

THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
OFFICIAL REPORT
[VOLUME 7]

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

17th Sitting	2 p.m.	Friday, 14th December, 1973
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MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Speaker

His Honour the Speaker, Mr. Sase Narain, J.P.

Members of the Government - People's National Congress (49)

The Hon. L.F.S. Burnham, O.E., S.C.,
Prime Minister

(Absent – on leave)

Dr. the Hon. P.A. Reid,
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of
National Development and Agriculture

Senior Ministers (7)

The Hon. H.D. Hoyte, S.C.,
Minster of Works and Communications

(Absent – on leave)

*The Hon. S.S. Ramphal, S.C.,
Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Justice

*The Hon. H Green,
Minister of Co-operatives and National Mobilisation

***Non-elected Ministers**

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

*The Hon. F.E. Hope,
Minister of Finance

*Dr. the Hon. K.F.S. King,
Minister of Economic Development

*The Hon. S.S. Naraine, A.A.,
Minister of Housing

Ministers (6)

The Hon. W.G. Carrington,
Minister of Labour

The Hon. Miss S.M. Field-Ridley,
Minister of Information and Culture

The Hon. B. Ramsaroop,
Minister of Parliamentary Affairs
and Leader of the House

*The Hon. Miss C.L. Baird,
Minister of Education (Absent)

*Dr. the Hon. O. M. R. Harper,
Minister of Health (Absent)

*The Hon. G. A. King
Minister of Trade

Ministers of State (9)

The Hon. M. Kasim, A.A.,
Minister of State for Agriculture

The Hon. O.E. Clarke,
Minister of State – Regional
(East Berbice/Corentyne) (Absent)

The Hon. P. Duncan, J.P.,
Minister of State – Regional (Rupununi)

***Non-elected Ministers**

The Hon. C. A. Nascimento,
Minister of State, Office of the Prime Minister

Mr. M. Zaheeruddeen, J.P.
Minister of State – Regional (Essequibo
Coast/West Demerara)

*The Hon. C.V. Mingo,
Minister of State for Home Affairs

*The Hon. W. Haynes,
Minister of State – Regional (Mazaruni/Potaro) **(Absent)**

*The Hon. A. Salim,
Minister of State - Regional
(East Demerara/West Coast Berbice)

*The Hon. F. U. A. Carmichael,
Minister of State – Regional (North West)

Parliamentary Secretaries (8)

Mr. J.R. Thomas
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Housing

Mr. C.E. Wrights, J.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Works
and Communications **(Absent – on leave)**

Miss M.M. Ackman,
Parliamentary Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister,
and Government Whip

Mr. E.L. Ambrose
Parliamentary Secretary (Agriculture),
Ministry of National Development and Agriculture

Mr. K. B. Bancroft,
Parliamentary Secretary (Hinterland),
Ministry of National Development and Agriculture **(Absent – on leave)**

Mr. S. Prashad,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Co-operatives
And National Mobilisation

***Non-elected Ministers**

Mr. J. P. Chowritmootoo,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Education

Mr. R. H. O. Corbin,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of
Co-operatives and National Mobilisation

(Absent – on leave)

Other Members (18)

Mr. J.N. Aaron

(Absent)

Mrs. L. M. Branco

Mr. M. Corrica

Mr. E.H.A. Fowler

Miss J. Gill

Mr. W. Hussain

(Absent)

Miss S. Jaiserrisingh

Mr. K. M. E. Jonas

Mr. M. Nissar

(Absent – on leave)

Dr. L. E. Ramsahoye

(Absent – on leave)

Mr. J. G. Ramson

Mrs. P. A. Rayman

Mr. E. M. Stoby, J.P.

Mr. S. H. Sukhu, M.S., J.P.

Mr. C. Sukul, J.P.

Mr. H. A. Taylor

Mr. R.C. Van Sluytman

Mrs. L.E. Willems

Members of the Opposition

Liberty Party (2)

Mr. M. F. Singh, Deputy Speaker

Mrs. E. DaSilva

OFFICERS

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

Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly – Mr. M. B. Henry, AMBIM.

14.12.73

National Assembly

2 – 2.10 p.m.

2.00 p.m.

PRAYERS

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Leave to Member

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been granted to the Hon Member, Mr. Nissar, for today's Sitting.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS – FIRST READING

The following Bill was introduced and read the First time:

Guyana Credit Corporation (Dissolution) Bill 1973. [**The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House on behalf of the Prime Minister**]

PUBLIC BUSINESS

MOTION

APPROVAL OF ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 1974

Assembly resumed debate on the Motion moved by the Minister of Finance on 10th December, 1973, for the approval of estimates of expenditure for the financial year 1974 totalling \$337,303,105.

Mr. Speaker: We continue the Motion on the debate. Hon. Member Mr. Feilden Singh.

Mr. M. F. Singh: Mr. Speaker, I hope that I am speaking to a House with a quorum.

Mr. Speaker: If you wish to raise a point, I will then rule on it.

Mr. M. F. Singh: I would like to raise a point. In fairness to the Opposition, we should have some people listening to us.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please check and see if we have a quorum.

Mr. M. F. Singh: Can you press the information bell?

Mr. Speaker: We will do that. I am just checking to see if we have eighteen elected Members.

[Members were summoned and a quorum was formed.]

Mr. Speaker: I think we have a quorum. Please proceed Hon. Member.

Mr. M. F. Singh: Mr. Speaker, the 1974 Budget Speech was a predictable effort by the Government to focus responsibility for our economic crisis. I have been saying for quite some time now that we are experiencing an economic crisis and I think despite what has been said in this honourable House – I apologise to Your Honour for not having been here yesterday, but, as Your Honour knows, I was not well and could not possibly come; it is only at great effort I have been able to come today – the position is critical. The responsibility has been attributed to the private sector, the general populace, the weather, the world situation, and there has been a charge on the Guyanese people in relation to the cost by a variety of tax increases.

This Government has been in sole power for over five years now. This Government has indeed assumed complete control and direction of our economy. The Government, we say, must bear the responsibility for our dreary economic situation. Let us look at the figures. Let us first look at the pattern of Government budgeting in the previous years in order to have an idea of how realistic we can expect the figures projected for next year to be, always providing, of course, that the Hon. Minister, who was absent, has not radically changed the pattern of preparing his Estimates. I should like to look at the pattern from 1968 to 1973, and, of course, the Estimates for 1974. For this purpose, I have extracted the figures from the Estimates for these years. Let us start first with recurrent expenditure. In 1968, the amount budgeted was \$96 million. The actual expenditure was \$98 million. That means that in 1968, \$2 million was overspent. What happened in 1969? The budgeted amount was \$105 million. The actual amount was \$107 million. I am dealing with recurrent expenditure all the time, so that again overspent amount on recurrent expenditure was \$2 million.

In 1970 the budgeted amount was \$116 million, the actual amount spent was \$123 million, an overspending of \$7 million on recurrent expenditure. In 1972 the budgeted amount was \$146 million. The actual amount spent was \$158 million, an overspending of \$12 million for 1972. But let us look at 1973. In 1973 the budgeted amount was \$174 million; the actual amount was \$224 million, an overspending of \$50 million. If we add what has been overspent between 1968 and 1973, we will get a total overspending of \$80 million. It is a very significant figure and it makes us wonder about these estimates being presented to Parliament, but the situation is more revealing when we look at the pattern of annual revenue.

In 1968 the annual revenue was estimated at \$106 million; the actual amount collected was \$103 million. There was a shortfall of \$3 million. In 1969 the estimated amount was \$119 million; the actual amount was \$111 million. There was a total this time of \$8 million short-collected. In 1970 the budgeted amount was \$122 million; the actual amount collected was \$133 million. So, there was an over-collection in 1970 of \$11 million. I shall deal with that in a moment, but let us look at 1971. The annual revenue estimated there was \$146 million; the actual amount collected was \$128 million and so we go back to the same pattern. The shortfall there was \$18 million.

In 1972 the budgeted amount was \$148 million; the actual amount collected was \$158 million. So, here again, as in 1970, there was an over-collection of \$10 million. As I said before, I will deal with that also in a moment, so that we go to 1973.

The budgeted amount was \$174 million, the actual amount collected was \$162 million. We had in the Budget Speech a lot of reasons for this. The shortfall was \$12 million. I will deal with the reasons in a moment. Let me first explain 1970.

In 1970 there was an over-collection of \$11 million. We will remember that in 1970 the Government introduced legislation to collect income tax other than P.A.Y.E. in advance, P.A.Y.E. had been in existence before, payment in advance of income tax on income from all sources came into effect in 1970. Coupled with this fact there were two new sources of taxation which came into existence with the introduction of the Corporation Tax. The Corporation Tax caused two things: (1) it caused an increase in the rates of tax by 10 per cent in respect of commercial companies and (2) it caused a limitation of the credit for tax paid by the companies

which previously had been given to shareholders' dividends when dividends were declared. This means that whereas previously shareholders received the full amount of 45 per cent tax paid by the companies as a set-off on their dividends after the Corporation Tax, when the income tax was limited to 20 per cent, instead of receiving 45 per cent as a set-off they received only 20 per cent. So those two measures, by and large, accounted for that over-collection of \$11 million in 1970.

In 1972 there was another reason. We remember that in 1972 the Hon. Minister of Finance stated very emphatically that income tax would yield \$5.4 million more than budgeted. He said that this increase was flowing from the receipts from DEMBA on the balance of income tax due for payment for the years 1970 and 1971. But, there was another reason in addition to that. He had accounted for \$5.4 million but the other reason was that because of the retrospectivity of the tax legislation introduced in December 1970 in respect of 1971 this had a carry-over to 1972. So that the full effect of this was not felt until 1972.

