harvests that severe glut conditions were experienced at times, particularly at year end, straining the financial and physical handling facilities. High production resulted in a lowering of prices to consumers. At the same time, the Government maintained its high minimum guaranteed price to the farmers so the farmers did not suffer, the consumer benefited. The surplus was exported to the Caribbean and apart from exporting to the Caribbean, here in Guyana we processed the surplus. Thus, the Guyana Agricultural Products Corporation manufactured some 236,000 pounds of cassava flour, at its cassava factories at Look-Out and Charity. Cassava flour was blended with wheaten flour for domestic consumption, thereby making a contribution to reducing imports of wheaten flour and saving foreign exchange. The importance of the Food Crop sector should not be under-estimated as it has made a sturdy contribution to the nation's self-sufficiency. Our local foods have replaced some two million pounds of white potatoes which you imported. Our local foods have also replaced a large variety of canned starchy dehydrated foods amounting to millions of dollars. Let us applaud our food farmers of Guyana.

[Applause]

With respect to legumes, we started a legume campaign in order to replace our imports and our production of black-eye peas virtually doubled last year. No black-eye peas were dumped; all reached our consumers and production was so high that it was possible to prohibit the importation of black-eye peas because of local self-sufficiency. Congratulations are in order for our black-eye peas farmers.

Where green vegetables and vine crops and tomatoes were concerned, production reached an all time high. Cabbage was more on the market than ever before; so were pumpkins and we exported pumpkins. So abundant was the supply of tomatoes that at year end the Government took a decision to prohibit the importation of ketchup and later to prohibit the importation of tomato paste and we banned other products such as frozen, preserved and canned vegetables all because of the high production of our vegetable farmers. We acclaim the vegetable farmers of Guyana! There was abundant food in Guyana. There was abundant fruit in Guyana. There were more oranges than ever before and we saw carts selling oranges throughout the city of Georgetown. We saw pineapples throughout the city of Georgetown.

Because of the large supply of our fruit, we were able to export and the Guyana Agricultural Products Corporation produced from the surplus 72,000 pounds of jam, 57,000 pounds of pineapple slices, chunks and juices from fruits like the bilembi and others; we produced 10,600 pounds of dried fruit replacing imports of prunes and currants and raisins which you imported. At the same time, it was possible to export some quantity of fruit to CARICOM. Applause for our fruit farmers again!

The most outstanding achievement of our livestock sector was in the area of pork production. The pig population and pig production increased. In 1977 we had an output of 4,800,000 pounds of pork compared with 150,000 pounds in 1968. Pig rearers received large loans from the Agricultural Bank. Actually over the past four years they received \$8.5 million in loans.

6.3.78

National Assembly

5:40 - 5:50 p.m.

[Cde. Kennard continued]

5:40 p.m.

Increased pork production was reflected in record production of pork products by the Guyana Marketing Corporation amounting to 1,151,000 lbs. of products such as ham, bacon, sausages and pickled pork. Moreover, the Corporation exported 1,106 pigs; 181,000 lbs. of frozen pork; and 10,000 lbs. of pork products.

Here again, self-sufficiency has meant the cessation of all imports of ham, bacon, pickled pork and many types of sausages. The saving of foreign exchange by the replacement of imports, the earning of foreign exchange through exports, more employment in Guyana more income for our farmers have resulted. Cheers for the pig farmers of Guyana! Now, I will deal with the area of Fisheries. The historic event in the development of our fishing industry was the enactment of legislation, the Maritime Boundaries Act, which established our sovereign rights over a fishery zone extending 200 miles off-shore. This was in conformity with similar action taken by most nations consequent on agreement reached at the international level on laws pertaining to the sea in negotiations extending over a number of years. The action was timely because Guyana's fishery resources were being ravaged and plundered by trawlers of various origins based in foreign countries. Those indiscriminate and exploitative activities by foreign-owned boats had greatly reduced shrimp catches by locally based boats and were destroying marine life, including edible fish which were discarded in favour of the sought after shrimps.

The establishment of the fishing zone, consequential arrangements for the licensing of fishing boats and the patrolling of the waters to ensure observance of the law brought order to a serious state of affairs and ensured the preservation of the resources for posterity. Locally based trawlers maintained their annual catch of about 7 million pounds of shrimp in 1977 and this amount is likely to increase as the resources now have a chance of recovery.

The operators in the fishing industry totalled 192 trawlers, which catch both shrimp and fish, 900 inshore vessels and an estimated 600 riverain fishermen. In addition, there are large numbers of part-time fresh water fish catchers and part-time farmers. The total catch of fish by all these categories was 41 million pounds compared to 35 million pounds in 1976. And let it be known, that Guyana no longer imports, and for some time now has not imported, salted fish, canned fish and pickled fish in any form. Congratulations to our fishermen! We salute our fishermen! **[Applause]**

I must now turn, Cde. Speaker, to sugar and I do so sadly. **[Interruption]** I will pick these up as I proceed. **[Interruption]** If you would wish me to deal with chicken, I would say that last year the production of poultry amounted to 16.3 million pounds of broiler meat and 53 million eggs, compared with 1.8 million pounds of broiler meat and 8.6 million eggs in 1964. Poultry rearers last year had certain difficulties with the supply of hatching eggs which come from outside of Guyana and because of those difficulties production did show certain setbacks during the year. Unfortunately, those difficulties are continuing and they are affecting the entire Caribbean. But the Ministry is moving to find a permanent solution to that by organising the production of hatching eggs right here in Guyana. They deserve to be saluted.

Sadly, I come to sugar. It is our most important commodity in the agricultural sector. At the beginning of the year GUYSUCO had mobilised its resources, and particularly its manpower, in field, office and factory, to achieve high production and productivity. Conservatively, it had set itself a target of 312,153 tons of sugar, though much more was realisable. The weather was the best we had experienced for many years. But what GUYSUCO did not have in its projections was the disruption which was being planned to achieve its destruction.

A senseless strike was unleashed by the Guyana Agricultural Workers Union, obviously instigated by forces opposed to the Government, in support of a claim for \$215 million in workers' alleged profit share entitlement for the years 1974, 1975 and 1976. This fantastic

demand represented 4 times the amount paid for the nationalisation of all the sugar estates; more than 200 times the cash reserves of GUYSUCO, and about as much as the industry eventually exported in 1977.

The strike broke all records of its type. It lasted for 135 days, but loyal workers and loyal volunteers were mobilised to save the crop, to save GUYSUCO and to save Guyana. The victory of these patriots was that they saved the industry from total destruction and, to their credit, they reaped 241,527 tons of sugar and enabled Guyana to meet its E.E.C. quota in full. Hooray for our loyal sugar workers and volunteers!

To those who planned the strike and kept it going, their historic booty may be measured in the sufferings of the workers, reduced production of more than 70,000 tons of sugar, wages denied, income deprived GUYSUCO and foreign exchange and revenue lost to men, women and children of Guyana. Shame on them! The only blot on the excellent performance in 1977 of the agricultural sector was that of the dismal performance of the sugar industry in terms of statistical output. Let us hope that those responsible have learnt their lesson and that hereafter the industry would earn its rightful place by continuing its growth, development and productivity.

I now turn to the outlook in agriculture in 1978 with particular reference to our plans and programmes as they relate to the provisions made in the Budget before us. World agricultural production is at its highest level, thanks to favourable weather in 1977. The world sugar situation is very relevant to the fortunes of our industry here in Guyana and I will deal with this in a few minutes. The Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations has put world sugar production for the 1977/1978 season at the record level of 92 million tons raw sugar value. By now, most of the crop in the Northern Hemisphere and a large part of the crop in the Southern Hemisphere have already been harvested. Good weather has favoured beet sugar development and harvesting in the major producing countries of Western Europe, Eastern Europe and the

U.S.S.R. resulting in a significant increase in their output of beet sugar. In fact, production in the U.S.S.R. is coming close to the level of self-sufficiency.

5:50 p.m.

There has also been an upsurge in world cane sugar production as a result of larger crops notably in Brazil and India where the outlook has remained reasonably favourable. There have been good crops also in other countries including Cuba. Compared with a world production of 92 million tons, FAO has forecast world consumption at about 87 million tons. So that the production/consumption balance shows a surplus of 5 million tons. In addition, there are large carry-over stocks from the 1976/1977 harvest.

The international Sugar Agreement which was negotiated in 1977, to which Guyana is a signatory, entered into force on 1st January, 1978. So far this Agreement has had no effect on the price situation. The current world price is considerably less than our national average cost of production and is likely to remain so for the rest of this year and until quota restrictions under the International Sugar Agreement so reduce production and exports as to exert a positive upward movement on the prices level. Until this happens Guyana is incurring, and will continue to incur, substantial loss on every ton of sugar it sells on the world sugar market.

Guyana enjoys a quota of 167,000 tons in the E.E.C. at a price which covers its cost of production. Quotas are about to be re-negotiated and similarly will be the Lome-Convention. One can only hope for an increase in the Guyana quota and in the negotiated price for those supplies.

The U.S. market is very sluggish under the weight of large inventories and Guyana has not qualified for preferential treatment under the General Sugar Preference. There is no immediate benefit to Guyana in this market.

On the local market the price of sugar continues to be pegged at the 1951 level. In other markets, unless concessional arrangements are negotiated, Guyana will have to face the full impact of the low world price.

The price situation for sugar dictates that our sugar industry should perform at the highest efficiency with yields per acre in the field per ton of sugar and the yield in the factory per ton of sugar extracted per ton of cane being kept at the maximum level attainable so as to prevent any escalation in our unit cost of production. There is clearly no place in those circumstances in our sugar industry for waste – whether it is of time by way of strikes, or in expenditure on inputs and services. We are walking a tight rope. The days of King Sugar are over. He has been dethroned and is hustling for bread and survival.

Rice is another crop the fortunes of which depend very largely on the world situation. The food and Agricultural Organisation, FAO, has reported that world paddy production in 1977 was 362 million tons – the highest ever compared with the 1975 record of 347 million tons.

World prices have declined in response to these large supplies. Since production in Guyana is expanding, we must produce the high qualities which are required in world markets at prices which are competitive. Nearer home, Guyana continue to earn a commensurate price for its rice in CARICOM by maintaining continuity of supplies at stable prices over the past four years and by absorbing storage and other costs and risks which normally would have to be borne by relatively small buyers who enter the world market in search of bargains.

As with sugar, it is incumbent on the Guyana rice industry to perform at maximum efficiency. Our farmers must achieve high yields and high quality of products by adopting the most modern technology. The greatest threat to our rice industry is those persons who prod farmers into seeking unattainable demands including unattainable demands for price. At the same time such persons discourage our farmers by various acts from going into the fields and

from working devotedly to achieve production and productivity equal to their brothers in Asia and elsewhere who earn a mere fraction of what they receive from the Guyana Rice Board.

As for other products in the Agricultural spectrum, our best prospect lies in our domestic market and in CARICOM, in our domestic market to replace imports and CARICOM for exports. This applies to other products and my colleague Cde. Minister King indicates this high level of some of these. Dr. King indicated that for daily products we import \$20 million annually; for peas \$4 million annually. Onions over \$3 million, vegetable oil \$5 million; wheat flour \$22 million; and a variety of sophisticated foods amounting to some \$2 million. Food imports in CARICOM amount to over \$1 billion. These figures show the opportunities which exist for our farmers to produce food to replace these imports and in 1978 the replacement of imports will continue to be the policy of this Government.

Coming to the Budget, Cde. Speaker, where and on what will we place emphasis in 1978? The theme will be “Maximum Production of all crops and livestock” and “Maximise efficiency in all activities.” For sugar our target is 360,000 tons. And I trust that GUYSTAC will be permitted to reap that crop. For rice, our target has been revised because of the prevailing dry weather about which the Government is exerting all its endeavours to supply farmers with water wherever water is available. For legumes, the replacement of all imports by increased production of peas and of all types of dahl such as urid dhal will be in our programme this year. For onions we shall strive to increase on a very large scale the production of onions and eschellots with a view to replacing imports. For cereals, and we imported things like sago, we will encourage the replacement by the use of local cereals such as corn and rice. For wheat flour maximum replacement of imports through an equivalent production of cassava flour and, this I have shown, we have already begun. For vegetable oil, reduction of imports by greater production of coconuts – last year the price went to 42.7 cents per pound, a tremendous increase, in order to encourage our coconut producers; by palm oil, of which I shall speak in a moment; by cotton seed oil. We are now extracting oil from the cotton seed and from soya beans. For

vegetables, fruit, root crops, fish and animal protein we will continue to achieve self-sufficiency and to export our surpluses.