These facts explain the over-collection in these two years alone otherwise my respectful submission, Mr. Speaker, is that the pattern of overspending and the pattern of shortfall, over-estimating of annual revenue would have been perfectly consistent. It is very consistent in respect of recurrent expenditure and, with the explanation, it is consistent in respect of annual revenue. Perhaps I should mention, if we look at the overspending of the recurrent estimates for 1973 that it is \$50 million and the shortfall of revenue for 1973 is \$12 million and this makes a total deficit for 1973 of \$62 million. This really makes us wonder. If we have Estimates which were presented to us last year December and which we debated forcefully, and if those Estimates are out by \$62 million in current expenditure and annual revenue, well then, we should seriously consider whether we are not actually wasting time in discussing Estimates. My fervent hope is that these Estimates for next year are not as badly out as for this year. If the Estimates are \$62 million out, \$50 million in overspending with 412 million deficit in collection, how then can we rely on any document being presented before this House as Estimates? How then can we really, without a feeling of frustration, debate Estimates when we know the pattern in the past has been that they are out by such enormous figures?

But the story does not even end there. If we go on to look at the pattern in respect of capital expenditure we will have even greater cause for concern. For example, in 1968 the budgeted amount of capital expenditure was \$45 million, the actual amount spent was \$40 million, therefore there was an underspending of \$5 million. In 1969 the same pattern, except worse. The budgeted amount was \$62 million, the actual amount spent was \$45 million. Therefore, the underspending was \$17 million. In 1970 the budgeted amount of capital expenditure was \$79 million; the actual amount spent was 444 million. In this case it was an underspending of \$35 million and the story goes on. In 1971 the budgeted amount was \$75 million; the actual amount spent was \$58 million, an underspending of \$17 million. In 1972 the budgeted amount was \$79 million; the actual amount spent was \$63 million. Again, an underspending of \$16 million.

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Then we come to this year, 1973. We had a nice, big, very impressive Budget. The budgeted amount for capital expenditure was \$138 million, the actual amount spent was \$98 million. There has been an underspending of \$40 million in respect of capital expenditure. Let us add those figures for 1968 and 1973. The total amounts to \$130 million not spent in these years and the very sad picture of bad economic policy and bad estimating continues. If we look at the Estimates of capital receipts we will see that the pattern continues.

In 1968 the Government budgeted that it would receive for capital purposes \$39 million. It received only \$28 million, a shortfall of 411 million. In 1969 again it budgeted for a big amount, \$51 million capital receipts, it actually got \$27 million, a shortfall of \$24 million. In 1970 it budgeted for \$63 million, it actually received \$37 million, a shortfall of \$26 million. In 1971 it budgeted for \$60 million, the revised estimate was \$44 million, a shortfall of \$16 million. In 1972 the budget for capital receipts was \$78 million, the revised amount was only \$44 million, so that means a shortfall of \$34 million. Then we come to this year, 1973, the budgeted amount was \$138 million, the revised amount – it is drying up, that is obviously clear – is \$98 million and the shortfall is \$40 million. That makes a total of \$141 million which the Government expected to receive in this six-year period and it did not materialise.

Let us look at the Estimates for 1974 because this is revealing. The budgeted amount for current expenditure in 1974 is \$222 million – a very fancy figure. We have a huge budget never as high as this ever before. This year it was \$174 million. This year current revenue was estimated at \$174 million we are estimating it at \$203 million for 1974. This year we estimated our capital expenditure to be \$145 million; we are estimating next year that it will be \$173 million. This year we estimated our capital receipts to be \$138 million: we are estimating next year that our receipts will be \$166 million. This shows a very over optimistic picture. Are these figures really realistic? Is it not an exercise in frustration when we go through this book here, if we do go through it, and at the next year we will find that the figures are out by more than \$50 million as they are out this year? We spend so much time and energy on this book and then the figures are so out.

The philosophy seems to be that the Government wants to spend \$222 million for next year on recurrent expenditure and it seems determined to spend whether it gets the money or not. And it seems to me – and I will deal with this in a moment – that it has padded the Estimates of Revenue on page 9. There are, I submit amounts in there as revenue in order to pad the figures so that the Government can somehow balance its figures to spend \$222 million in recurrent expenditure.

I respectfully submit that the Government has not – and I am very disappointed to say this – in any way altered its bad financial policy as indicated from its budgeting and taxation pattern. It is significant from 1968 to 1973 that the Government has spent more each year on recurrent than was budgeted. In fact, \$80 million more.

Let us look now at the pattern as reflected in the Estimates because we would like to know that this is not in fact an exercise in frustration. Let us look first of all at page 5. I should like to read because these first pages are not normally discussed when we are considering Estimates, we go straight to the expenditure. The first pages, therefore, will necessarily have to be dealt with in the general debate. The question must be asked: How liquid is the Government's financial position? Let us look at page 5, paragraph 9. I should like to read it.

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“The balance of the current amount decreased from a surplus of \$24,060,971 at the end of 1970 to an overdrawn surplus of \$48,034,078 at the end of 1973. As a deficit of \$18,773,772 is projected for 1974, the deficit of the Consolidated Fund (Current Account) at the end of 1974 will be increased to \$66,807,850.”

This means that even if we collect the estimated 1974 deficit on the re-current from the new tax proposals, the deficit on this account will still be \$48,024,078. Obviously it is a bankrupt state of affairs. The experts have examined this and they have verified my opinion on this.

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Let us look at paragraph 10. **[Interruption]** This paragraph states:

“The Capital account has been overdrawn throughout the period 1970 to 1973. The accumulated deficit rose from \$66,601,488 at the end of 1970 to \$94,134,937 at the end of 1973 with the anticipated deficit of \$7,233,594 for 1974 the Consolidated Fund (Capital Account) will be overdrawn by \$101,358,531 at the end of 1974.”

This is bankruptcy. That is why I would read the first sentence of paragraph 11 which states:

“The outlook for the Government’s liquidity position”

And I will put my own words now – can be summarised in one word – bankruptcy. This is the state of affairs reflected here.

Let us look at the other side of page 5, and it is verification of what I am saying. At the penultimate line of the balance sheet on the other side of page 5 “Cash Balance” at the end of 1973 is listed as a liability of \$140,169,015 and, at the bottom of the 1974 column, the “Cash Balance” is listed as a liability of \$166,076,381. This is a bankrupt state of affairs. **[Mr. Nascimento:** It is not a cook shop, it is a Government they are running.] You cannot read a balance sheet? I am not going to enlighten you. On page 6, paragraph 12 states:

“Table II indicates that total expenditure has in general been in excess of total receipts over the past four years, increasing the debit balance from \$66,601,488 at the end of 1970 to an estimated \$169,136,381 at the end of 1974.”

It is a debit balance. Let us look at Public Debt. Let us look at Public Debt. Paragraph 13 states:

“At 31st December, 1973, the public debt is estimated to be \$513.2 mn. Of which \$371.2 mn. Has been derived from external borrowing and \$142.0 mn. for internal borrowing. The estimates envisage borrowing to the extent of \$160.0 mn. As debt repayments in 1971 are estimated to be \$13.1 mn., the Public Debt at the end of the year should therefore be \$600.1 mn. Of this amount \$521.4 mn. Will be repayable in instalments, and sinking fund contributions are being accumulated to”

whereas the Public Debt will be \$600 million.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member Dr. King.

Dr. King: The Hon. Member, Mr. Marcellus Feilden Singh, read the last sentence incorrectly. He said “The investment and sinking funds”. In fact, the sentence should read “the investment of the sinking funds” and that means that the interest payable on the investment amount to \$39.6 million. This gives a completely different complexion to what the Hon. Member is trying to say.

Mr. Speaker: Please proceed Hon. Member Mr. Singh.

Mr. Singh: The investments of the sinking funds at the end of 1974 are estimated to be worth \$39.6 million. The Hon. Minister is saying that the investments are worth more. Perhaps he will supply the figure at the appropriate time. But all of these figures point to a very depressing state of affairs indeed where the Public Debt has been rising and rising and we see no significant provisions and no significant returns to repay this public Debt.

For example, the estimates for 1974 clearly show a deficit on the recurrent – because I am sure they will not realise the estimated shortfall – and a deficit on the capital which I will

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deal with later. But there is nothing which shows how the deficit on the capital account of \$7,233,594, will be funded. There is nothing that shows how that deficit will be funded.

I will now turn to page 8 and deal with some significant entries which deal with Summary of Estimates of Revenue. The number of Head and subhead is 51, Code No. 152 – Tolls, Corentyne Highway. The 1973 Approved Estimates had \$550,000 estimated. No amount appears in the Revised Estimates for 1973 or in the column for 1974 Estimates. I am happy to see this because I have always objected to this imposition of tolls for the Corentyne Highway. But it points to another picture. This shows that the budget for 1973 was not properly thought out because, if the Government had anticipated over half a million dollars in revenue and it did not materialise, surely something must have been wrong somewhere. The practical details of collecting this obviously were not worked out. Why was it inserted in the first place? Why did we pad the 1973 Estimates with this amount?

Further down the page, Head VI and subhead 6, Code No. 206 loans – Co-operative Societies; there is need for an explanation. Under Approved Estimates for 1973, the sum is listed as \$10,000. The 1973 Revised Estimates reduced that \$10,000 to \$1,000 and the estimate for 1974 is also \$1,000. Questions need to be answered here. Obviously, the Hon. Minister must have had some reason for anticipating \$10,000 at the beginning of 1973. What is the position now? Is it that the Co-operative Societies are getting loans free of interest now? Why is it that we have changed from a figure of \$10,000 to only \$1,000 for this year and for next year?