6 p.m.

Our programme in 1978 has been designated “Increased Production Drive” and I invite the comrades to join it. It will involve all communities – rural and urban – all our people throughout Guyana, all state agencies, all Local Authorities, all voluntary service agencies and all genuine producers. Agriculture in 1978 will become a way of life for every Guyanese. The right to eat must carry with it the obligation to produce; there is no place for drones and parasites in our national “Increased Production Drive” but there are places and opportunities for workers. The agencies and departments under the umbrella of the Ministry of Agriculture will be organised to meet the challenge.

Foremost is the Guyana Sugar Corporation. With respect to this Corporation, the Cde. Prime Minister has already announced that GuySuCo’s role will no longer be a sugar monoculture. The corporation’s concern should not be, and would not be the production of sugar only but the pursuit of a balanced diversified agriculture involving companion cropping of sugar cane with other crops and the full utilisation of all the available land. While sugar will continue to dominate the corporation’s activities, it will produce as well other crops and cultivate fish in its fallowed fields and reserves. A start has been made already in 1977 and some 161,000 pounds of black-eye peas were reaped in addition to 150 acres of food crops. So far this year, GuySuCo has cultivated 425 acres of black-eye peas and shortly will be putting down a further 600 acres of black-eye peas.

The GuySuCo sister corporation – because we are speaking here of diversification – is the Guyana Liquor Corporation. It will be expanding its production and exports of alcoholic

beverages. I am sure you are pleased to hear that we will have more rum and other beverages. This year it will be commissioning the first bulk terminal plant in the Caribbean and will be making bulk shipments of rum to foreign markets. The Liquor Corporation will also be diversifying at an industrial level by completing a vinegar plant in May and a winery in November. In addition, studies are in progress on the manufacture of power alcohol because of the increasing price of petrol and the use of bagasse to manufacture building materials.

In order to rationalise the work of the agricultural organisations which are engaged in agriculture and in compliance with its mandate to enlarge the scope of its activities, GuySuCo will be renamed and it will be renamed Guyana Agricultural Industries Ltd., G.A.I.L. In pursuance of the enlarged activities it has been decided that will absorb the Guyana Agricultural Products Corporation and this absorption of Guyana Agricultural Products into GuySuCo has been brought into effect as from the 1st March current. The Guyana Agricultural Industries Ltd. or GuySuCo will pursue immediately the expansion of the Oil Palm in the North West District and at St. Jan in the Demerara River. We are about to plant about 70,000 seedlings at Wauna so that the total acreage by the middle of this year will be some 1,500 acres of oil palm. Already we produced 29 tons of oil last year from St. Jan. Fruits are now ripe at Wauna and these are about to be processed.

Early this year, for the information of members, we had a visit from international experts under the aegis of the Ministry of Overseas Development of the United Kingdom who examined the North Western area at Wauna and have found Oil Palm cultivation there to be attractive and viable. They are recommending an area of some 10,000 acres under this crop. We are in the process of attracting the external financing for this project. When that acreage is fully under cultivation, an export industry will be created, apart from Guyana becoming totally self-sufficient in vegetable oil. **[Interruption]** Orders have been placed. This Oil Palm industry will create employment for some 4,000 workers and will be a major injection of life into the North West District.

Now, cassava: Cassava is increasingly becoming an important world crop: GUYSUCO's interest will be to produce cassava on an industrial basis and to manufacture cassava flour and cassava products on an industrial scale. The present factories at Kaituma, Look-Out and Charity will be fully utilised and a fourth factory will be erected on the East Bank of the Demerara River.

A substantial reduction in the imports of wheat flour should follow the full implementation of these plans, in addition to the export of casareep and cassava starch.

Production of cassava by small farmers will be encouraged simultaneously and the Ministry of Agriculture is already issuing high yielding varieties which when grown under modern technology will give high yields and reduce the present cost of production. Farmers will find a ready market for cassava at GuySuCo's factories.

As part of the rationalisation of Government's agricultural agencies, the production of corn, soya bean, and black-eye peas at Kibilibiri will now be transformed to the Eborabo Savannahs where the CARICOM Corn and Soya Bean Company operates and will be concentrated and expanded there. With the transference of these activities which would mean a better use of resources and a greater integration, the Livestock Development Company will take over responsibility for Kibilibiri and will be expanding its cattle production in that area.

With respect to cattle production, as I mentioned the Livestock Development Company, they now have a herd of 15,000 cattle. Last year they produced 835,000 pounds of beef and 642,000 pints of milk. This year they will produce 990,000 pounds of beef and 2 million pints of milk. As part of its programme of expansion, the Livestock Company will take over the Guyana Marketing Corporation's activities at the milk pasteurisation plant. That plant will now be run by the Livestock Development Company. Government has placed very largely on the shoulders

of the Livestock Development Company, responsibility for achieving self-sufficiency in milk and in beef and they are going a long way towards this end.

In the fisheries sector, Members will be interested to know that expansion will be continued particularly at the Fish Port Complex which will cost some \$34.8 million and that we shall be putting on the market more fish to be processed by the Guyana Food Processors Ltd., more salted fish, pickled fish and in collaboration with the Canadians, the International Development Agency and the Ministry of Overseas Development of the U.K. we will be pursuing a programme for bringing in a by-catch of shrimp trawlers amounting to several million pounds of edible fish and other marine life.

I come now to the favourite topic of Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud, the topic of Drainage and Irrigation and I will add, River and Sea Defences.

6:10 p.m.

Notwithstanding the work of our state agencies, we must continue to rely on our farmers greatly to achieve our target of higher production for both crops and livestock and Government is moving and has moved to give our farmers major support.

In the Essequibo, the Tapakuma Project will cost \$98.7 million. It is not merely drainage and irrigation but has access roads, seed farms and other facilities. This project is based mainly on rice.

Phase 1 of the M.M.A. project, which will cost \$183.5 million, will commence this year. Here again this project is mainly for rice. The Black Bush Extension Project which has just been approved in principle by the World Bank will bring drainage and irrigation to the front lands of the Corentyne and to new lands adjacent to Black Bush Polder. It will cost G\$109.5 million.

Here again the project is mainly for rice. The total investment by Government on these three large schemes comes from our own resources – we could have used the resources for something else but we used it to support the rice farmers – in addition to substantial loans from international agencies notably the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, Canadian International Development Agency, the International fund for Agricultural Development etc.

The total of these three schemes amounts to \$291.7 million. In addition, there must be supportive social and economic infrastructure which will cost further millions. It should be noted, as I said, that the investment is largely to safeguard and to increase rice production and protect the welfare of rice farmers. In this regard there can be no more convincing evidence of Government's confidence in and support for the rice farmers of Guyana. Therefore, let those who undermine the rice farmers' faith in the Government take note. Let those who agitate for no production and for unattainable price increases appreciate the mountains of money which the Government is putting into the hands of the rice farmers to give them and their children more and better land which will be worth more to them than all the price increases they can ever dream of receiving.

In addition to drainage and irrigation schemes, Government continues to make land available to farmers on the basis of low-price leases. Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud asked what we are doing about land distribution. In 1977 we distributed a total of 48,677 acres. But let it be noted that this gesture of the distribution of lease land at low prices has been abused by many who have been issued land but have left it unused and abandoned. The Commissioner of Lands has been instructed to proceed with the cancellation of all such leases – that is where our land reform starts – and the redistribution of the land to deserving developers and suing the original leasees for the recovery of unpaid rent. This process of resuming these lands has begun. In 1977 we resumed some 1,634 acres.

We not only provide the farmer with drainage and irrigation, land, loans and good prices, we seek also to educate our farmers and educate the community in general. The Minister of Education will speak in greater detail but I would like Parliament to note that last year the Guyana School of Agriculture had a record number of students on roll, amounting to 157 students compared with 92 in the previous year. 82 graduated in 1977 compared with 50 in 1976. At last we have started our Faculty of Agriculture at the University of Guyana which will offer a degree course in Agriculture. The first entrants into this Faculty number 26 and I wish to congratulate the Vice Chancellor of the University and all who helped to get this Faculty started on the smallest of budgets.

Finally, in the area of agricultural education, I wish to mention also the work of the Regional Animal Health Assistants Institute which is located at Mon Repos and from which the first 32 students graduated last year. There will be six rural Training Centres. [Interruption.] These facts are so – you cannot even face the facts – that is why you are trying to run away from them. There is more to come.

With respect to the comrade's remark a while ago about these massive drainage and irrigation schemes, these schemes are not of much larger scope and greater sophistication providing greater services to the farmers than originally conceived some years ago. Let it be noted that it was the P.N.C. Government that had the courage to secure the necessary finance for the implementation of these schemes.

Cde. Speaker, 1978 onwards promises to be a period of challenge and opportunity for our farmers, livestock rearers and fishermen. It is also a period of promise and opportunity for state agencies led by the Ministry of Agriculture. There is no doubt whatever in my mind and in the minds of my comrades and colleagues that we have proven our mettle in the past and again together will achieve our objectives. In achieving our objectives we shall provide our nation

with abundant food to give it the strength to overcome its difficulties and to give it the surpluses to export to earn the necessary income and foreign exchange for its development. [Applause]

The Speaker: Cde. Mohamed.

Cde. Mohamed: Cde. Speaker, to think that education would have escaped the crisis affecting the nation would be a mythical and unimaginable. We cannot look at education outside and isolate it from the economic realities of this country. In fact, it is subjected to these realities and if Guyana is plunging from crisis to deeper crisis it naturally will be taking with it the educational sector.

Last year when we discussed the 1977 Budget we shared in this House the optimism that we were now set on a road for revolutionary changes stemming from the modifications and reforms which were implemented by the previous Minister of Education in 1976. Today, however, one can say that optimism has been substituted by anxiety and concern for the future of this country and for the future of the children of this country.

6:20 p.m.

During the debate last year, Cde. Speaker, I can recall that certain weaknesses were identified within the obtaining educational system and which weaknesses on to now unfortunately, have not been resolved. One weakness which was not resolved and which was raised the last time, was the selection process from the primary to the secondary level. We have passed an entire year. We are debating another Budget and I am not in a position to say that the Government has taken heed of that weakness I have identified.

Last year, also, Cde. Speaker, I attempted to offer certain broad perspectives which I had hoped the Government would have utilised as a guide to planned educational policies in this

[Cde. Mohamed continued]

country and perspectives which were based primarily on the assumption that in spite of definite and certain ideological confusion which exists within the Government Benches, nevertheless, the Government had wanted to continue along the road of anti-imperialism, and hopefully, to move on to socialism. But since then, Cde. Speaker, unfortunately, we have seen that new elements have now emerged, new factors now exist within our reality and I am constrained to make some other considerations about education and the education system in Guyana.

I must say that one can now seriously question the sincerity of the Government about moving towards socialism and one can question, and seriously doubt the intention towards the construction of socialism, and the socialist objective.

Before I go into a new consideration of what happened the last time, I would like briefly to look at the 1978 Estimates in order to show, that the sleight-of-hand which the hon. Minister of Finance tried to show, without qualifying the superficial increase for education, is not really so, but that in fact there is a decrease. I would like to look at the estimate and while agreeing that in absolute terms there is an increase, when one relates the expenditure on education percentage-wise, then one can definitely say a decrease exists. There is an increase in current expenditure of 18 percent but when one looks at the Capital Expenditure there is a decrease to the tune of \$627,766 and this represents a decrease as against the total Capital Expenditure of 1.7 percent. In totality, only 13.3 percent of the Budget is really to be spent on development of education and if one is to relate this to the amount that was allocated for education in 1977, then one would see that there is a drop, since in 1977 there was an allocation of 14.1 percent. Clearly, therefore, although the Budget Speech may have wanted to show an increase in education, percentage-wise, there is in fact, a decrease in the expenditure on education as calculations will reveal. I would not want to dwell on the quality of education or where there have been improvements in education or failures for that matter. I would like to determine whether in fact and in truth there has been any real sparkling development within the field of education over the

past year. I do not think that that one can correctly or scientifically measure our performance in education by simply quoting figures just as one cannot determine the popularity of the P.N.C. by how many seats it has in this House.

I prefer instead to look at some other questions, to certain aspects of education in this country. Unfortunately, I had an informal discussion with the hon. Minister about certain statistics but the Minister said that he will not consider this until after the debate. Obviously, the Minister does not want to provide these statistics because they are quite revealing. It is obvious that they are trying to treat the Ministry of Education as if it was a Ministry dealing with national security.

It would be meet to remind the hon. Minister that public education is only effective when the questions of education become public business and when the questions of education are discussed within each family of the country. It is also meet to remind the Minister that stimulation of public opinion on the question of education forms the only sound basis upon which improvements in this field can be made. If you are afraid to allow the public or to stimulate public opinion in this field then what you will have are simply public institutions but certainly not public education. We hope that the hon. Minister would stop treating the Ministry of Education as if the Ministry dealt with the Guyana Defence Force or internal security or some such matter. We would like to have these materials so that they can be properly assessed for the nation's purposes.

In determining education I try to look at what has been accomplished against the background of the continued talk about socialism and I looked at the whole Ministry of

Education and the education system to see how well the system was being prepared, how well we have done in keeping with the stated objectives of socialism. As I took a second look at the whole education system, I found that in spite of the talk of socialism, in spite of the socialist

objectives that the Government continues to speak about, at the moment, right within our system imperialism is present in our different institutions and it is allowed to penetrate heavily once again, the whole education system in this country.

Today, Cde. Speaker - -

The Speaker: Comrade Mohamed, are you going to another point? Maybe we can take the suspension until 8 o'clock if you are not here, then you will not have the opportunity to continue.

The Sitting of the House is suspended until 8 o'clock.

Sitting suspended at 6:30 p.m.

8 p.m.

On resumption - -

The Speaker: When the suspension was taken at 6:30 p.m., Cde. Feroze Mohamed was speaking. Please continue.

Cde. Mohamed: at the time of the Suspension, I was making the point that imperialism was present in our education system and in keeping with imperialism's new policy there has been penetration into our cultural and educational institutions. I would like to refer to the end of the 1960s which was known as the development decade when the experts of big international financial monopoly capital tried to assess the 1960s and work out a new orientation for 1970 and 1980 known as the second development decade. Then these experts suggested to imperialism that what should be done in 1970/1980 should be concentration within the education system of underdeveloped countries and charged their financial institutions to carry out and implement those decisions and to realise those proposals. The World Bank particularly was charged by

imperialism to look into the question of education in the developing countries. The World Bank, as you know, is also known as the International Bank for reconstruction and development and it is headed by no other person than McDamarra who was formerly Secretary for Defence in the United States Administration and who had quite a lot to do with the Vietnamese war. This is what, in outlining the educational policy, the World Bank stated, and I quote:

“It is hoped that the Bank will manage to become the major source of financing for educational purposes and that it will continue in almost all cases financing projects of a magnitude which will permit ensuring that they have a considerable effect from both the qualitative and quantitative viewpoints.”

The report went on:

“Although it will continue its policy of financing investments in the educational sector aimed at attending to the borrowing country’s most urgent and immediate needs in terms of personnel, the bank will encourage the establishing of more comprehensive rather than long range objectives. To another greater extent the projects will be selected on the basis of a thorough examination of the educational system as a whole, the reforms of which must be a part of adequately structural educational plan balance. In some cases this will perhaps call for longer range projects of perhaps eight years’ duration for the implementation of institutional changes. In other cases long range educational plans will have to be financed to support successive projects that have been prepared beforehand in order to implement the various phases of the programme.”

On the question of education, the imperialist institution known as the I.B.R.D. proposes reforms with a global approach. A global approach brings with it long term projects, and long term projects bring with them negative consequences upon the future, upon the sovereignty and independence of countries. Not only is the I.B.R.D. now moving into underdeveloped countries and developing countries with respect to education, but they are seeking the cover of UNESCO based on an agreement signed since 1964. It is revealing to note that in 1969/1970 whilst

UNESCO Budget was \$11 million, as a result of their co-operation with the I.B.R.D., it spent over \$178 million carrying out educational reforms in various countries. Now, Cde. Speaker, I would like to show that the I.B.R.D. is not only concentrating on the construction work in these developing countries but it also has a hand in the administration and planning of education within these countries. Further, it also has a hand in the training of teachers for these countries. The Colombian experience as was expressed by the Colombian Education Minister, Jacko clearly pointed out how this policy that was pursued by the World Bank affected Colombia and the Colombian system.

In Guyana, we have had, unfortunately perhaps, or fortunately, the assistance of the World Bank or the I.B.R.D. in several fields. Projects that have been completed by this financial imperialist organisation so far have been six multilateral schools and the primary teachers' training college, now known as the Cyril Potter College. Although these projects have been completed some time now – if I am correct, around 1975 – it is understood that still the World Bank monitors the implementation of the curricula of these institutions. Further, as a consequence of this kind of arrangement, some of these schools are not able to adjust their programmes in keeping with these special conditions and circumstances without the consent of the World Bank. This was shown in Colombia and I have no doubt that this too is expressed within these institutions that have been constructed, or where the World Bank has been able to enter. In addition to that, we have had experts and we have regular visits from the I.B.R.D. who pay a lot of attention to our educational work.

Looking at this question again, I want to refer to the role of the Frederick Egbert Stiffton Foundation with respect to the Critchlow Labour College. That College is being heavily financed by the Government, but relations have developed particularly over the past year with this West German Foundation. If you look at the history of this Foundation, you will note that

this Foundation has as its main objective taking developing countries towards reformism and moving them away from revolutionary changes. Its area of operation is particularly within the Third World countries. Over 100,000 persons have been trained already by this foundation and unlike the I.B.R.D., for example, it is not only concentrating on Government, it concentrates its work on trade unions, through co-ops, and through community development. I remember there has been participation by the T.U.C. in seminars and courses sponsored by this West German imperialist organisation that has as its objective imperialist aims.

In addition to that, we note that this year our Budget shows that we are going to begin a project which will be done by the I.D.A. The I.D.A., like the I.B.R.D., is also an imperialist financial organisation and it is going to concentrate in this year, we are told, on community high schools and the Secondary Teachers' Training College. Again, we see that imperialism will be using these arrangements to come into our country, to come within our educational system, to penetrate our cultural institutions and educational institutions. These things will have consequences and effects, for a country which is going towards socialism and that assumes that this Government hopes or continues to go in that direction.

Imperialism is not only coming through these different organisations today. It is also using different forms to penetrate. Over the last year the University of Guyana, for example, has benefited from several grants. But what was important to note was that these grants came particularly and mainly from Canada and the United Kingdom. We must be grateful from time to time for these gifts but at the same time we should also be watchful that these gifts are not in fact imperialism's Pandora's boxes. The Canadian Government, for example gave \$4,800 to build library shelves in the University of Guyana. The British Government, the Ministry of Overseas Development, gave £2,500 in the form of books to the University of Guyana. It may appear as a strange coincidence or, perhaps, some would want to call it a very carefully worked out co-ordination by two imperialist countries.

The Speaker: Cde. Mohamed, did not the Soviet Union Ambassador give some books recently?

Cde. Mohamed: He did, but I am speaking about education against the background of a socialist objective. If the Soviet Union and Cuba may have presented books, then that is consistent and in keeping with that objective. But when they come from imperialist financial organisations, knowing the techniques of imperialism, knowing that it has unchanging goals, knowing that it has only changed techniques and methods of operation, then it is reasonable for us to be concerned and anxious about the way education is being penetrated at the moment. I am waiting with very great interest to hear Cde. Teekah, because he was on that side and he was making those statements. Now he would have had great experience.

Mohamed: I am saying it now. I also want to point out, Cde. Speaker, that one can also look at this question in other areas of our education system. Some of it needs further research and study. But you can very well understand the kind of confusion or how precarious the situation can be when these developments occur in a country where, still prevalent within our educational institution, are people who are very much confused about the socialist theory.

8:10 p.m.

I recall, for example, one headmaster who, in his eagerness to mechanically respond to the dictates of the Ministry, carried out National Policy lessons with his staff on the East Bank. This is how that headmaster explained socialism to his staff: “Russia first practised communism and failed, and having failed, now they are moving to build socialism.” Another headmaster from Canje, who was very active for the P.N.C. and still is, giving a lecture at a seminar sponsored by the T.U.C., only two months ago, explained socialism in this way: “Socialism is like a man with two bulls; one must be given to the State and the other to his neighbour.”

Clearly, when one ties up all of these factors, then one, as I said, must seriously question to what extent our educational system is fulfilling or carrying out a kind of curriculum consistent with the ideological objective of the Government and to what extent is imperialism skilfully and subtly subverting that objective.

The Speaker: Are you suggesting that these comrades should go to the Cuffy Ideological Institute?

Cde. Mohamed: I was about to suggest that for a headmaster of the hon. Minister of Education, Cde. Archer, and ask him to see that that comrade attends the Ideological Institute. But, I am sure that the Minister has not so quickly forgotten the nature of imperialism and the techniques and methods that imperialism is employing in fulfilment of their unchanging goals.

Having said that, I would now like to turn my attention to the concept of relevance. It is a concept that has been spoken very much of in this country. We need, as a developing country, people with relevant skills to carry out the development of this country. That is recognised by our educationists, the politicians, and the People's Progressive Party. We have no quarrel with that. In fact, that concept of relevance has been developing more and more within the Third World countries and developing countries because of the economic difficulties these countries are faced with. However, although recognition has been given to this concept of relevance, it will appear from the results that have been coming out from our educational system, within this period we have not been able to fulfil or see that concept materialise.

I want to look for example, at our science education. I am referring here to the Cyril Potter College of Education and the figures indicate that 1970, 20 students of 137 opted to do Science which is equivalent to 14 percent. In 1975, 20 out of 280 students did it, 7 percent. In 1976, 25 out of 300 students did Science, 8 percent; in 1977, 33 out of 360; that is 9 percent. At

the Lilian Dewar College, in 1976, we had 4 trained Science teachers; in 1977, we had 7. Perhaps if we are lucky this year we may get 14. What is being told here? We are seeing from these figures I have just quoted that while we are giving lip service or speaking about the need for developing relevant skills, somehow our institutions have not been able to grapple with the task of training young people in Science to produce enough scientists, enough technologists, enough technicians who will be necessary to carry out our economic tasks and to help in the development of our country. If such a low percentage of Science students come out from Cyril Potter College and Lilian Dewar College, then clearly we will not be able to influence the young people at the primary level so that in turn these colleges will have more people coming to them and more scientists, technicians and technologists can be produced from these institutions.

At the University of Guyana, out of 555 graduates that came out last year, 54 only were from Natural Sciences, and 99 from Technology. This situation warranted the following comment by the Vice Chancellor in his 1976/1977 report. He said:

“The disturbing feature is a lack of growth in Science and Technology since 1973/1974 and I have already alluded to the reasons for this.”

When we look at the Science staff in secondary schools, a survey of 40 secondary schools in 1974 showed that of 187 Science teachers only 33 percent were trained; but in 1976, out of 276 Science teachers, only 15 percent were trained; and in June 1977, in a survey of 54 schools, junior, senior and Community High Schools, out of 284 Science teachers, only 16 percent of these were trained. I look at these figures against the background of the thought we have been giving these days to Science Education. Two things seem to be clear from these figures. One is, there is a stagnation in Science Education; development is not taking place, and secondly, it seems to my mind that we will have to have more training of teachers early so that we can have enough qualified people to promote Science Education, something which, I am sure the hon.

Minister will agree with because he was very vehement in making these proposals when he was on this side of the House.

Let us look at this same question on the performance at the G.C.E. "O" Level examinations in Science subjects. I have chosen three subjects to just give an example of the decline in Science Education over the past three years. Biology, Chemistry, and Physics. In 1974, only 36 percent of the students who took Science subjects passed; in 1976, 32 percent, and in June, 1977, of 4,057 who sat the examination, only 21.3 percent got grades between A and C. In Chemistry, in 1977, 44 percent passed. In 1976, 34 percent, and in June 1977, of 1,792, who sat that examination only 31.9 percent got passes between B and C. In physics, only 34 percent passed in 1974, 31 percent in 1976 and in June, 1977, of the 1,569 who sat, only 27.8 percent got grades between A and C.