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I shall turn to page 9 on the right hand side. Again, questions need to be answered. Subhead 5, Code No. 357 – Guybau Dividends. We see in the Approved Estimates that the dividends were anticipated at \$14,800,000. The Revised Estimates cut them at \$11 million, \$3,800,000 less. And the 1974 Estimates have put them at merely \$9 million. If Guyana is doing so well, how then do we account for these reduced figures? Why do we put \$14,800,000 in the estimates? To pad the estimates and then the rest of the figures must come back down when the true picture materialises. It means that the Estimates are unrealistic.

If we look at subhead 7, Code No. 356, Public Corporation, under the column for 1973 Approved Estimates we see the sum of \$1,700,000. That is what the hon. Minister said that Public Corporations would bring in to us as revenue for 1973. The Revised Estimates have nothing. Do not put it in to pad the Estimates. But in the 1974 Estimates column we have \$9,700,000.

Let us look at the last item. This is perhaps the most alarming thing on the same page 9. These revealing figures may hurt the Hon. Members on the other side, but this is a job I have to do. Let us look at subhead 11, Code No. 412, under a very peculiar new Head, “Other”. It has expenditure for 1974 estimated at \$7,800,000. What is this? This is a tremendous sum of money. Surely the Hon. Minister owes it to this House to tell us what that significant figure represents.

In respect of all the other amounts, \$2,500, \$40,000, even Pension Contributions of Legislators at \$23,000, they are itemised and listed, but a significant sum of \$7,800,000 is merely put under a heading “Other” with absolutely no details. Is this a figure being used to balance the Budget? I should like to hear the details of this sum.

Perhaps I should not read but the figures on page 10 are very revealing. External grants show a lack of grants forthcoming in relation to the Estimates. Estimated amounts were very fancy figures. They did not materialise at all. Internal Loans, the same thing, \$25 million estimated, Revised Estimate 1973 \$41 million. This has to be repaid, but look at page 10 on the right hand side. We estimated External Loans – *[Interruption]* N.I.S. money should not be used to meet recurrent expenditure. That should be invested in gilt-edged security. If there is a calamity, there would be tremendous trouble so if you raise money internally from things like N.I.S. and other corporations, you are in serious trouble.

Let us look at page 10, External Loans. This is really, as the Guyanese would say, a “lulu”. In the 1973 Approved Estimates at subhead 9 we estimated that we would get \$10 million from China. We got absolutely nothing from China. Revised Estimates have nothing listed, but in the 1974 Estimates there is \$3 million listed. External loans are really drying up.

If I may refer to a page in the Hon. Minister's speech, I refer to the third paragraph on page 20 in the Hon. Minister's speech.

“Expenditure on Current Account are now estimated at \$224 mn. (revised). At this level they are approximately 450 Mn. more than was originally approved. Most of the increases arise from improved salaries paid to employees in the Public Service and to Teachers for which the provisions that were made turned out to be inadequate.”

The Hon. Minister is saying that most of the \$50 million that was overspent went to increases of salaries in the Public Service and to teachers. The Financial Paper which dealt with that is Financial Paper No. 6 of 1973. The total of that Financial Paper was \$23 million, and out of that \$23 million, \$590,000 was for telephones, so that the difference is approximately \$27 million. The lump sum payments are embodied here. The Minister does not know what his own Financial Paper embodies.

The last item on page 13 is Ministry of Finance, Head No. 77, revision of wages, salaries and related payments, \$8 million under the 1973 Revised Estimates Column, so the lump sum payments are here. It is obvious that this statement is wrong. When we are dealing with Financial Paper No. 5, which asked for supplementary provisions amounting to approximately \$16 million, apart from charwomen, etc., there were things like telephones and all the other heads which were overspent. It is not fair for the Minister to exclude this Financial Paper which accounts for \$16 million. It is not true to say that the overspending of \$16 million is essentially a revision of salaries. It had a lot in it which had nothing to do with revision of salaries. We see on page 12 \$4 million excess for the Guyana Defence Force, \$2 million excess Ministry of Foreign Affairs, \$1 million excess Ministry of Information and Culture, and \$5 million excess for Police. And so the story goes in the Estimates.

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So that we see a clear picture of overspending whereas we are induced to believe that it was for revision of wages and salaries.

There are some aspects of this Budget Speech which are very alarming. I quote from paragraph 2 on page 1.

“...the Government is deeply conscious of the great responsibility which has naturally devolved upon it, as a consequence of its overwhelming success at the polls” –

And these are the operative words: “overwhelming success at the polls”

“in July 16th of this year, to give positive direction to the development of the economy of Guyana.”

This is really an insult to our intelligence. We all know that on July the 16th there was no election but a take-over on behalf of the P.N.C. but the inference is that with an ordinary majority the Government would not have been conscious of any great responsibility because they say they are conscious only “as a consequence of the overwhelming success.” It is a worrying state of affairs.

I should like to deal with paragraph 3:

“Since the last Budget was presented to this House in December, 1972 the Government has issued a draft development programme for the period 1972 – 1976. That programme identifies full employment by 1976...”

This is really a big joke. It is a joke if it were not so catastrophic. What is the employment figure now? We do not know. We have not been given any. All we know is that it is high. All we know is that the “choke and rob” is still there. National Service may well take the “choke and rob” off the streets, but would National Service provide enough money for these people to feed, clothe and house their families? Three years are left for 1976, this is the end of 1973, is the Government really saying that in those three years it will provide full employment? Is the Government really saying that when in fact relatively little has been done during the three years?

The Hon. Minister, Dr. King, referred me to pages 267 to 269 of the Development Plan which has not been approved as yet and it is for 1972 to 1976. I looked at the newspapers this morning and we were being asked to wait for these things to get off the ground. If I am wrong this is how the newspapers put it. Let us have a look at pages 267 to 269 in the second

Development Plan, 1972 – 1976. It is headed “List of Some Industrial Opportunities”. Presumably that is what the Hon. Minister was referring to. It is very revealing. Fish Processing and Canning, 1972 – 1975: Direct Employment 300 people. That has not been materialised. Milk Condensary 1973 – 1974 – 60 people. My wife is still trying to get condensed milk. We are at the end of 1973 and we have heard nothing about it. Textile Plant (Spinning, Weaving and Finishing). Again, there is the column, “Year of Investment 1973 – 1974.” **[Interruption]** We are at the end of 1973. We have done the preliminary work but we are supposed to have an investment from 1973. There is nothing. And so it goes on. Hosiery, 1973 – 1974. Is there anything there? Well, tell us. **[Interruption]** This story continues. Bolts, Nuts and Washers: I understand that we are doing something about this but certainly it is not an established industry yet and it says the year of investment is 1973 alone. Aluminium and Wooden Windows 1972 – 1973, well, ALCOA was existing before that; Davis was existing before that. Long before 1972 we had aluminium windows. Do not let us have red herrings here. Refrigerators (assembly); Year of Investment 1973, We are at the end of 1973 and certainly nothing has materialised for 1973. Can we now, at the end of 1973, buy an assembled refrigerator? No we cannot. And so the story goes on. bicycles (Assembly), Year of Investment 1973. Nothing has been done. This is a list of new industries. Let us know the number of people that these industries have employed. But we are referred to a bit of paper and we are told that everything is okay. That is not good enough, non-productive.

On page 4 of the Budget Speech we read:

“The fiscal proposals that form part of the Budget presentation rest largely on the assumption that the people of this country are serious about development and are prepared to endure a period of austerity...”

The people have been enduring austerity for years now. This Government has been in office since 1965 and all that the people have received are promises. They were promised that after Independence everything would be okay. They were promised that after Republic everything would be okay. They were promised that after the nationalisation of DEMBA everything would be okay and all they are getting are “obeah” and National Service as red-

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herrings to turn their attention away from the problems of the spiralling cost of living and the shortage of oil and the other essential food-stuff. It says further:

“Substantially, too, the proposal presume that trade unions in both Public and Private Sectors endorse the proposition that unionized workers have a duty to accept a certain measure of sacrifice and are prepared to exercise some self-restraint in terms of pay demands,...”

I should like to agree with this but what we have to look at is the realistic position and this is a false presumption because how could you call on the workers to sacrifice when the Cabinet has given themselves and this Parliament very significant pay hikes within recent times? How could you ask John Public the ordinary man to make sacrifices when you are enjoying the benefits of increased remuneration?

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Certainly, it is not something that trade unions would agree with. We see one eminent economist disagreed long before. At the top of page 5 we read, “There is a high propensity to import.” It goes on to state that over the past twelve months we have seen the inflationary trend in Guyana in the form of higher food prices and the increase landed cost of raw materials. I want to refer to this together with what is stated on page 14 of the *Budget Speech*, because we are dealing with imports and exports. Paragraph 14, page 3:

“Key exports fell in volume terms at a time when prices for most of our primary commodity exports were quite high; at the same time imports rose in quantity,...”

And if we look at page 22, paragraph 4, we will see the same sort of trend.

“...exports of domestic produce are now projected at about \$299 Mn...”

And further down:

“...Imports on the other hand are estimated at \$340 Mn.”

In this case for 1973 imports clearly exceed exports. If this has been the position with a high propensity for and imports a lower propensity to export—[*Interruption.*] Well certainly on page 22 the import figures are much higher than the export figures. I should like to put to the Hon. Minister that this is in fact the pattern. Well then why did we not develop? Because if we did not devalue import prices would not have been that much in terms of Guyana dollars. We would have paid less for imports if we had not devalued. If we devalue merely to maintain a high figure in respect to bauxite would be devalued mainly for that reason. Perhaps the Hon. Minister will explain to the House. On page 7, at paragraph 3, it is stated:

“Against these increases in primary commodity prices this country had to cope with phenomenal price rises for wheat, corn, machine parts and fuel, dairy products, and in fact practically all items of manufactured and semi-manufactured goods.”

Yet the Government refused to allow increases on controlled commodities and it even denied that there was a great rise in the cost of living. I go to the next paragraph:

“On balance for most developing countries, as for Guyana, import prices in general rose so sharply and so steadily...”

One of the reasons why import prices rose was because the E.T.B failed to place orders for goods and these shortages were caused by the E.T.B.’s failures also.

In paragraph 2 on page 8 the Hon. Minister states:

“...It is not difficult to conclude that in view of the high cost of foreign borrowing it is of utmost importance that Guyanese should rely more on domestic savings for the financing of development works.”

Let us again be realistic. The effect of increased taxation on local income with rising consumption cost can never generate an increase in domestic savings. [**Mr. Hope:** “I did not say that.”] At the end of page 9 it is:

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“In fact, while the instability persists, we do not have the best environment in which we could adopt, or even determine, the exchange rate policy that would best fit our development circumstances.”

Fair enough and yet Government bans foreign goods in all those countries requiring high exchange and providing highly paid staff. If the situation is bad why do this? Why should they not get together to share embassies? We indulge in the extravagancies as the big developed nations would do. We host Non-Aligned Conference. We had Carifesta. We have safaris; with huge entourages. We give ourselves pay increases and we tell the Guyanese people that they must tighten their belts. Is this really fair? The statement in paragraph 3 at the end of page 14:

“...Despite the improvement in wages and salaries in many sectors of the economy including the Public Service, the savings rate appeared to have declined to about 16% of Gross National Product, compared with 22% three years earlier.”

The Hon. Minister says:

“This was due in the main to the substantial overrun of public expenditure over revenues.”

Let us point out further. The fact is that because of the substantial increases in the cost of the growing bureaucracy with little or nothing given to the productive sectors there was an extracted transfer of funds of income to a great bureaucracy from the productive sectors. With depleted funds in these sectors production fell while with an increased availability of funds, the demand within the bureaucracy grew, contributing to rising prices.

Mr. Speaker, we turn to page 17, paragraph 1:

“... - Guyana – has been able to maintain reasonably high and diverse output. The fact that dried bauxite output and exports declined was due in large measure to a drastic cut back in production by the Reynolds Company...”

We have already seen that Guybau figures project lower than was originally anticipated. So that reasonably high and diversified output here is not borne out by the figures.

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Will the Hon. Minister tell us if the statement about Reynolds is really true, and if it is true could he give us the figure? We want to know the figures.

At the end of page 18 he states:

“Private capital formation was still sluggish.”

Is this any surprise, with heavy taxation and profits and income? With regressive property tax? With limitation on debts which have only now been removed where companies had to pay property tax on property that they did not own? I have talked about this *ad nauseum*, and again with the thrust of the Government to acquire will establish concern? Is it any surprise then that private capital formation was still sluggish? And it will not improve.

Then on page 19 paragraph 1 states:

“The intervention of the general elections, coupled with delays in delivery of essential machinery and equipment from overseas, reduced the rate of implementation of a number of projects included in the capital programme for 1973.”

Just imagine, blaming the elections for retarding the development. Voting takes one day but, let the Hon. Minister tell us what are these delays which reduced the rate of implementation of projects. What are these projects which have not been implemented because of elections. I think that this statement is, perhaps, the first truthful statement made by the Government that they were as involved with the rigging of the elections. [**Mr. Nascimento:** “You rigged the Liberty Party and what happened to you?”] The fantastic job is being put on us as stated in paragraph 4 of page 22:

“...exports of domestic produce are now projected at about \$299 Mn. And are therefore likely to be marginally below the 1972 value of \$300 Mn. Imports on the other hand are estimated at \$340 Mn.”

Let us add to that the \$44 million net import of services making a total of \$85 million. This means that we will have to increase our exports between twenty-five to thirty per cent to balance the situation. It is a target that we cannot make. We are being far too unrealistic.

Let us look at page 25 paragraph 2. Unless there is a mistake in this statement, something is radically wrong:

“In short the aim would be to increase our Gross Domestic Product in real terms by at least 1.0% in the next year.”

[**Mr. Hope:** “10%”] Well collect it. I thought you might have corrected it when you were reading the speech. Because the Development Plan on page 79 does project 8.5 per cent and certainly it would have been wrong for this Budget Speech to have only 1.0 per cent.

In the second paragraph on page 26 it is stated:

“But Mr. Speaker, all the inevitably implies that the External Trade Bureau would need to take firmer and wider control of our import trade in order to ensure that the direction and content of that trade are responsive to the national interest.”

This is a very frightening statement. My only real consolation is that the present Minister comes from the private enterprise. But it is a frightening statement because when we first heard of the E.T.B., we were told that it was trading on a nation to nation basis and now we seem to be taking over private enterprise. The inference of this statement is that it would be a takeover of private enterprise. The last paragraph states:

“...while the Government moves to reduce inflationary pressures it would frown on demands for wage increments that are tied in any automatic way to movements of consumer prices.”

Mr. Speaker, I understand this statement to mean that as consumer prices move upwards the Government will certainly either freeze wage rates or will frown on any increase in wage rates of the already suffering wage earners. It continues:

“The fundamental reason for this stand is not difficult to appreciate. Automatic wage adjustments in a situation where prices are already trending upwards, is in practice highly inflationary.”

It still means that the consume—

Mr. Hope: read the last sentence.

Mr. Singh: I continue:

“Wages would change prices, and prices would in turn chase wages with the inevitable result of a vicious inflationary spiral. Instead the Government would continue to favour a system of wages adjustment based on periodic review of wages and salary rates.”

Mr. Speaker, it means that in a period of rising prices wage earners will lose and will suffer until the rates are reviewed. I have read the whole thing in its entirety to facilitate the Hon. Minister and obviously this is the interference. If they have to wait until their wages are reviewed they must lose. ‘While the grass is growing the horse is starving’. That is a very common English saying and it is equally applicable in this country.

There is already an abject lack of adequate supply of consumer goods and this to my mind has been generating in the population with further restraints on consumption. Dr. Harry says so. Disease will become widespread and following on that the death rate will mount. Are we not being penny wise and pound foolish? Is this not false economy?

On page 28, it is stated:

“The Government on its part would also seek to contain its own consumption of goods and services at least to a level that matches its revenue.”

I am very pleased to hear that. The malpractice of overspending for years will be corrected by this promise. But why only now? Maybe because the Hon. Minister, as a former Civil Servant, has decided to take strong action against this overspending.

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But let us ask another question following on this. I am glad to see that there is this promise on the part of the Government, but where are the Audit Reports since 1967? We have not had Audit Reports – from what I can remember – since 1967. Where are they? Why did we not have them? If we get those Reports then it will, perhaps, give us an insight into the picture much more than these Estimates can give us because we have learnt from experience that we cannot rely on these Estimates. Is it that the information is not forthcoming from the Government Departments to enable the Director of Audit to do his duty? I am glad that the Director of Audit is here at the present time. Is it that he has tabled his reports and the Government has failed to present them to us here in Parliament? What is the position? We would like to know.

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And as I am on this question of audit reports and Government spending generally, let me raise the question of taxpayers' money going into the Corporations. I understand that the Corporations are audited by firms of private auditors. That is as it should be. They would not be subject to the pressures which one knows can be exercised by a Government in power. On the other hand, under the Constitution, the Director of Audit has a responsibility to the nation in respect of taxpayers' monies which find their way anywhere at all.

My contention is that if public monies find themselves in the form of subsidies or otherwise in the Government Corporations, then the Director of Audit should have the power, if he so desires, to look into the accounts of public corporations. It is a duty he has to the nation. If it means an increase in his staff, let us have it. There is much to be desired in the choice of auditors for public corporations. It is well known that an individual who is a major partner in one of the accounting firms auditing Government Corporations is in fact receiving emoluments from the Government of Guyana. **[Interruption]** I would supply you with the name but I think it is in your interest not to ask for the name.

There are other accounting firms in Guyana. I shall not dictate for the Government. We know them, but it is basically a wrong thing for someone who receives emoluments from the Government to be involved in this. That is why I say, generally speaking, the principle is if taxpayers' money finds its way into Government Corporations, then the Director of Audit must

have the right to look at these accounts. Under the Constitution is also an independent officer independent of ministerial control. If the Hon. Minister disagrees with the contention that taxpayers' money should be subject to scrutiny by the Director of Audit, then let him say so.

If we look at page 34, after giving us all the proposals for capital spending and capital receipts the Minister concludes in paragraph 3: "There is left a small deficit of \$7 mn." We certainly would like to know how the Hon. Minister proposes that this deficit be funded. Nowhere in this Speech is it indicated how this deficit would be funded. However, he has indicated how the deficit in the recurrent expenditure will be funded. In dealing with the deficit the Minister starts off with tax proposals. The first one deals with beer. Let us look at this. Is this not in fact hitting the poor man very hard? Generally, beer is regarded as the poor man's relaxation. Any increase in its price may well propel the use of more potent spirits. When the man goes into the shops, he would normally call for two bottles beer. Perhaps now, thinking of value for money, he will say: "Let me have a quarter of rum."