Engineering Science: June, 1977 showed that of the 31 students who sat the examination, only 7 passed, equivalent to 22 percent. The "A" Levels did not show any better position. The question we must ask now is why this result if so much emphasis is being placed in keeping with our economic development? There can be several factors responsible for this, but the primary factor responsible for this type of situation lies with the Ministry of Education. I get the impression very often that the personnel within the Ministry of Education is more concerned with doing political work, P.N.C. work, than paying attention to the education and to the performance of our young people who are now going into our educational institutions and studying there.

8.20 p.m.

The other day the hon. Minister Hoyte said that the Government is putting a lot of emphasis and making a lot of investments on the development of human resources. These figures indicate that while this may be so, the dividends and returns are extremely poor.

I have here, for example, a letter signed by L. Salall, D.E.O. for Corentyne. This is what is coming out from the Ministry when we are having these poor results:

“Subject: 13th Anniversary in Government

Various persons will visit your school in connection with the exercise and you are expected to give them your fullest co-operation. Headmasters are hereby requested to ensure that all members of staff see and sign this circular.”

I wonder what the D.E.O. for Corentyne is now saying when he has seen the 1977 G.C.E. results. It would appear to me that a special Commission should be set up to investigate this. Millions of Guyanese taxpayers' money is involved here without seeing the equivalent returns. I think there should be a public inquiry about the behaviour and performance of officials in the Ministry of Education.

On the 13th Anniversary, teachers at the last minute were given instructions to appear at different centres so that they could march. Students were taken out of schools and taken to party functions. I think that the responsibility for these failures and poor performances within our educational system must be traced right back to the beginning, to the source, and that is the Ministry of Education.

I remember how vehemently and passionately the present Minister of Education stood opposed to this type of practice when he was on this side of the House. Now that he is Minister of Education, I hope, before his fortunes wane, he will take some positive steps to ensure that they desist from this type of practice.

Equally important, if not more important in the field of education is the question of moral education and this is an aspect of education on which, unfortunately, much emphasis had not been placed when we were formulating our policies. As a result, today, whenever the big shots of our country go about speaking, they always underline the need for discipline. The effects are seen. More important, one must go to the cause. One must not only see the manifestations but

Education, I hope, before his fortunes wane, he will take some positive steps to ensure that go to the root of the indiscipline, to the root of the moral degeneration and decay which affect the entire moral fabric of our country. This problem is recognised. I feel that while it is not the decisive factor, education plays an important part in rectifying this problem within our society. I strongly feel that an integral part of our educational policy must be the question of moral development, things like courage, things like integrity, things like honesty, are things which must be emphasised in our schools. Discipline, duty. These are patriotism; these are concepts which more and more one hears less and less of. It is an important question if we are going to prepare our young people to tackle the different tasks confronting our nation and to prepare them to be good citizens within our country. I don't think enough is being done, if anything is being done at all in this direction. The feeble attempts that are made to develop the feeling of patriotism within our youth ...

The Speaker: You have 5 minutes more.

Cde. Mohamed: There is interference by way of party symbols and so forth. I would like quickly to turn my attention to another aspect of an approach which has recently developed known as the work-study approach. Several people went to Cuba to learn from their experiences, then all of a sudden it became quiet. Now, we ask that new efforts be made to emphasise this question of work-study. We have no quarrel with it. We feel that it is a good approach if it is aimed at inculcating and instilling in our young people, a love for labour.

What we are saying is that whilst on the one hand the education system seems to be wanting to inculcate a feeling of love for labour, which has very good psychological and educational value, and which is important to preserve and maintain a sense of human dignity and to rid ourselves of the stench of vanity and self-conceit which is so rampant in our society, it is occurring at a time when we have rapid redeployment of people. There seems to be a contradiction. Work-study approach will only be successful if it does hand in hand with the

expansion of the economy, when having inculcated in our young people the love for work, there will be work for them when they will have finished their studies.

Education, I hope, before his fortunes wane, he will take some positive steps to ensure that go to the root of the indiscipline, to the root of the moral degeneration and decay which I think that this is important for the Ministry to look into, to pay attention to. I saw a set of children at the T.&H.D. Stelling. They were being shown how the people stamped tickets. When they were finished, they were given seats and they sat there staring at the ceiling. There needs to be planning. We must not make the same mistake which we made on the question of community high schools. Those schools are in chaos and mess. If we are going to make a new approach to work-study, which is something we would like fulfilled because it is in keeping with socialist principles of education, then we must have it better planned, we must have it well thought out, we must have our ideas clear. If not, like so many aspects of our educational system, we are going to definitely fail.

Another point I would like to touch on, Cde. Speaker, is the question of free education. Free education, to my mind, is openly subverted when one looks at some of the figures which appear in the 1974-1975 Digest where it is shown that 43,723 children within the age group 5 – 12 years cannot attend school because there are no places. This is one of the points that the present Minister of Education spoke about when he was over here. Now, we have not had the latest results, but if one is to consider that we have not had any allocation for developmental works in last year's budget and in this year's, and when one considers also that there has been a 2 ½ percent increase in our population, then clearly this figure would have increased. Also, 55,081 persons between the ages of 13 and 17 years are not in our educational institutions. This strikes at the very root, at the very heart of the right to education in this country. According to the Government's statistics, there are thousands and thousands of young people who have not had the opportunity of entering schools and all the talk about free education, therefore, falls along the wayside before those statistics.

We hope that the Government will look into this question and take cognisance of this fact. I don't know how they can do it but it would appear, to my mind, that they should pay some attention to the construction of more schools to accommodate these young people. At the primary level the situation has been worsened because of the lack of planning. We have had primary schools being converted into community high schools and, therefore, instead of alleviating the position to a situation where many children can get to school, we have seen it worsening in many areas. This aspect, Cde. Speaker, is a serious problem in that whilst the Government has been talking about free education, it is open to many questions. We know that, in fact, this is not so for thousands of our children and nothing is being done to build schools, to expand schools in order to accommodate these children. Developmental work is being carried out, but not very much.

8:30 p.m.

The Speaker: You seem to be going on to something else, but your time is up. I will give you 5 minutes in which to wind up on whatever topic you wish to speak.

Cde. Mohamed: I was just moving on to the question of University and to say that this is also an area about which we are concerned. We also want to look at certain factors here because the reports that were recently given by the teams have not been very pleasant reading. They show that in this area much must be done. We know that the University is reaching saturation point and we have not had the opportunity of seeing much expansion work there. So the Vice Chancellor said. In fact, Cde. Trotz, Dean of the Faculty of Natural Sciences said that proposals for the construction of the science building and the chemistry building had to be shelved because of financial constraints. We have had cases where the Agriculture Faculty has suffered. That is one problem within our University.

Another problem is staff shortage. At the moment, it has lost about 23 percent of its staff. People may not have been attracted to the University and a percentage which, the experts say, is very dangerous with respect to the University. In addition we have another letter which was sent by the Pro-Chancellor of the University of Guyana, which time will not permit us to deal with here, but it definitely will be dealt with in the Committee of Supply. This is a serious problem.

There is another serious problem which will also affect the entire question of democracy and autonomy at the University. Now they are proposing to put the regulation of students into the hands of a Select Committee, a Committee which will no doubt function in the interest of the P.N.C., having failed to use National Service effectively. Now a new technique is being devised.

It is something to which we are strongly opposed because it will affect the whole question of higher education in this country.

Time does not permit, but I understand, therefore, I will not be able to raise other questions. I do hope that in the brief way I have touched on these questions the Minister and the Ministry of Education will pay a lot of attention to the whole direction of education at the moment. I would like to re-make my call to the Government and ask that it considers the setting up of a public inquiry to investigate the Ministry and the bad results that we have been getting in the field of education so far.

Suspension of Sitting

The Speaker: Cde. Leader of the House, I am going to suspend the Sitting for 5 minutes by which time you will see that the House is properly constituted and there is proper decorum and dignity. The Sitting of the House is suspended for 5 minutes.

Sitting suspended at 8:34 p.m.

6.3.78

National Assembly

8:39 - 8:45 p.m.

8:39 p.m.

On resumption - -

Resumption of Budget Debate

The Speaker: Cde. Minister of Education.

The Minister of Education, Social Development and Culture (Cde. Teekah):

Cde. Speaker, let me hasten to say that I am very happy to be associated with the budgetary allocations for education, as presented by the Cde. Minister of Finance last Monday, in the 1978 National Budget. You know, Cde. Speaker, I think it would not be an over-statement to say that this Government's performance in the field of education is, metaphorically speaking, the brightest jewel in the crown of Guyana, perhaps keenly rivalled only by our foreign policy. But far too often adequate appreciation is not given to what we are doing. I think those of us who are socialists must look at things dialectically. We must not look at matters or issues in isolation. We ought to look at Government's policy and achievements in education in relation to the size of the economy. I submit that any analysis of the educational system, its performance and achievements is unscientific and false if it does not take into account the connection and the inter-relationship between what we do in education and what the nation's capacity allows us to do.

I now invite Members of the Assembly to look at the facts at the various levels in the field of education. But before doing so I would like to point out two significant developments. First, in Guyana, education is free from the nursery level to the university level for eighteen months now. Secondly, it might surprise many of us to learn that the education budget of 1978 is greater than the national budget of 1964. I heard of comments when I was not here earlier this afternoon about the decrease in the size of the budget and all that, but, Cde. Speaker, we are spending \$92.9 million in education this year and the budget of 1964 spent for the whole country

\$79.6 million, \$13.3 million less, 16.8 percent less. I do not say this in order to be derisive. I am just making this point to illustrate the emphasis which is being placed on education today in Guyana, an illustration of the sincerity of the Government to develop the educational system as much as possible, given our present financial constraints.

8:45 p.m.

I would just like to pause for a while to answer a few criticisms. I am told that my comrade across there on the Opposition Benches said that I refused to give him some information for which he asked. Well, sometime last week, sitting across from me, he did ask me informally for some statistics. I said: "I will not give you; listen to me on Monday when I speak," and as a former student of mine, he will learn when I speak. Cde. Speaker, I refuse to do the work of anyone. I was once in the Opposition. I know how hard it is to do research, and a good parliamentarian is one who shows the capacity to do research and to come out well in the debate. If the comrade wants to do research, he wants statistics, let him go and work hard and then he will prove himself as a parliamentarian.

There is talk of shortage of science teachers. First of all, at our training institutions, science is compulsory for every teacher trainee. Every single one has to do science. It is part of the curriculum. So, as far as our teachers are concerned, they must do science. That is compulsory. Now, it is true that Guyana does not have enough science teachers. That is true, but Cde. Speaker, the whole world suffers from a shortage of science teachers including the Socialist countries, and, therefore, Guyana is no exception to the rule. We are not magnificent, we are only the other day Independent and we are striving towards improving the situation. The comrade did say that we are placing emphasis in this field. I am glad that he recognised this because we recognise that we need to produce more science teachers and that is exactly what we are doing.

Then there is the criticism about borrowing from the I.B.R.D. The I.B.R.D. is also known as the World Bank. I would like to remind the comrade of the Opposition, Cde. Mohamed, that the World Bank was one of the institutions approached by the then Premier of 1961-1964 for a loan and the only reason that Guyana did not have a loan from the World Bank was because Guyana was not Independent and Britain did not allow it. But the P.P.P. sought a loan from the World Bank between 1961 and 1964.

The Speaker: Comrade Minister, you did not tell your student that before?

Cde. Teekah: I thought he knew it, Cde. Speaker, and I was rather surprised that he raised it here because Dr. Jagan used to lecture on this all the time, that the British prevented him from getting money from the World Bank.

The other comment was a statement by Cde. Mohamed, when I came in here, that UNESCO has become a cover for the I.B.R.D. and so on. I would like to inform Cde. Mohamed that the headquarters for UNESCO in Latin America is in Cuba and, therefore, if UNESCO is covering up for imperialism, maybe Cuba is part of it. Now, I am not saying so, because the Minister of Culture of Cuba and I attended a UNESCO Conference recently. We had the best of relationships. We worked very closely with each other and I think we were very satisfied with what we were able to achieve for our respective countries but if it is that UNESCO is assisting in this area to the extent that it could possibly - - - [**Interruption.**]

The Speaker: Cde. Mohamed, the Cde. Minister was not interrupting you when you were speaking.

Cde. Teekah: I would not accuse UNESCO, and this Government would not accuse UNESCO of covering up for any imperialist agent. If, as he said, UNESCO is becoming a cover for imperialism, then Cuba must be a part of it. But my God! I could not imagine Cuba taking

part in it. I respect that country so much that I refuse to believe that Cuba would take part in that.

The other point of the curriculum of our multilateral schools being decided by the I.B.R.D. is absolutely false. It is nonsense! We decide what must be taught in our multilateral schools. The officers of the Ministry of Education, Social Development and Culture decide that. And then, there is this other point about the consultants coming down from the World Bank, that all these are imperialist agents who come under the cover of being consultants. The World Bank helps in some cases to pay some of our consultants. UNESCO also helped us to pay the salaries of some of our consultants but we select the consultants we want. I can name off-hand two consultants. Dr. Rudolph Grant, I would like to hear if the Opposition would call him an imperialist agent or what have you, or reactionary, and Dr. Percy Anderson, people who profess socialist beliefs, people who advocate socialism.

Another thing since I am on this point is that we are now engaged in the Second Education Project of which I will speak a little later. But Guyana is the only country so far and the World Bank people have accepted this – or we are the first country so far – to decide who must be the contractors to build our schools. We are taking Guyanese contractors, local contractors to build our schools in Guyana. We dictated this.

Now let us look at the progress made at each level of education in Guyana. Just prior to Independence, using 1964 as the base year, at the nursery level, there was not a single child in Guyana receiving free nursery education. Nursery education was a luxury which only the rich or the well-to-do could afford. The sons and daughters of the working class, the peasantry, the working people still went to some nursery schools but those nursery schools they attended were just bottom-house schools and they were managed by what one of my officers called recently,

“child-minders”, not teachers, really. Those were the schools that the children of the working-class in Guyana, the children of the peasantry attended. Today, we have opened the doors of all nursery schools to children of any social status, of every social status, in this country.

8:55 p.m.

I understand that we were asked earlier this afternoon where is the socialism in the educational system. That is socialism in the educational system. It is also important to note just a while ago before the comrade from the Opposition took his seat, he spoke about the shortage of places and so on. Let me give him the facts. In 1976 when the Government nationalised the schools, Government nationalised 151 nursery schools. Only those schools existed at the nursery level. Between September 1976 and February 1978, a span of 18 months, we have established 169 more nursery schools in Guyana. [Applause.] Today, we have 320 nursery schools offering free places to 27,000 children between 3 years 9 months and 5 years 9 months. At the primary level, again using 1964 as the base year, there were 358 primary schools in 1964 offering primary education to 126,494 pupils. In February 1978, there are 435 primary schools, an increase of 77 or 22 percent over the '64 number, catering for 140,394 pupils. It is also apposite that I mention that overcrowding in the primary schools in 1964 was 21.7 percent. This year there is still overcrowding because we are still developing. We don't have 21.7 percent, we only have 8 percent overcrowding.

At secondary level, again using 1964 as the base year, there were 13 secondary schools. Today, in 1978 at the 28th February, 1978, there are 84 secondary schools in Guyana, 6 of which are multilateral, 28 are Community High, and while in 1964 there were 43,830 students, today, there are 73,429 students in the Secondary Schools, an increase of 67.5 percent. Cde. Mohamed ended his speech on the note that he hopes the Minister of Education will do something about it. I asked the planning unit this morning to check to see how many schools were established between April last and up to the end of February this year. I am doing something about it

because 41 schools were established between April last year and February this year. Now, teachers in the Secondary Schools, as I am on the level of secondary education, I want to show also that there has been an increase in the number of teachers in secondary schools because while in 1964 there were only 1,423 teachers in the secondary schools in Guyana, at the end of February this year there were 3,429 teachers in secondary schools, an increase of 141 percent. These are the statistics that I had in mind to give Cde. Mohamed.

Now, talking about teachers, Cde. Speaker, I would like to deal now with the area of teacher training. First, I will deal with training in primary education. In 1964, the College catered for only 206 students. Today, our primary teacher training college, the Cyril Potter College of Primary Education, caters for 620 students, an increase of 201 percent over the '64 figure. Isn't this progress? Now, let us look at teacher training at the secondary school level. In 1964, there was no institution in this country which trained secondary school teachers. Today, we have the Lilian Dewar College of Secondary Education and its capacity is 163. Over the period 1964 to now, the period I would like to review and which I am reviewing, there have been 4,038 teachers trained between that time in 1964, December, to February 1978. So when we speak about what is being done, as I said earlier, everything has to be looked at dialectically; you will have to look at development in terms of your population, in terms of your national wealth. That is how we were looking at development.

In 1964, there was no Secondary Teachers Training College, now there is development; people are receiving training at that institution. There was no programme at all in 1964 for teachers in secondary school. Today, we have such a programme and not only at that institution, we have more than that. There is also training at the University level for our teachers. In 1967, a course for the Diploma in Education (Dip.Ed.) was mounted and the Dip.Ed. programme so far has put out 54 graduates. In 1975, a programme for the Certificate in Education (Cert. Ed.) was offered. To date, we have had 72 graduates. In 1975, also a programme for the Bachelor's Degree in Education was offered; to date we have had 57 Guyanese trained in Guyana, 57

teachers and persons involved in education, education officers, education supervisors and so on, having the Dip.Ed. And in 1976, the Masters Degree in Education was offered by the University for teachers, for Education Officers, Education Supervisors, for professional Officers working in the Ministry and it is expected this year that we will put out our first batch of graduates from the massive degree programme in education, a batch of twenty-six, this year. So this is how we have progressed so far in the field of teacher-training.

9:05 p.m.

In 1964, beyond primary level was not known. We have now the primary level, the secondary level, and the university level and there are varying levels at the university level. I ought to mention too that in 1964 a teacher trainee received a loan, if he or she resided in Georgetown, of \$50. If he or she resided outside of Georgetown, the loan was \$70. Naturally, a loan has to be repaid. As time went on, that loan was increased to \$100. Last year, Government abolished that loan, converted it into a grant and we now offer a resident teacher trainee \$125 and a non-resident teacher trainee \$150. **[Applause]** In addition, there is also a book grant of \$150 being given. So these are growth points in education and we must not be so selfish and petty not to recognise where development is taking place, like the ostrich burying its head in the sand, and not recognising what is happening around us. We must see the truth. If we see somebody doing something well, be man enough to recognise it. But I have only been hearing of wrongs, I have not been hearing praise.

I now turn to the field of technical and vocational training. Using 1964 as the base year, there were only two institutions that offered technical and vocational training in Guyana, catering for 1,541 students. In 1978, there are now five such institutions. We have the Government Technical Institute, the New Amsterdam Technical Institute, the Guyana Industrial Training Centre, the Carnegie School of Home Economics and Fredericks School of Home Economics. They cater together for a total of 4,026 students. The G.T.I. today caters for 95.3 percent more students than it did in 1964 and the Carnegie School of Home Economics serves 100.9 percent more persons than it did in 1964. So it would be true to say that our technical and vocational institutions involve 161.3 percent of persons more than they did in 1964. I wish to point out that the Guyana Industrial training Centre, perhaps the only one in the Commonwealth Caribbean, maybe one of the few in Latin America, offers its students a stipend of \$10 weekly as they receive their training. This is the only institute in the Commonwealth Caribbean to do so and possibly one of the few in Latin America.

I now move on to discuss tertiary and university education. Since 1964, the University of Guyana has its own buildings. In 1964, there were only three faculties at U.G., namely, Arts, Social Sciences, Natural Sciences. In 1978, the number of faculties has increased by 100 percent. We have six faculties now at the University of Guyana. In addition to Arts, Natural Sciences and Social Sciences, we have the Faculty of Education, the Faculty of Technology, and the Faculty of Agriculture. In 1964, there were only 164 students at U.G. In 1978, there are 1,749 students. In the Faculty of Social Sciences, we now offer a Diploma in Public Administration, Social Work, Public Communications. We offer also the Degree in Management, a Degree in Political Sciences and a Degree in Business Administration. We also offer the part one Degree in Law. In the Faculty of Natural Sciences, we offer the Certificate in Medical Technology and a Diploma in Pharmacy. In the Faculty of Arts, we now offer a Degree in Portuguese and we offer a Masters Degree in History. This is how we have been making progress in education.

Also, for the University of Guyana, Government's policy has been and continues to be to release Government workers of this country on full pay to attend U.G. We have been doing that. Today, there are hundreds of students at U.G. who are released from their work to attend university with their salaries paid to them every month. Teachers are included in the release. It is a heavy price to pay but we pay it because we recognise the value of education and it costs this Government \$7.8 million to do this yearly. But we pay this heavy price because we recognise the importance of doing this.

9:15 p.m.

Also, the University of Guyana, since 1964 has established an Extra-mural Department. It is all in keeping with our socialist objectives because we cater for those students who cannot go to U.G. and by our Extra-mural Department those students who cannot go to Turkeyen,

Turkeyen goes to them. That is what we are doing. We have also doubled the number of Guyana Scholarships since 1964 because that is the base year that I am using. In 1964, there were only three Guyana Scholarships offered. In 1978, officially there are supposed to be six but last year because of several ties, nine students earning the highest number of points and five of those students earning the same number of points, in order not to discriminate against them, we decided and we gave nine Guyana Scholarships. The Cabinet decided it should give nine last year. That is the way the Cabinet approaches the people of Guyana and education generally.

I should mention also that there are certain disciplines which we do not offer at U.G. and in order to pursue those disciplines, we sent our students overseas to institutions of higher learning in friendly countries both in the West and in the East and today we have approximately 600 students in friendly countries pursuing education in institutions of higher learning. Off the cuff, I can tell you that in Cuba, we have approximately 120 students in institutions of higher learning in the fields of medicine, engineering, aviation, to name just a few. I would like to say this also: that even though we sent students overseas on conditional Scholarships, for example, Cuba, a socialist country which gives allowances to students, our students take those allowances but this Government gives additional allowances to those students to help them further by increasing their stipends. It costs us \$1.4 million yearly.

Now let me turn to certain new developments in education. We inherited from the imperialists, from the colonialists, an educational system that was not wholly relevant to our country and to the society that the majority of Guyanese wished to establish. There has been need to re-fashion and remould our educational system and we are doing just that. Among the innovations are, to begin with, the community High Schools and the Multilateral Schools. These schools have brought about a diversification of the curriculum of secondary schools to provide for the interests, abilities and aptitudes of our students and they represent a break away from the traditional grammar-type of secondary school, for they provide functional and real-life secondary education. In our multilateral schools, for example, this programme is offered to the students,

first three years general studies, so the student is exposed to several areas of learning, a broad exposure in the first three years. The final two years are devoted to optional streaming according to the children's own interest, abilities, aptitude and that is how the new Guyanese citizen is being developed today. We wish him to have a broad outlook in life, a wider personality, a greater personality.

In the Community High Schools for example, they offer a four-year programme. The first three years are devoted to what is called the academic area of education. The final year is devoted to the pre-vocational subjects. And that is done on a percentage basis because in the Community High Schools, the first three years are devoted 60 percent to the academic subjects, 40 percent to pre-vocational subjects, and in the final year it is the converse. Pre-vocational subjects take up 60 percent of the time and the so-called academic subjects take up 40 percent of the time. Cde. Mohamed mentioned the work study. There is also, Cde. Speaker, the work study programme that is offered by the Ministry of Education, Social Development and Culture.

[Interruption]

That Professor is Dr. Jagan's very good friend.

9:25 p.m.

Cde. Speaker, I wonder if you would allow me one brief moment to say something that has been spoken about. In Barbados, at Cave Hill, there is a Professor by the name of Dr. Chowdrey. I recall him once inviting myself and Dr. Cheddi Jagan to lunch at the Cambridge Hotel.

The Speaker: Cde. Teekah, you must not allow these hecklings to interfere with you, especially when they come from people whom you have taught. Then there are with us some old people whom you have to permit to say something to keep themselves occupied. In every country, in

every society there is always a jester. You have to understand and appreciate these things. Please proceed.