If he can afford a beer, then perhaps he will start drinking bush rum which means a loss in revenue for the Government, a decrease in consumption of beer and an increase in the consumption of bush rum; then we will have to vote more money for the prevention of the manufacture of bush rum. He might even drink methylated spirits. The net result of this may well be broken homes, absenteeism reduced productivity. In any case, if there is a fall in the demand for beer, it will result in a fall in the revenue on beer.

We talk about John Public, and if we are realistic and we have not lost touch with the common men by fancy salaries and Rover cars, etc., then if we go into the shops we will see how the poor man lives and what he calls for, we will see what he drinks. And I do that. I wonder how many others do.

Let us look at electrical appliances other than refrigerators. Are they really non-essentials? In a tropical climate like Guyana, I look around and I see a number of air conditioners and fans all over the place. Are we denying the ordinary man these comforts? What are we doing? What about the radios? Is a radio still a luxury? Surely in these enlightened days one would like to listen to the propaganda, which costs so many millions of dollars, being broadcast

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over the Government radio station, and a radio is essential in order to listen to the Government propaganda broadcast. In any case, further increases in expensive items will merely serve to remove these things further from the reach of the small man and prevent him from raising standard of living. He would not be able to buy a fan for his hot house after these increases are put on.

The taxation on aerated waters is very wicked and unconscionable. It may be true that doctors may argue that soft drinks have no particular nutritive value to the small man, but it must have been considered a further nail in his hopes of ever becoming a real man. Soft drinks are clean, they are sanitary, they are easy to handle. The dock workers drink them. The market women drink them. The labourers drink them. They are so very convenient. The fact of life is that these things are used.

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Does the Hon. Minister really feel that by imposing this taxation on aerated waters and calling them non-essential he will make these poor ordinary people stop drinking soft drinks? That is not so. They will still drink soft drinks and this will mean a rise in the cost of living. Obviously it must mean a rise in the cost of living. We have no quarrel with the tax on molasses. **[Interruption]** Home-made drinks are not as easy to handle and less convenient for the market woman, the dock workers and all the others. They will not drink your mauby and the rest of it. they will still rely on their soft drinks. They will have to pay more for them and this will mean a rise in the cost of living.

The tax on motor-cars is fair enough; the tax is on cars above 16 horsepower, but let us remember that this is yet another tax and this tax will not prevent the Ministers, the civil servants, the Government workers, the Parliamentary Secretaries with their tax concessions from having their regular change of cars.

The tax on cigarettes is very wicked indeed. I understand that for years the manufacturers have been trying to get the Government to allow an increase in the price of cigarettes and they have given as their reason cost of raw materials and production costs. The Government has

refused to allow such an increase and the Government's own reason, as I understand it, is that cigarettes are the poor man's relaxation – if you deny it, say so – having regard to the habits in this country. The Government has increased the poor man's cost of living by this taxation and the manufacturers will get nothing. The poor man's cost of living has gone up. Will it stop the poor man from smoking? Let us be realistic. The poor man who is addicted to smoking will still smoke. He may have a choice but let us be realistic: he has the habit, it is his relaxation, he will still smoke and he will smoke at the expense of the take-home pay to his wife, if he has one, or for the upkeep of his home. That is what will be the result.

When you increase the tax on gasoline, is this not adding fuel to fire? In less than 6 weeks the cost of gasoline has increased from 91 cents to \$1.35 per gallon and yet the Government, in spite of the assurance given to this House last week by the Hon. Minister, - **[Interruption]** That is how I understand it; we were dealing with consumption price at the time but I stand corrected – finds it expedient now in spite of the increase to add another 15 cents per gallon to the cost of this essential commodity. Obviously taxi fares will go up, obviously bus fares will go up. The taxi operators and bus operators have told us that at great sacrifice they have kept down the cost. The taxi fares, as the Hon. Minister says, have gone up and that makes an increase in the cost of living and we cannot possibly police any such control. Let us realise that we have scrapped the railway, except on the West Coast, and we have to rely on taxis and buses. The cost of gasoline would necessarily mean reduction of the profit margin for the operators and/or increase in the fares and certainly the taxi drivers will increase their fares. Let us not fool ourselves.

Who can quarrel about the tax on shrimp? There is an increase in the licences for liquor restaurants and betting shops. Regardless of the justification for this, let us be realistic. The increased cost will be passed on to the consumer. I know the Hon. Minister is considering this. The Hon. Minister may well give consideration to the statement that the \$50,000 deposit would be without interest. I shall not elaborate on that because I know that he is considering the representations made to him in this respect.

The National Development Surtax is unconscionable highway robbery. Guyana is already one of the most, if not the most, heavily taxed countries in the world and the imposition of this tax will heavily reduce the tax-home pay of a large number of persons who would normally contribute to the rise in savings in this country. The Hon. Minister says he wants to have a rise in the savings. How can we have a rise in savings if we are going to tax the worker further? The 1973 Budget took cognisance of the fact that the poor man is heavily taxed and he needs special consideration and it said that the poor man should not pay any income tax if his chargeable income was up to \$500.

If we gave the poor man special consideration in the last Budget why are we attempting to take it away in this Budget? We should give him special consideration here also; he deserves it. **[Interruption]** We do suggest that the small man who got consideration last year should also get this year but, again, we gave a consideration last year which we are taking away. There was an earned income allowance of \$500. If we increase taxation we are reducing the benefit which the small man had last year. He has to pay more tax than he would have paid last year. This is obvious. If last year he had to pay “x” dollars, he will now have to pay the 5 per cent surtax. Therefore, he has to pay more. In the example which the Hon. Minister has given, the man will have to pay \$11 more than the man above \$500 will also have to pay more. So that, in an overall picture, we are derogating from the benefit we gave him last year. At least somebody acknowledges that.

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On the other question of property tax, the private company and private are again the whipping boy. We have been whipping them quite heavily for years and we are now increasing the taxation. We are doing something good, however. I heartily commend the Government for removing the limitation of debts, 20 per cent and 50 per cent on assets of companies and individuals. This is something that I had spoken on very strongly when we debated the last Budget. I am glad; it makes me feel that I am serving some purpose when the Government says, even at this late stage that it will wipe away altogether this iniquitous piece of legislation. As I pointed out, companies and individuals were made to pay property tax on property that they did

not even own. The Government has recognised this and I want to express my thanks to the Hon. Minister of Finance for this.

But then the Hon. Minister goes on to say that, “Companies will, however, have to pay property tax on the following scale.” I respectfully ask the Hon. Minister for clarification on a point here. Is it $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent on the first \$500,000 and $\frac{3}{4}$ per cent on the balance in excess of \$500,000? Or is it $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent on \$500,000, but as long as it is over \$500,000, which means 500,001? Will \$500,001 attract $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent? Or will it attract $\frac{3}{4}$ per cent? I presume the Hon. Minister to mean that up to \$500,000 would be $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent but \$501,000 would be $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent on the \$500,000 and $\frac{3}{4}$ per cent on the \$1,000. **[Interruption]** Then the position is clear. Because there was some confusion in the minds of people about this. The Hon. Minister is saying that on \$500,000 the tax would be $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent but on \$501,000 the tax would be $\frac{3}{4}$ per cent on the whole thing. **[Mr. Hope: “No.”]** That is what I was asking the Hon. Minister. He said, yes, at first and he now is saying no. For the first \$500,000 the tax would be $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent and for the excess over \$500,000 the tax would be $\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. The position is clarified now and it is quite clear so it would be published as such.

Perhaps the Hon. Minister would give some consideration to see whether there should not be an amendment to section 13 of the Property Tax Ordinance in that shareholders of a company in returning the value of shares for property tax purposes will receive the benefit of a set-off on the value of these shares at half per cent of the value. If the company rate increases, then the Minister may well consider whether it is necessary to make any amendment to this provision to give a corresponding off-set to shareholders. I commend that for the Minister’s consideration.

Mr. Speaker, the question was asked: What would we have suggested in place of the taxation which we object to/ instead of these taxation measures which affect the small man, recurrent expenditure could have been pruned. The very huge sum we are projecting on the G.D.F. that could have been cut down. The re-current expenditure on the Prime Minister’s Ministry. The expenditure on the foreign service could also have been cut down.

There is no earthly reason why we should have Regional Ministries. Civil servants are quite capable of carrying on the job even better, because there are dedicated and properly

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qualified civil servants who can look into the problems even in a non-partisan manner. All that expenditure on Regional Ministries could have been avoided, and if there was a shortfall, there should have been a taxation on cigars. What was taxation not put on cigars? Because certain people smoke cigars? Surely the small man needs to eat. What about the imported liquor? All these people with their noses turned up in the air who do not drink local stuff and drink imported liquors. What about cosmetics? Why not put a tax on cosmetics? This is non-essential. We love our female Members of Parliament without their cosmetics. We see so many of them now wearing wigs; that is non-essential. We could even put a tax on wigs.

Why is it that we tax the small man's beer and have the big man's imported liquor? What kind of a Government is this? [Mr. Hope: "It was taxed last year."] The Hon. Member reminds me. Why not tax after-shave lotion, colognes, all these things which are so high smelling when the Hon. Members enter this august Chamber? Why all the sweet smells that emanate from them? What about those? Limacol would be good enough. The Hon. Member Miss Ackman did talk about crab oil on one occasion. The P.N.C. advocates crab oil. This is part of the Government's policy on paper but when it comes to the realities, it is just not there. Another Hon. Minister has just entered this Chamber and I can smell the after-shave lotion and the cologne. **[Laughter]**

I want to sound a very serious note. I should like the Government to be responsive to constructive criticism. It is time for the Government to realise that self-examination must be added to self-help, self-feed and self-clothe. Until self-examination is accomplished the Guyanese people will continue to be victimised by an unrealistic, over-ambitious Development Scheme.