Cde. Teekah: Thank you, Cde. Speaker, for your wise counsel.

The Speaker: For instance, today I was telling Cde. Narbada he knows only ‘why’. Since then, he has been borrowing the dictionary from the library and he has learnt a few additional words. **[Interruption]**

Cde. Teekah: As I was saying, the objectives of the work-study programme are:

- 1) The provision of work experience for students during their final years at school;
- 2) The development of a positive and responsible attitude towards work and to relationship with others in a work situation.
- 3) To enable students to relate the significance of their studies to the world of work and, at the same time, ensuring that this work experience does not deteriorate into a series of repetitive unskilled tasks.
- 4) The bridging of the gap between the theoretical and the practical as to keep students’ perspectives realistic;
- 5) The provision of an opportunity for the testing of the students’ interests, and suitability in, and suitability for the occupation he or she is experiencing;
- 6) To provide students with meaningful work experience which will, at the same time, make schools productive thereby contributing to their own maintenance.

The whole idea is to link the school with its community and the community with the school, a blending of theory and practice. Because of the swing away from the traditional type of education and our deliberate effort to re-arrange the Guyanese people to work to achieve the national objectives, there has been need to revolutionise the education system and the examination system. Starting at the bottom officially, cabinet decided last year to abolish the

Common Entrance Examination. I once described that examination as institutionalised discrimination. Cabinet abolished that examination last year and instituted in its place the Secondary Schools Entrance examination (SSEE) which will be taken by all students in the below 12 years group. There is no pass or fail any longer but every child who takes the SSEE, will be allocated a place in a secondary school in Guyana on the basis of his or her results.

[Applause]

Now, let me make this point very clear. When I speak about guaranteeing a secondary school place for every child, I am not talking about Queen's College or Bishop's; they are not the only high schools. We have to learn that there are other schools. Sometimes people think that if their child does not obtain a place at schools like Bishops', Queen's, St. Stanislaus or at St. Rose's, that child is not going to high school, or he or she is not getting the correct type of secondary education. Well, they must recognise that there are other high schools, equally good, because from the results we have been having even at the Guyana scholarship level, we have winners from schools other than those I named earlier. So there is to be a free flow from the nursery schools to the primary schools to the secondary schools and the examinations that are taken are only for allocating places. Even the card that will be sent out will say, "Dear Parent, etc. Etc., your child has been allocated a place in the XYZ school." And not pass or fail any longer. On the question of revolutionising our examination system, I would like to inform the House that last year, we abolished the College of Preceptors examination and the Preliminary Certificate Examination, the former was a foreign examination and the latter we find no longer relevant in the circumstances. Instead of the C.P. and P.C.E., we have instituted the Secondary Schools Proficiency Examination (SSPE) and this year that examination will be taken in two parts. Part I, will still offer the late developer in the academic field a chance to be re-allocated to a school where the emphasis is on that type of education, because we recognise that not all children develop in the same manner and at the same place. Some are slow learners, some are late developers. So if the child shows excellence at the SSPE Examination Part I in a particular

subject, for example, if the child is good at the grammar-type education, that child is re-allocated to a school where that is emphasised, Queen's College, St. Stanislaus College, and so on.

The Part II of the examination will be for those children who are continuing with the SSPE programme and at the end of that examination the child will be awarded the Secondary Schools Proficiency Diploma. This will be the first year - -

The Speaker: Cde. Ram Karran, you should not be bothered about the "P's," you have three "P's".

9:35 p.m.

Cde. Teekah: Then, Cde. Speaker, at the G.C.E. level, in 1979, we will be having for the first time a Caribbean Examination, not an English-formulated, oriented, produced examination. The Caribbean Examinations Council Examination, commonly known as C.X.C will be replacing the G.C.E. in five subjects in Guyana: English Language, History, Geography, Mathematics, and Integrated Science. The aim is to obtain an examination more relevant to our people, to our society, and to our objectives.

Let me now discuss this much talked-about question of text books and exercise books. In order to assist our students and reduce whatever costs they still have to bear in pursuing a good education, Government has embarked upon the policy of providing free text books and free exercise books to all children of school age. I agree, Cde. Speaker, like everything, we must have teething problems. It is a new programme in this country; it is a new service in this country. We have had problems of transportation, storage, inexperienced staff, headmasters sending their request late. We have had all sorts of problems. But, I submit, and strongly too, that the children of school age in Guyana have benefited immensely from the free text book and the free exercise book programme. To date we have distributed two million text books and

twelve million exercise books since the programme began, costing a sum of \$17 million. And anyone who says that the young people of this country have not benefited from Government's programme of giving free text books and free exercise books really is dishonest and also ungrateful.

I move to the issue of truants.

The Speaker: You will have to because you have only 5 minutes more. When we come to the Estimates, you will have nearly three hours under that Head.

Cde. Teekah: Thank you, Cde. Speaker. I would like the nation to know that we are thinking very seriously of this problem and we have set up a Committee to look at the problems involving truancy and to see how we can solve them. I will go into greater detail during the consideration of the Estimates. At the same time, we seek to raise the cultural levels of the young people by creating programmes which allow a greater appreciation of our cultural heritage and consistently strive towards cultural refinement in our dress, in our speech, in our music, in our painting, in our sculpture, in our song, dance and our way of life. Our department of culture is constantly expanding. We now boast the largest and best cultural centre in the Commonwealth Caribbean and performers to Guyana from both the Socialist and non-Socialist countries have told me it is one of the very best in Latin America. They say Guyana and Cuba have the best Cultural centres. I really do not know, but that is what strangers say. We have also established a Department of Creative Writing, a Department of Music, a Department of Drama, and a Department of Folk Research. In addition, there are also the Burrowes School of Art and the National School of Dance. They all contribute to our educational system and add a new dimension to the education received by our young people, a cultural dimension, and with Guyfesta, our biennial festival of creative arts, we are bound to succeed in welding together the people of Guyana, not only politically and economically but also culturally.

There is one last project I would like to mention before I conclude. I would like to speak about the second education project. By the second education project, we hope to involve a sum of \$37.7 million and the money will be spent on the building of seven Community High Schools, the extending of ten Secondary Schools to provide them with multilateral programme, the building of a Secondary Teachers' Training College at Turkeyen, the building or establishment of an Agricultural Technical Training Institute at Mon Repos, the establishment of an In-Service and Communication Centre for Agriculture at Mon Repos, the establishment of six rural training centres at Onverwagt, Black Bush, Anna Regina, Bartica, Kuru Kururu and Lethem, a regional Animal Health Training Centre at Mon Repos. Even without the query from the comrade sitting down there, I had in mind, as I do now, to inform this House that these are expected to be completed in 1980 and these will be living testimony to the gigantic strides in the field of education. I would not argue whether it would not be completed in a particular month in 1980 or particular day. Once the project is completed, and I know it will be completed. All those things I have enunciated will be done.

In conclusion, I think no honest or conscious Guyanese could really and truly fault Government's education policy. Our education policy, as we conceive it, is to play a vital role in the building, the construction of socialism in Guyana ... both by producing the skills required for such a society and the new outlook which is a prerequisite for socialist planning. I am happy to say that we are creating the new educational system for socialism in Guyana.

9:45 p.m.

I wish to end by quoting the first verse of a song written by a young man in the Ministry of Education, Social Development and Culture, George Noel. The song is entitled "Better Life" and it was written on the occasion of the 55th birthday of the Cde. Prime Minister. It states:

"We have a great task before us
To build Guyana for all.

We, born in this very country,
We cannot let Guyana fall.
Don't let us lick down and hustle
for power and trample the fellow man;
We must care whether we build or destroy,
After all, Guyana is our land." [Applause]

The Speaker: Cde. Duncan.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Economic Development and Co-operatives (Cde. Duncan): Cde. Speaker, I should like again, as I did last year to give full support to our national Budget for 1978 as presented by Cde. Frank Hope, our Minister of Finance. I recall during 1977 January, in support of that Budget, stating that the 1977 Budget had been presented against the background of serious political and economic challenges to this nation. None of us, I am sure, doubted that that was the case. We described our Budget then as an austerity Budget and the year, 1977 as an austerity year. Understandably, Cde. Speaker, we were and still are the victims of natural and financial problems in Guyana. We are not alone. I am sure we recognise that because we know that the whole world suffers from economic recession. Today, we must all acknowledge that we are in a serious economic crisis in this country. At least by now we must acknowledge that austerity and our crisis are a part of human development everywhere. We must acknowledge that other countries and people in some parts of the world are worse off than we are while those that are better off than we are, are severely affected by some economic crisis. No amount of words can hide this fact, that throughout the world countries are experiencing economic recession even in the so-called "developed world".

Before I make my further contribution to support the 1978 Budget, I would like to respond to criticisms advanced last Friday by Cde Nokta, member of the Opposition, in his attempt to mislead this House. I have, like he has, travelled Essequibo Coast, Pomeroun,

Moruca, Mahaica, Mahaicony, Essequibo, Potaro, Corentyne, right along the borders including the Atlantic border. I spoke with the same people with whom he spoke. I spoke in the language that they understand along the borders. I have heard about the molehills from which he tried to make mountains. Cde. Nokta stated from the beginning of his contribution to the Budget Debate that this Government made errors upon errors. He cited cases where Government achieved certain things during its term of office and he turned those achievements to suit his purposes. He continued making his own errors upon errors and victimised himself with his own errors.

He further stated that one-third of the Siparuta's population, that is, in the Corentyne River had moved across to Surinam to live and that cassava takes three months to ripen. Further he said that Rupununi's bridges are impassable, that the people in the Rupununi are starving to death, that there was shooting of Amerindians by members of the Guyana Defence Force, that Amerindians are crossing the borders because of Police and Army harassment, that ammunition was cheap during the P.P.P.'s regime, that Amerindians paddle over a hundred miles to find markets for their produce, and that transport and medical services were hopeless.

May I, Cde. Speaker, respond to some of the misrepresentations. First, let us note that the movement of Amerindians along the borders with Surinam, Brazil, and Venezuela is normal. The movement of Amerindians at Orealla, Siparuta, Spira and Konashen to Surinam and Brazil is normal. The movement of Amerindians of Achawib, Karaudarnawa, Aishalton, Awarewaunawe, Maruranawa, Shea, Sawariwau, sand Creek, Nacushi, Potarwana, Sawarab, St. Ignatius, Lethem, Moco Moco, Nappi, Parishara, Yupukarri, Toka, Karasabai, Tiger Pond, Tipuru, Yarwong-Paru, Monkey Mountain, Taruka, Paramakatoi, Kato, Kurukabaru, Chiung Mouth, Puwa, Kanapang, Itabac, Orinduik, Kamana, Waipa, Kaibarupai, and Amakokopai to Brazil is normal. The movement of Amerindians of Paruima, Kaikan, Arau, Awarasati, Baramita, Kamwatta and Mabaruma to Venezuela is normal. It is apparent that Cde. Nokta did not know this fact until he became a wanderer along our borders. In his wanderings he had selected only the bad side of things and spoke about the bad side of life and forgot the good side

of things in Guyana. Cassava he said, ripens in three months but he has not told us – and perhaps he does not know – what kind of cassava ripens in three months. He must do some more research so that he will know the right answer, which kind of cassava ripens in three months.

9:55 p.m.

In the Rupununi, he said, the bridges were or are impassable but he did not say why. The bridges in the Rupununi, like the houses around Georgetown, have been victims of fire. He also said that people starved to death in the Rupununi. May I inform this honourable House, Cde. Speaker, that the people did not starve to death in the Rupununi. In fact, people in the Rupununi can survive without the food imported either from abroad or from Georgetown. If he does not understand that, then maybe he can do some more walking. I am almost sure that he has not seen certain parts of Pakaraima where he has to walk distances to understand the natural way of life of Guyanese people. He also said that Morawhanna is accessible from Georgetown. He has not seen the part of the country where you have to walk and climb 3,000 feet above sea level.