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That self examination, Mr. Speaker, should begin with a close investigation of what the Government's 1973 Budget brought to the Guyanese people. We ask the Government again to tell us in figures, how many jobs has it created for our unemployed. How many are still unemployed? How many houses were built in 1973 for the homeless? Why has the Government failed to ensure an adequate supply of home-grown foodstuff and products for the market place?

Has it occurred to the Government that the Guyanese, perhaps, prefer the foreign foods because of the fact that they may be more nutritious, tastier and cleaner? Is there any reason why our basic foodstuffs should be in superficial short supply? Is this not, perhaps, because of the incompetence of the E.T.B. in the past?

The answer is apparent that the Government did not build the expected number of houses; it did not put a dent into the unemployment problem. Indeed, it may well be thought that the Government does not even know the extent of the labour problem. What is certain is that the consumer is dissatisfied with the quality, the quantity, the availability and price of food and household items. The sum total then is that the Government has not brought us any closer to economic independence and self-sufficiency, but it seems that it has brought us closer to dependence on foreign loans and assistance.

The day is fast approaching when, as the Government itself realises, foreign loans are going to dry up. What then will we be left with? We will be left with the battered remains of an economic development programme and an enlarged and ineffective bureaucracy which the optimistic Development Programme has spawned.

The Hon. Minister is disappointed at the savings rate and the sluggishness of the private capital investment. People do not save when there is increasing inflation which makes today a better time to buy than tomorrow. People do not save when they have lost confidence in the value of their currency. People do not invest when governmental and bureaucratic policies frustrate and eliminate incentives. Savings and investment will grow when the Guyanese people believe that the future is promising. Not until then will it grow.

It is my summary that by their actions the Guyanese people have cast a vote of no confidence in the Government's economic policies. It is a vote which cannot be ignored and it is a vote which cannot be altered. What this Government must do is to stop its sloganeering on things like obeah and the rest. It must collect the needed statistical data, it must analyse the problems, it must find new solutions, it must promote practical proposals which will appeal to all

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Guyanese and not just the politicians and the bureaucracies who may have gained from the present scheme.

In summary, Mr. Speaker, the 1974 budget is a sad and shadowed disclosure of economic and financial catastrophe. It is a catastrophe of governmental and bureaucratic inadequacy. This Government has an obligation to the Guyanese people to face the truth, to drop the political posturing and to make a realistic response to the economic crisis that it admitted is upon us at the present time. The time is urgent and the problems are not soluble by ideological certitude of pretence. [Applause]

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER

The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House (Mr. Ramsaroop): Your Honour, it is proposed that Dr. Reid should wind up the debate at 5 o'clock. The Standing Order will permit half an hour break therefore I move the suspension of Standing Order No. 9(2) to enable us to go up to 5 o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: It is agreed that the Suspension be taken until 5 o'clock.

Sitting suspended at 3.52 p.m.

4.50 p.m.

On resumption --

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER

Mr. Ramsaroop: When the suspension was taken, I indicated to this House that we would wind up the debate at 5 o'clock. It appears, sir, that it will not be possible for the Government to continue the debate at 5 o'clock. I am, therefore, proposing that we break at this stage and resume and finish the debate from 7 o'clock this evening to 10 o'clock. Hopefully, we will also get in a few Heads in the Estimates. I see the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Justice here. In view of that suggestion, I, therefore, respectfully ask for the suspension of the relevant

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Standing Order No. 9(2) to enable us to continue the break, resume at 7 o'clock, then we shall meet from 7 o'clock to 10 o'clock and break for the day.

Question put, and agreed to.

Sitting suspended at 4.52 p.m.

7 p.m.

On resumption –

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Deputy Prime Minister.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Development and Agriculture (Dr. Reid): The budget is always full of interest in all sorts of ways. I want at this time in winding up this debate to congratulate the Minister of Finance because in a developing country, notwithstanding it is a combined effort, there is a lot of pressure that comes to bear on the Minister of Finance because in all these developing countries financial resources are scarce and so, for us in Guyana, budget time is very important and the Minister at this time has played his part well in presenting to Guyana's public a Budget that he himself has described as a harsh budget. But, under our circumstances, what other Budget can be presented to this nation since we are endeavouring to develop so that the fruits of production can be equitably distributed to all people? Hence, it is only looking at the G.N.P. and G.D.P. because those figures are sometime so misleading as all figures are.

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friend on the opposite side was endeavouring to get into all the details, even though remarks were made by some of the experts on this side who, still in their seats, were printing out some of his errors, and even though, yesterday, the Minister of Economic Development took pains to go through some of those details and the Minister of Finance himself has taken all possible care to bring us up to date with all the facts of our present economic and financial situation. By the remarks made from their seats, it was clear that my friend was looking at the figures, looking at some of the statements, reading some of them wrong and interpreting most of

them incorrectly. Probably this is all part of our politics, that he must find something to say that sounds critical, even if, when the facts are uncovered, the situation is quite different.

He had disregarded some of the facts of our situation in coming to his conclusion about overspending and falling short of proposals for 1973. This year, 1973, has been a difficult one not only for Guyana but, I daresay, for most parts of the world. Not only for the developing world but also for the developed world.

It seems, however, that whatever we try to point out here is not taken with the seriousness that it deserves, because for some years we have been talking about endeavouring to do things for ourselves, to be self-reliant so that development can proceed. Here in Guyana, we have been saying not only in the House but out of the House, that 1973 in particular has been a year that has been frustrating many efforts because of the weather. My friend does not accept that, though he has lived it through. He still believes that we are trying to find some way out of what is happening in Guyana.

And so, I want to refer him to a booklet called *Cajanus* Volume 6, No. 3 – and this was published this year, 1973 – to show that the weather this year has caused troubles beyond our experience in this world of ours. In this booklet it is recorded: “Famine threat grows”, and I will read just a small portion: “In fact, famine risks hitting several regions of the world...because of disastrous weather over recent years.” This is not only for the developing countries, but also for the developed world, and in some parts of the world they have had to send in mercy units because of the seriousness of the situation.

Yet, here in Guyana, my friend tries to pick on something that he knows very little about; he says that people are suffering from malnutrition. He said some expert has said that. We are still fortunate under these difficult circumstances that we have been able to keep this nation properly fed during this difficult period.

And what is the kind of weather we are speaking of in Guyana? The weather that we are speaking of in Guyana is very unusual. I should like to note what has happened over the years

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1956 to 1972. I am going to take the mean rainfall over those years, month by month, and then have a look at 1973 to see if, indeed and in fact, we on this side are trying to make up a story.

Now the mean for the period 1956 to 1972, in January, was 6.60 inches of rainfall. For 1973, over that same month, it was 1.91 inches. In February, the mean for that period was 3.40; February 1973, it was 0.61 inches. For March, over the period, it was 2.82; for 1973, it was 1.37 inches. In April, it was 5.73, and in 1973, 3.10 inches.

Now, up to that point, there is a conclusion that can be arrived at if we analyse these figures properly, and that is in those months when we should have been having some rain, we had drought. This Government exerted itself in a major effort to get water for some of our crops. And then, lo and behold, when we should have had our routine dry season to reap some of the largest cultivations, not only in rice but in several other commodities, the unusual rains came, for in August, the mean for the period 1956 to 1972 was 7.91 inches; for 1973, it was 12.26 inches. For September, the mean over those years was 3.43 inches; in 1973, it was 11.04 inches. In October, the mean was 3.35 inches, in October of 1973, it was 11.57 inches.

In such unusual weather conditions, no country can really prepare itself to offset the damage, and that is why in this article that I have read from *Cajanus* – statements by Mr. Boerma, who is the Director General of the Food and Agriculture Organisation, are quoted in it – it is said that famine risks hitting several regions of the world because of disastrous weather over recent years.

I think people in Guyana notwithstanding those circumstances, especially the farming community, have done a wonderful job in keeping this nation properly supplied with food and also keeping export markets supplied with some of the products that they need.

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At this very moment as we sit in the House people are again suffering from severe floods and so people are desperately harvesting all they can – thousands and thousands of tonnes of food. Hence, when we come to Budget time, at least it should be a common duty whether you be on the Government's side or on the Opposition's side. We should examine the details carefully. My

colleagues on this side have been exhorting the Members on the opposite side, if they do not really understand some of the complexities in the figures, to ask questions. We hope that there will be understanding of the answers. That is all I wish to say on some of the things my friend has been saying.

I am of the mind, however, that, as far as the increase in current expenses is concerned, he has already decided that because of this high current expenditure he certainly will not be accepting any increase in pay because he claims that is not a right thing to do. I think that if he so believes that it is a wrong thing then the least he can do is to tell the country so. I thought that at some stage he would have said so. I am not too sure whether he did because I had to be away a little while so probably he did say so. I thought he would have dedicated to the nation that he, the Hon. Member, would not wish to take part in accepting any such increase. I learn from the whispering that no such statement was made in the House. And so again you see the cheap politicking that goes on and how can we therefore trust what they say?

He claims that at election time there should not only be any additional expenses, probably he has never had the chance – and I know he never would have the chance to organise and run an election because elections do not only involve the politicians, they involve the entire Service. All sorts of people have to be involved in registration and all sorts of other duties. All sorts of movements have to take place, locally and overseas, so that you can ensure that the people who have qualified to vote can do so and these are justified expenses because if you believe in elections – and we on this side believe in elections – if you believe in the democratic system, then we have to go through the mechanics of working through the system and those mechanics must involve expenditure.