Perhaps it would benefit the Members of this House to know that there is a cycle of drought in the Rupununi which perhaps can be found in other parts of the world. That is, every leap year there are floods followed by severe droughts. Let us, for example, look at the cycle of four years. I have lived on this earth for about 35 years and I can remember when we had floods that affected the Rupununi. I recall that during the following years we had floods which were followed by droughts. In 1948 we had floods followed by severe droughts beginning from September 1948 and ending in April or May in 1949. Again they came back in 1952 to 1953; then in 1956 to 1957; then from 1960 to 1961; in 1964 to 1965; again in 1968 to 1969; in 1972 to 1973, and the last being from 1976 to 1977. Sometimes people suffered severely sometimes to a lesser extent. Again in 1980 to 1981 we must expect floods and droughts. I have no doubt that certain parts of the Mazaruni/Potaro region, and perhaps the North West Region had been similarly affected.

Again I say that even in the so-called developed world, Socialist or Capitalist, such weather conditions have affected the lives of the people and central Government must help in such situations. This Government has been able to assist in helping the people whose cassava had dried out. In the first place, the cassava was drowned for weeks and when the sun took over, it was dried out. So there was a shortage of cassava, and it is no use fooling around and saying that there was no shortage of cassava. That is a fact. For most of my 35 years of existence I have lived in the Rupununi and no amount of words can hide those facts.

Cde. Nokta might want to say that 1977 was not a leap year but floods and droughts, usually experienced during the leap year and the following year as in this case, are caught up by the drought. It is not something strange that Amerindians who have selected perhaps wrong spots for farms near the creeks suffered more than those Amerindians who have built part of their farms on top of a hill and part in the swamp. Although there would be a severe shortage of cassava, there would still be other people to assist those who are without. I thought I should mention this because last year I heard criticisms from the Opposition and we must now signal that kind of warning to other regions that might be similarly affected in 1980 and 1981. Of course, I would like to add this part, that the food supplies that we were able to fly in to the Rupununi also helped our neighbours from Brazil, and I suppose from Venezuela, because those people in Venezuela and Brazil, who live in the same tropical belt of this world, suffered the same plight. In fact, little Guyana has been helping citizens of Brazil and Venezuela who are victims of the same leap-year floods and droughts. This cannot be doubted and since I am not speaking for other Governments, I would not go into details of the problems of Venezuela, Brazil and perhaps Suriname.

We made sure this time that the Rupununi people obtained their food supplies from Georgetown during those hard times. I would like to emphasise that the people of the Rupununi can survive without Georgetown food, and in fact, they had been surviving without supplies from Georgetown, in the days before the Colonial Government, before the Interim Government,

before the P.P.P. Government, and before this Government. But it must be noted that the P.N.C. Government has helped tremendously the victims of floods and droughts more than any other Government of the past.

Cde. Nokta said there has been shooting of Amerindians by the security forces. We cannot blame the Army or the Police Force entirely for what has been happening in isolated cases. In any society there might be, and perhaps even among members of this National Assembly, delinquents. Our security forces in this country have never planned to shoot Amerindians. Our security forces will never plan to shoot Amerindians. As I said, worse things can happen in a life created by delinquents. You must understand that Amerindians, like their fellow Guyanese, must expect that the Army must be on the alert everywhere on the borders and within the communities and Amerindians must expect that if they become agents of external aggression they must expect that the Army will be in sight. There must have been a certain situation along the border where our security forces had to intervene. Amerindians must expect that the security forces of this country will be on the alert all the time ... Especially when we know that such aggression can take place from Atlantic, Venezuela, Brazil or Suriname.

10:05 p.m.

On the question of ammunition being cheap during the regime of the P.P.P., I still cannot reason how Cde. Nokta can state that as a matter of fact. My own analysis is that ammunition is an imported item. We do not manufacture ammunition in this country. Ammunition, as an imported item, is like one of the many imported items to this country. The prices of those imported commodities must be expected to go up. It is like man. Man cannot control his age. The cost of living is like that. We cannot stop age. If you want to stop at sixty years of age, for example, perhaps you have to die at that age so that you do not grow older. Cost of living throughout the world is something like that. The more the world is populated, one must expect

that commodities throughout the world will become scarce, and because of that the prices will also go up affecting the rising population throughout the world.

Referring to the case where Amerindians have to paddle over one hundred miles to find markets, we know as a fact, I am sure Cde. Nokta knows as well, that throughout the length and breadth of this country Government has provided markets for produce. Even internationally the Government has provided markets for Amerindians' produce. For example, we have G.M.C. buying agents who buy produce in various parts of the country but it must be understood that areas like Rupununi, North-West, and Mazaruni-Potaro are big areas geographically and there will be isolated cases where Amerindians on their own would paddle great distances in order to market their produce and purchase goods at the same time. But in most cases, this Government provides markets for Amerindians' produce, including markets abroad for example, for gold and diamonds. One will see that there is no discrimination against Amerindians in the purchase of their produce. They use the same channels that are used by other Guyanese to market their produce.

On the question of transport and medical services - -

The Speaker: Cde. Duncan, you have 5 minutes more.

Cde. Duncan: On the question of transport and medical services being hopeless, Cde. Speaker, I am sure that you and other Members of this National Assembly heard that long playing record before in 1977. Since time is against me, I would just want to refer briefly to the contribution the Amerindian economy has made in terms of gaining foreign exchange for this country. Perhaps before I touch on that I should mention that it was during the regime of this Government that the answer was given to the vexed question of Amerindian ownership of lands. The legal land titles were granted to Amerindian Village Councils. There are sixty-five areas for which this Government has granted freehold titles to Amerindians for lands which they have

occupied from time immemorial and the total area, according to the figures available covers about 3,400 square miles.

There have been other developments during the time of this Government but I would just like to focus attention on a scheme we had started some years ago. I refer to the Amerindian Handicraft Scheme. We started that scheme in 1970 and over the years it has improved. The following figures are available: Purchases from the year 1970 to 12th January, 1978 - \$211,319.27. This amount represents purchases. Sales locally and abroad amounted to \$435,707.36 for the same period. So Amerindian handicraft has been finding markets locally and abroad, and from those external markets we did earn foreign exchange.

If there is still any time left for me, I would just like to support Cde. Teekah in what he said about the contribution Amerindians have made to Guyanese culture. During 1975 and 1977 many Amerindians throughout the country participated in Guyfesta. Amerindians are today a proud people because they contributed directly to the enrichment of Guyanese culture locally and internationally.

Cde. Sukul: Cde. Speaker, as I stand this evening to make my contribution in support of the 1978 Budget and four-year development plan presented by the Cde. Finance Minister, may I say that having sat in this House as a parliamentarian, I have been listening to the same trumpet being blown and the same song of the Opposition. That is their level of contribution to this debate; it is of a low standard. This shows, Cde. Speaker, that there is no constructive criticism to this Budget as presented by the Cde. Finance Minister under the vanguard Party of this nation – P.N.C. As Cde. Teekah – if I may quote my colleague – said, they are like the ostrich. They are digging their heads in the sand all the time and are afraid to tell this nation that this Budget is so designed for the people's development and for the nation as a whole.

10:15 p.m.

Cde. Speaker, I am reminded of a biblical quotation that says man is a social animal and man takes his ideas from those whom he considers to be his moral superiors. The blind cannot lead the blind any more, as we can see. The Opposition has failed in so many instances. The members have tried to fool the people of this nation but the people will not be fooled as easily as they were, as witnessed during the recent strike in the sugar industry. If they did not call off the strike – but they took the hint – they would have been embarrassed because thousands of the sugar workers had already gone back to work in the fields. So we can see there where they tried to fool this nation all the time but the people will not be fooled any more. They realised that it was this Opposition, when in Government, which failed to better the lot of the people of this nation.

And Cde. Speaker, may I mention tonight, some of the achievements, some of the advances, some of the betterment brought to the people by this Government in power, the P.N.C. Under the wise and astute leadership of our Cde. Leader and Prime Minister, when the People's National Congress assumed office as the Government of Guyana, it transformed the chaos of the sixties into stability, peace and progress that we see pervading in this land of ours today. **[Applause]** We all remember what this land of ours was like before 1964. It was a land of turmoil; it was a land of disunity; it was a land where the P.P.P. fooled the people and preached racism to them. Cde. Speaker, it is only because of the wise and astute leadership of this vanguard Party of the nation, the P.N.C. that certain historical imbalances were corrected, among other things. These imbalances existed in our cultural and religious life for Cde. Speaker, we all know the achievements in this area are clear for all to see.

For instance, in the past, teachers were appointed to positions in the teaching service on the basis of religious affinity. We know in the past if you were a civil servant, if you were a teacher and you belonged to a certain denomination, and you did not accept that religion that was given the priority by this State, then you were not permitted to enter into the Civil Service or you

were not permitted to enter the teaching profession. But, these imbalances have been corrected by this vanguard Party of the nation, the P.N.C. So, Cde. Speaker, we find that religious denomination with a preponderance of wealth and members no longer enjoy superiority over a religious organisation whose financial resources and members.

The creation of our national holidays by the P.N.C. was so designed as to correct these imbalances, not in favour of one group or the other but in favour of the entire nation. This Party does not blow any empty shell but rather by precept and example and practice we see that this Party, the P.N.C. has brought to this nation the position where all denominations are free to practise their religions. Not only does this Party preach but also it has enshrined this in our Constitution. **[Interruption]** So, Cde. Speaker, I quote Article 11 of the Constitution of Guyana:

“Except with his own consent, no person shall be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom of conscience, and for the purposes of this article the said freedom includes freedom of thought and of religion, freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom either alone or in community with others, and both in public and in private, to manifest with propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance.”

“No religious community shall be prevented from providing religious instruction for persons of that community.”

This is where freedom of religion is enshrined by this P.N.C. Government for all the people of Guyana setting up one people, one nation and one destiny.

In the past – I remember well because I am still in that organisation – I was part of that delegation that went to the then Premier of this country when we asked that the Hindus and the Muslims should be given their festivals as national holidays of this country. The then Premier, Dr. Jagan, refused bluntly saying he could not entertain such.

I can remember very well that it was a Phagwah Day, the Prime Minister joined with the nation in celebrating Phagwah. He then made an announcement that in the future years Phagwah and Deepavali would be made National Holidays of this country. Cde. Speaker, not only Phagwah and Deepavali were given the recognition that they so deserve in this country, but also we find in the Muslim religion that Eid-ul-Azha and Yoummun-Nabbi were also recognised by this vanguard Party of the nation, the P.N.C., as being National Holidays.

10:25 p.m.

Cde. Speaker, we also find in the Christian denomination that Easter and Christmas were also given the prominence and recognition they deserve. We can see clearly that this Government does not only preach by words but it practises. It is doing things so that all can live together as one people, one nation with one destiny. In the past these festivals of the Hindus and the Muslims were not given recognition and hardly anyone of the other denominations recognised the significance of these festivals. Today, because of the P.N.C. Government in power these festivals are given recognition as national holidays so that not only Hindus or Muslims celebrate these festivals but also our Guyanese brothers of other denominations can join in celebrating or observing these festivals and knowing the significance which the P.P.P. Government in the past failed to do.

Cde. Speaker, may I quote from the Prime Minister's address to the First Biennial Congress of the People's National Congress and to this nation. This is what the Cde. Prime Minister said in Chapter 6 of this booklet:

“Recently, certain expatriate and local agents of reaction have been suggesting that in Guyana, socialism and religion are incompatible. I cannot, I dare not speak for other countries, but note immediately that I have personally seen Churches operating and tending their members in socialist countries.”

Cde. Speaker, I have had the opportunity of going to a Socialist country and I have seen it for myself. The Prime Minister went on to say:

“Ours is a secular state in which there is, and can be, no Established Church with special rights and privileges. But every Guyanese is free to, and will always continue to be free to, worship or not to worship, to believe or not to believe, without interference.

The Christians in the party have said that the basic tenets of Christianity, especially those contained in the Sermon on the Mount, express many of the beliefs of socialism, and similar sentiments have been voiced by our comrades who are adherents of the Hindu and Islamic faiths.

There are some religionist who do not subscribe to equality, who believe in the segregation of classes and the reservation of special pews in the Church for special people, who discriminate in appointments to high office as between expatriate and local clergy. These we consider aberrant and hypocrites. We oppose them and are prepared to take proper action against them.

We feel that they have identified themselves with the old economic and social order, and become the pillars thereof and certainly are not faithful exponents of their respective religions. But we do not blame their religions for their misdeeds. Freedom of religion is guaranteed.”

We can see here also that the Prime Minister has told the nation on the occasion of the First Biennial Congress of this vanguard party that freedom of religion is guaranteed without interference. This Opposition that speaks of national unity has called for national unity. But in setting up a socialist society, one of the prerequisites for national unity is that we must have peace. Whilst they are calling for peace they are the ones that are setting up factional organisations in the various denominations telling the people of this country that freedom of

religion is denied. We can see clearly from the Prime Minister's speech and enshrined in the Constitution of Guyana that freedom was not given to religion before in this country until the P.N.C. Government, this vanguard party, came on the scene of this nation.

Cde. Speaker, not only have the festivals of the various denominations been given recognition and the significance made known to comrades of other religions, but also, our Priests are given that esteemed opportunity at national functions to officiate, as we have witnessed, since this Party came into Government. Never in the past were Priests of various denominations given such recognition, it all came about through this vanguard party of the nation, the People's National Congress.

Let me now deal with some of the more practical and physical things which symbolise and adorn the religious life of our community. Through the National History and Arts Council, this vanguard party which is in Government has worked and will continue to work assiduously in the restoration and preservation of the architectural masterpieces of our three great religions. I refer to the restoration fund that was given to the St. George's Cathedral to maintain it as one of our relics in this country. Not only to that particular denomination but also for the Mandir at Woodley Park, West Coast Berbice, funds were also made available to maintain such a relic so that our future generations can be proud of it. The P.P.P. failed to do that.

I was sitting in this House when the Christians were given assistance and also the Hindus were given assistance. The Muslim community of this country is also given assistance for the brothers and sisters who want to go to Haj and Mecca. For that matter any religious leader who goes to the various pilgrimages in various parts of the world are assisted by this Government. Apart from their tickets they are given foreign exchange so they can pay their expenses.

We see here some of the benefits brought to this nation by this vanguard Party. The P.P.P. people believed in fooling the people, but as I have said, the Opposition can no longer fool

the people of this country. It was the Opposition Leader who, whilst speaking at a certain function of the Hindus to which he was invited and garlanded by the many devotees of that Hindu religion, said that religion was a dope for the people. I was there when he said that. But today we see that they are using the same religion, which he said was a dope for the people, in dividing the people. The Party and Government under our wise leadership will not condone such, for we see from his speech and from the Constitution that freedom of religion is guaranteed without any interference. In spite of what they attempt to do to divide our people, the people will not be fooled anymore. Long ago they fooled the people and the people realised that when the P.P.P. Government was in power they did nothing to help them. It was not until this Party came into power that the people were given freedom of religion and certain benefits which they did not get in the past.

10:35 p.m.

For instance, at a recent function at the Maha Sabha at which we tried to raise funds to build a new Temple in Georgetown, the Prime Minister who was present made certain commitments. We have seen that he did not make it in words alone, but he fulfilled it in practise. He said that he would permit duty-free concessions to this Temple for all materials imported from abroad for its construction. We have also seen that gifts were given, amounting to thousands of dollars, for a raffle to raise money for the construction of this Temple. So here we can see that this is not only preaching by words as the P.P.P. did in the past, trying to divide our people. Rather, this Government is interested in the peace and development of the people. So we see that this budget is so designed for the people's development and the development of the nation as a whole.

The P.P.P. tried to use its limited power in going about in the areas to divide the people. The word we often hear used is "Apanjat". But this Government will not tolerate such. Here are some of the benefits: Religious books are imported from abroad duty-free. Instruments are imported from abroad for religious purposes, for all denominations, duty-free. This was never

given by the P.P.P. Government. It was this Government which set up a Hindi desk at the University of Guyana by securing, through the auspices of the Indian Government, highly-qualified personnel, to teach Hindi whereby all in Guyana can go there and learn Hindi. This Government, in spite of the malicious Opposition, has constructed, as the Minister of Education has told this House, a National Cultural Centre whereby all denominations are free to go and give their cultural expression which was never given in the past. These are a few benefits that this Government has brought to this nation and the Government will continue to work towards the development of the people's advancement and the nation as a whole.

In conclusion, may I quote once again, for the benefit of the Opposition, from the Cde. Prime Minister's address, "Towards the Socialist Revolution", to the First Biennial Congress. He stated:

"But every Guyanese is free to, and will always continue to be free to, worship or not to worship, to believe or not to believe, without interference,"

a condition which is so enshrined in our Constitution.

The Speaker: Cde. Rayman.

Cde. Rayman: Cde. Speaker, one of the objects of the People's National Congress reads thus: To secure and maintain through the practice of co-operative Socialism the interest, well being and prosperity of all the people of Guyana. The Party over the years has assiduously pursued this commitment, even though it has not been able to accomplish everything as intended because of various financial constraints from which many countries of the developing world suffer. I will not deal with all the aspects as many of my colleagues from time to time during this debate will tell you of our attempts, achievements and proposals.

Our Party has never forgotten the indigent, the destitute, the senior citizens and those who have contributed to the nation. We will continue to look at their welfare. The Party has recognised the work of great stalwarts and provided pensions for such persons who would not have otherwise received any monetary assistance. The people have given their service to this nation and they were justly rewarded. Through the instrumentality of the Party and Government in power and faith in the leadership, we now have the Uncle Eddie's Home for senior citizens. In addition to this, we have the Palms, Dharm Shala, the Archer Home and many others. We cannot forget these people and we continue to support these institutions. We will fervently strive to banish poverty in our society.

It was during this Government's time that the National Relief Committee was established from which some people, who have become destitute from fires and other catastrophes, can obtain some measure of relief and assistance to rehabilitate them. Already, several persons have been assisted and no one knows who will be the next victim. There are also the Triplets Committee, the Social Welfare Committee of the W.R.S.M., and such like, with the aim in mind of assisting those who are in dire need as a result of uncalculated happenings. It was this Party and Government which gave free transport on Government services to pensioners. We have also increased their rates and will surely do more for them as the situation improves. In an attempt to further assist the housewives, the W.R.S.M. has instituted a regular market-day from which people can obtain supplies at reasonable prices. The W.R.S.M. has been going about giving cheer and hope, in addition to material assistance, to some of the institutions I have mentioned before and also to others such as the Best Hospital, the Georgetown Hospital, the Leprosy Hospital at Mahaica, etc. We have been doing our part in the W.R.S.M. and we hope others will emulate.

The Cde. Minister of Finance has endeavoured to portray the economic crisis in which we have found ourselves. But it is not an irreparable situation, his projections are not beyond our reach and with greater production and productivity I am sure we will overcome.

I would like to close with a quotation from Shakespeare:

“There is a tide in the affairs of man which when taken at the flood leads on to fortune.”

10:45 p.m.

The Speaker: Cde. Corrica.

Cde. Corrica: Cde. Speaker, it is indeed an honour to be associated with and a great privilege to be given this opportunity to make a contribution to what I would describe as a most significant and realistic 1978 Budget Debate. I think, Cde. Speaker, at this particular period of our nation's history, our people need to be well informed, well educated and well prepared for the task of nation building that lies ahead. This is so especially when we have in our society, dishonest persons, rumour mongers, people who would go so far even to be unpatriotic and at sometimes I would say do things that are treasonable just to prove certain points, to score certain political points. They would go to the extent to do damage to a country where, when everything is said and done, this is where we have to build, this where we have to live.

Cde. Speaker, the time is ripe now for us to let our people know where we were, where we are and where we are going. Now, a comrade from the Opposition benches, when he was making his contribution, I think it was Cde. Lalbahadur, mentioned about people worried. They are worried about the change of attitudes that they have to adopt for nation building, there would be one or two cultural changes in relation to things that we were accustomed to, because remember, we were in a colonial situation and actually overnight we were in an independent situation where Guyana belongs to us. One of the most important things is the ideological change. There is the change from being under foreign domination, from years of subjection to foreign domination which, among other things, stifled us or suppressed us culturally.

A very important feature of man's existence is culture so it is in this area that I shall try to prove how in no uncertain terms this P.N.C. party and Government from the time we took office, have paid tremendous and constant attention to the development of culture in Guyana. As a Party committed to the establishment of socialism in this country, we realise that there must be at the same time a revolution in the field of culture. A cultural revolution must take place at the same time with the political revolution, as happened in the Socialist countries and we are already seeing the benefits of these cultural developments. Cde. Hoyte, in passing, made certain remarks about the cultural developments that are taking place. I do not think that there is any other person in this House who can speak with more authenticity than I do on this subject, not because I am the Parliamentary Secretary for the Ministry of Education, Social Development and Culture but because I am what I like to describe myself as, a "cultural activist", an artiste with over twenty years of practical experience and I know how much culture was neglected in this country.

In 1964, my friends across the floor attempted a little cultural gimmick. The best thing they did in promoting that gimmick was to establish a national steel band and the sad thing about that is that they had comrades in the place that we call now the National Park, a well-developed place, eating. They were indoctrinating them with what? Every day, fried salt fish. That was the kind of food they were giving people there to eat. Imported salt fish and imported potatoes!

The Speaker: You mean Cde. Barney was in charge of that thing?

Cde. Corrica: Cde. Speaker, that was one part of it and the next part of the gimmick was that they caused embarrassment to so many other Guyanese artistes and musicians including myself. With my love for cultural activities, I was invited to be a member of the History and Arts Council. At least they did not communicate with me personally, I was communicated with by one of my colleagues and when I reached there I asked "What we are supposed to do here?" And a fellow by the name of – I think he has the same surname as the comrade over there – said "Not to worry about what you have to do. If we win the elections, then you gon get work to do."

[**Interruption**] I just want you to follow the story Cde. Speaker. I think you know part of it. And then to the great embarrassment of all - - [**Interruption**]

10:55 p.m.

The Speaker: Cde. Corrica, I want to correct you. It is the other Naraine. He was in charge of it.

Cde. Corrica: The next embarrassing part of the situation was when we asked what was the cultural work we were supposed to do. They said after the elections everything will be alright. I am going to show you how it is meshing. Our names were placed as teachers in schools. Barney was a headmaster at Monkey Mountain. That is what the members of the Opposition did to culture in this country.

This Government realised that culture has an important part to play in socialist development. Today no one can deny that there is great development in the cultural life of Guyana. [**Applause**] And let it be known that this has not come about by accident or by guess. This has come about by careful cultural planning which we know is an integral part of socialist development. So everything had to be properly planned. We realise also, that all of those who have something worthwhile to offer in the field of culture must be popular and highly respected; they must not be put in an embarrassing position; as long as you have something worthwhile to offer in the field of culture, you will be popular and highly respected.

We have recipients of national awards, for example, comrades who belong to steel bands. We respect cultural people. For instance there is a calypsonian here speaking to you now. That is respect we have shown for people who have something worthwhile to offer in the field of culture. As I have said before, great development is taking place in the cultural life of Guyana and not by guess. The cultural revolution was really accelerated immediately after attaining

political Independence. We didn't try to establish socialism in a colony like what you were trying to do. We looked after political Independence first then we started to establish socialism. They tried to establish socialism in a colony. Immediately after attaining political Independence the cultural revolution was accelerated when through the inspiration of our Leader and Prime Minister we organised and hosted the first Caribbean Festival of Creative Arts, CARIFESTA. Guyanese of all ethnic groups, from all walks of life, were organised to make their contribution.

The emphasis continued in this direction in order to popularise dance, music, songs, etc. The National School of dance was established. This school is being used, among other things, to choreograph our indigenous dance steps and other notable life styles consistent with that of the Guyanese people and then presented to us for entertainment and educational purposes. But culture, in our book, is to be used as a form of education. Also this is why cultural activists and all persons involved in culture will be highly respected and given the proper treatment. Going on to extend a little more on this National School of Dance, among other things, it assists us to make presentations of very high quality and for some of the facts, today, in the dance school - -

The Speaker: Cde. Corrica, are you going to be much longer?

Cde. Corrica: I am now starting, Cde. Speaker.

The Speaker: You are now starting? Well, I think if you are now starting, we will start again tomorrow.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, “That this Assembly do now adjourn until Tuesday, 7th March, 1978, at 2 p.m.” [The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House]

Adjourned accordingly at 11:03 p.m.