Some of them are saying that the additional expenses were used for the P.N.C. campaign. The P.N.C., as a political organisation, has been able to gather funds from its supporters and these days we can talk in terms of millions of dollars from our supporters, at Congress and otherwise, so that we can carry on a proper Election, so that we can get out into the areas and tell the people the truth. Probably, he would have wished us to stay in Georgetown without going any place so that they can be allowed, as they did some years ago, to mislead and deceive the

people. My Hon. Friend on that side has a great reputation that he seems to forget, that at election time in the days when we talked of the “Great Force”, the Force that had the dynamism, the Force that was going to burst the interior open, that “Force” at election time that spent enough funds on all sorts of gadgets to get into the far-off areas of this country and to put some of these gadgets high up on the trees to tell the people that that was the voice of God telling them to vote for “Peter, the rock on which I built my churches.”

It is time to be ashamed and not to speak in this House about elections. I would advise my Hon. Friend not to mention anything about elections in this House. We on this side can organise the elections properly. We would not tell the people that the voice of God is speaking to them. We would never go out into the countryside and tell people that other members are going to eat them up. We would not do that. We would not go and tell the people that other members are going to take away their wives and kill their children. But that was the kind of campaign, and he would wish us to leave them alone so that they can continue this exercise but the days for that kind of politicking are over.

He mentioned the External Trade Bureau. I know that the External Trade Bureau hurts some of his friends. It must hurt them because so many of them have lived on commissions without getting into the productive sector of this economy. The thing has become such a habit that even though there are so many opportunities for investing in the productive sector they still would want to continue to buy and sell, some of them just making the arrangement and collecting the high fees as commissions. It might be well for him to advise them that the changes have already come upon us and we will not return to those old days.

Everything has difficulty in its beginning. The External Trade Bureau is no exception and I am sure that from the practice that the External Trade Bureau has undergone the External Trade Bureau has now gathered enough experience to wrestle with some of the rascals in the communities at home and abroad. It was not an organisation that had no opposition. It was an organisation that had 100 per cent opposition from those who were already entrenched in this community, from those who were reaping the best fruits from a harvest, the cultivation of which they had no real part. They were reaping the fruits of other people’s labour.

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The external Trade Bureau – we have said this before – has come to stay and it is well for him to advise his friends – I know he has close friends – for them to accommodate themselves to this change and take on new attitudes as we are not now trying to exploit one another but we are trying to help one another.

Guyana, during the year, even though it was a hard year, has made some achievement but in these days we do not shout so much about what has been achieved. We keep on planning for the future because we know that we have to do several other things outside of bauxite, sugar and rice.

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These new areas of development must take time, they must have their teething troubles. But the beginning has been made. Though in some areas the traditional production has decreased in the overall new commodities have come into being and some of these new commodities have shown a definite increase. For instance, you have already heard of forest products. It is good to know that it has doubled. But it used to be such a small part of the economy that even when you double, the impact is not as great.

Fishing has made significant strides. New crops have made significant stride. Processing and preservation of food has made some strides. But these are just in the beginning. Everything has a beginning. We are not ashamed of this beginning because we have seen in Guyana some small beginnings that are now snow-balling. One very recent example that was now current and which I must mention is our small beginning with Christmas cards. When this country decided that it is time for us to produce our own cards people laughed at the production in the first few years. I challenge anybody now to go around the business places and laugh at the production of our local Christmas cards; they are as good as any and better than many. As a matter of fact, they are serving a use in Guyana that foreign cards should never serve. I hope this will give our people more self-reliance, self-respect and confidence that once we pursue diligently and intelligently we can succeed. That is one area at this time that we need to take note of and to congratulate all those who were pursuing this project of producing Christmas cards for our own use. I want to make special reference to the hundreds of school children who are part of this team

of production. Because this is how our education must go. It has to be education for development. I hope that from this exercise people in schools and out of schools are beginning to realise what this new education has to be. It must be education for development; it must involve work experience, and our schools are beginning to give our children that type of experience.

I said, Mr. Speaker, that everything begins small and our small efforts in some areas are beginning to bear fruit. I want to leave with this House a thought that the oceans of waters all come from the accumulation of drops of water and a drop of water in a bucket is insignificant but it is so meaningful to that vast accumulation of millions and millions of drops of water. Our mighty Mazaruni in this country of ours should remind us that even though it is powerful it is awesome, it is useful and destructive as it flows over rapids, cataracts and waterfalls, it is nothing more than an accumulation of tiny drops of water. If we should take time to study our environment it can provide us with the type of inspiration we need at this stage of our development.

A word has been said that notwithstanding the increased production that we talked about the prices of commodities keep going up and down. Probably it is well for us to know that one of the reasons for this is nothing more than people who distribute the goods trying to get more and more from what they are doing. Even though the Guyana Marketing Corporation does some distribution we have relied on the distributive services to render a fair service to the consumers. From the complaints that we have heard in and out of this House they are not doing this.

This Government, as you know, stands ready to react to such iniquities. It is giving us more firmness as the Government has to get involved in more and more meaningful activities. Therefore, as the distributive services do not serve the communities well it is our hope that people in the communities will organise themselves into co-operatives and other groups so that in time they can serve themselves.

This year, a great change has come in our structure, that is Regional Ministries. In this period of change, I think Guyana can claim no second place. Guyana has been thrusting forward into some areas of the unknown so that the masses of people can benefit, so that as they get involved in production, they can benefit from the fruits of their labour.

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Decentralisation has taken place at the national level and we have moved to regional centralisation. It might look a little conflicting but if you give it a little thought you will find that as we move from national decentralisation we go forward to regional centralisation. In the regions we need development to take place as promptly as possible so that the impact of development can reach all the people. In time past, development was not for the masses of people. For them development meant only hard work, and the least of the fruits from their labour.

Today, development must mean not only hard work but a just share of the fruits of labour, so that those who labour on would have hope and confidence that their economic betterment is assured. Regional centralisation has therefore come so that development can move more promptly. In too many cases there is waste of our human resources, there is waste of our financial resources and there is waste of our natural resources.

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By moving to regional centralization, it is hoped that decisions will be taken at the ground level so that action can take place and I was hearing only this afternoon that in one particular region the impact is already being experienced. The people not only are involved in planning and identifying what projects should be done, but are making decisions when bottlenecks occur so that the road blocks can be removed and development can take place. This budget is indicating to us more and more that we are the husbandmen of our resources and it is for that reason mention is made that before long there will be introduced in this House a White Paper on National Service.

Some people have all sorts of strange ideas of what this will be. But, Mr. Speaker, it is good to note at this stage some of the history through which we have come, some of the attitudes we have adopted, some of the education we have received and when we look at all that we can then examine the results of all this. What are the results in the community? For years we have had people who have gone through our school system but who are not prepared for work. I have just come back from a conference where they are bemoaning the fact that our very school system has separated us from work. National Service is nothing more than presenting to the people who

have never had an opportunity to participate in a new system so that they can have learning that is relevant to development. In my mind, it is a new type of teaching exercise so that all of our people will be better prepared for this massive task of developing themselves and the communities in which they live, and unless we have man, our human resource, properly prepared, then, notwithstanding what we do, real development will not take place.

It is hoped that through National Service young and old will get an opportunity to experience learning for development and our human resources, especially our large percentage of youth must be given this type of opportunity because our masters in the past never had any idea that we were being trained to develop anything. For we know over the years that many young people who today walk the streets looking for work were at school brilliant children, their teachers remarking to them how brilliant they were. Because of the system of not training them to perform, not teaching them to work, because they have not had learning for development they came out of schools and walked the street for weeks, months and years and then came to the sad conclusion that they are of no value.

We want to do a task in this country so that every Guyanese will know that he is of value in this country of ours and National Service will present him with that opportunity. The only regret is that because of our scarce financial resources, we will not be able to do it on a large enough scale to have as quick an impact as we would wish, but everything in this world starts from a small beginning. Never forget the drop of water in the bucket. It starts from a small beginning but we must start and the time has come when we must make this tremendous thrust forward so that in time we would speak of a Guyana where there is no unemployment at all.

In my friend's rambling about wasteful expenditure, he indicated that we should not have had the Non-Aligned Conference in this country. I never thought that after the experience we have experience we have gained from the Non-Aligned Conference in Guyana we would have still remained ignorant of the value of such a Conference to this country of ours. I wish to remind my friend that Guyana has done well notwithstanding that the critics have said because, through Non-Alignment, we have made friends far and near.

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We have been able to attack problems that would prevent us from moving and the Foreign Services of Guyana is contributing in no small way to the development of this country. It is only in recent weeks we have seen long lines of people putting the pressure on the gasoline station so that they could get petroleum products. If our Foreign Service was not working full time and intelligently, those lines would have still been around but because of our contribution in the Non-Aligned Group and in the undeveloped world, because of regionalism, we have been able to contain this severe crisis that has confronted the entire world.

We have read only today of the measures being taken in the United Kingdom itself, the United Kingdom that at one time ruled the world. We, too, used to say “Rule Britannia. Britannia rule the waves.” They have instituted measures that little Guyana has not seen fit to introduce yet and we hope that from our activity and contribution in the overseas conferences and in Non-Aligned Groups and the Third World Group, we would be able to avert probably the worst aspect of this crisis.

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Our development is taking place in other areas. We have seen in recent weeks a new plant opened in Guyana. It is a lapidary – I hope I called the word properly. It is a very technical term but it is a little plant that is making use of one of our neglected natural resources. That plant is making use of all our semi-precious stones.

Because of the type of Government that ensures the participation of people, the involvement of people, a new inspiration has come about and our professional and technical men in this sector have gone the extra mile in their work to have an interaction of the human being with this natural resource. I want us to realise how important this is, because that natural resource was here for a long time. As long as we can think of this country, I would think that particular natural resource has been here.

Many people have managed the affairs of this country, some of them with a lot of expertise, a lot of technology and what not, but it is only now that Guyana has seen the value of this idle resource. By means of processing, all sorts of things – and I hope you will visit the place

to see, it looks as if it is magic, by the time you have finished the processing – precious and attractive commodities are produced, commodities that our housewives in this country and people from abroad would wish to have.

It is again giving credence to our policy that we must own, control and manage our resources. Because of this policy, our semi-precious stones are now being managed properly. We have found a new industry in Guyana. It is a small beginning, but a small beginning that is so meaningful. I hope that as we view these projects, we will be able to get within ourselves more self-confidence, so that, given the environment and the opportunity, we can do better and better.

The task ahead, as indicated by the Budget, is a difficult one. I repeat, the Minister himself has admitted that it is a hard Budget, but the developed world has already indicated that notwithstanding the shoutings that we make, they can only help in some areas. Even assistance that they committed they would give they cannot give.

We must realise, too, that Guyana is not listed among the poorest countries of the world. Not at all. Guyana has actually moved away from loans that we describe as soft loans, because our income per capita is above that which is called the norm for very poor countries. We have moved away from \$200 US per capita income to some \$300. I think the limit is around \$250, so we have moved away from that because of our struggles toward development. We would wish, as time goes on, to move higher and higher.

I should like to read what the President of the World Bank had to say in 1972. The President is Robert McNamara. He was addressing the Board of Governors on 25th September, 1972. He said this on page 6:

“Projected to the end of the century – only a generation away – that means the people of the developed countries will be enjoying per capita incomes, in 1972 prices of over \$8,000 per year, while these masses of the poor (who by that time)”

That is, the end of the country,

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“will total over two and one-quarter billion people, will on average receive less than \$200 per capita, and some 300 million of these will receive less than \$100.”

Sometimes when we speak in this House we do not want to relate what is happening on the international scene, but we are not an island all by ourselves. Whatever is happening in the international world affects us, and so we must always recognise that fact, for development to take place, it has to be in a world. Not in an island all by ourselves, but in a world.

That brings me to the fact that the pressures and constraints to prevent development are great. Sometimes I think it would be a good thing to be able to come to this House from time to time and tell the happenings, but that, too, would not help the Government, because development is a battle, it is a war, and in a war, it is not in your interest to declare all your plans and programmes for success. Some things must remain in secret, especially in a Government of a developing country. And so it is not a practical thing to reveal all the manoeuvrings that go on, so that we can have great constraints to our development.

What is sometimes of great concern is that people who should assist in giving leadership come to this House, misinterpret what we are doing, and sometimes deliberately deceive the public. I would advise my Hon. Friend on the other side, that if, as he says, he wishes development to take place, to look at the Budget dispassionately, to study it well, to analyse it intelligently, so that he can make constructive criticisms.

He talks about the poor man and the new tax measures. I am always wondering. As a matter of fact, so often I am left in wonderment when the “Leader of the Opposition” tells this House and this nation that his organisation – I do not really want to call it a party, but we grant it that name – that his party is interested in the poor man, and they shout about their interest in the poor more than anyone else.

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I am left in wonderment. Either it is the belief as they believed at one time that the masses are asses. Who would believe that they have interest in the poor in this country? What he is trying to do with these tax measures is to get sympathy from the masses who he believes

would not see for themselves. Great care has been taken in presenting these tax proposals so that they will fall more on the people who can bear them.

We make no apology that the poor in this country will have to carry some of the burden because development involves all the people but I am satisfied that the measures introduced here have taken into consideration what contribution the poor in Guyana can make. I hope that my good friend will examine those measures again because it is through those measures that we must be able to demonstrate to the world that we are really committed to development.

Too many people shout how they would cooperate, how they are committed. In this period in the history of Guyana we need to translate words into action notwithstanding what our friends say we must see them in action.

What do they know about poverty? What kind of poverty have they ever come near? Do they have any idea how the poor man lives? I learnt a while ago that my friend is taking the opportunity to visit places where there are poor people, so that he can learn about the prices. He is getting a new experience and I want to compliment him for that. He must get outside of Georgetown too to see what happens in the countryside. That has nothing to do with where you were born. What is important is your attitude to the poor and the Hon. Member's attitude to the poor has already been demonstrated by the Party not only now but in times past, in that it concerned itself with deceiving the people of this country.

This is important at this stage of our development so that the people who claim to be leaders, who come and sit in the House on the opposite side, are not given any opportunity any more to deceive the public. We need to mobilise and organise the masses of the people for this immense task of developing this country and we will leave no stone unturned, notwithstanding what my friend is whispering in his seat, to expose those who are determined that no development should take place in Guyana.

This Budget, as presented, is an indication that the Government and the people of Guyana are serious when they speak of development. In some countries this is only a matter of words but this Government has already demonstrated that it is determined that this country would develop.

We wish to assure the hon. Member on the other side that we look forward to his contribution to the development of this country. We look forward to his giving of his best because in this socialism that we are pursuing, this social road that we have entered on, it must be not only from each according to his ability but to each according to his work. [Applause]

Assembly in Committee of Supply.

HEAD I – OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

Question proposed that the sum of \$90,098 for Head I, Office of the President, stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Those Members who wish to speak kindly indicate. Hon. Member Mr. Singh.

Mr. M. F. Singh: Page 18, subheads 5 and 7. Subhead 5 is there current business of telephones. We heard so much during the debate on the last supplementary provisions of money owing as arrears for telephones to the Guyana Telecommunications Corporation and it was very forcibly pointed out that telephone rates had gone up and that was why there was an increase being asked for. Well, we note that the approved provision for 1973 was \$6,500 and the sum being asked for for 1974 is the same \$6,500. If the rates have in fact gone up as has been so forcibly pointed out to us, then it seems quite obvious that we need some more money to be provided there. I should like to be very fair to the Guyana Telecommunications Corporation and let them have their bills paid rather than waiting to come again to the House for supplementary provision later next year.

Subhead 7, Entertainment Allowance: The Approved Estimates, 1973 had \$4,800, the Revised Estimates, 1973 had \$12,000 and the Estimates for 1974 have \$12,000. The Hon. Minister states very clearly on page 41 of his Budget Speech:

“...let us at least be able to show that we tightened our belt first.”

I think this example should perhaps be set from the President right down and that we should start to tighten our belts particularly in the field of entertainment allowance.

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This provision was \$4,800 in the Approved Estimates, 1973. Why should it go to \$12,000 for 1974?

The Minister of Finance (Mr. Hope): I think a part of the whole emphasis of this Budget is to try to impress upon Ministries the need to economise. The use of the telephone is one area in which we in the Ministry of Finance feel that at least in some Ministries and Departments economies are possible and they should be sought after. For this reason we have sought to limit the expenditure in this Department in respect of telephones to a level no higher than in 1973.

With respect to entertainment allowance, we have a Presidency and we have to ensure that when important visitors come to this country they are entertained by His Excellence the President as a matter of clear courtesy. We recognise that this means, and we realise the responsibilities placed upon His Excellency. We should therefore provide him with the wherewithal to entertain foreign guests with the dignity befitting his high office and the reputations of this country in international forums.

Head 1, President, \$90,098, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Pages 20 and 21.

HEAD 2 – SUPREME COURT OF JUDICATURE

Question proposed that the sum of \$753,677, for Head 2, Supreme Court and Judicature, stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. M. F. Singh: Mr. Chairman, would you like me to deal with them page by page or the entire Head?

The Chairman: I think it will be more convenient to deal with the entire Head so that the Minister could make one reply. Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, would that be convenient to you?

The Minister of Foreign Affairs and Justice (Mr. Ramphal): Yes Sir.

Mr. M. F. Singh: Subhead 1, item (5), Remuneration for Members, Judicial Service Commission. This is a statutory body set up under the Constitution, we are quite aware of that. The Approved Estimates had provided \$7,200, there has been an increase in 1974 to \$12,000.

The Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Singh, I permitted you to raise a question under entertainment due to inadvertence just now, but this provision is statutory and it does not permit for any discussion.

Mr. Singh: I prefaced my remark by saying that. Subhead 1, item (14), Chief Registry Officers. I should like to say that there is a lot of distraction in respect of a promotion to this post recently. We are aware that promotions are made by the Public Service Commission but I should like to draw to the Hon. Minister's attention that there has been dissatisfaction in that one officer it is alleged was promoted over five others who were senior to him. I would want to urge that ability and the principle of the best man for the job should always be the criteria for promotion, because there are very ugly rumours about this particular promotion.

Item (21), Legal Secretaries: This is a new item. Perhaps the Hon. Minister would tell us to whom these new legal secretaries are attached. What are they doing that the ordinary Registry staff cannot do? Perhaps it is the ordinary Registry staff. Do they need any special qualification for this particular post?

Item (36), Duty Allowance to Officer in charge of Sub Registry in New Amsterdam: Since I was working in the Registry in 1952 this amount was the same at the time, \$30 per month. In view of the change in money value over the years I think it is only fair that a request should be made to have this duty allowance increased.

Subhead 17, National Insurance. There have been salary increases in this Department. There is a staff of 143. If we look under the 1973 Approved Estimates which was before the revision provision of salaries we would see that the sum of \$18,000 was provided for National Insurance. Almost everyone else in these Estimates this provision has gone up as a result of increases in salaries. It seems rather strange, and indeed I would venture to say incorrect, that the amount of National Insurance should be estimated at \$18,000 for 1974 also when the salary

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increases to a staff of 143. Before the salary increases in 1973 the amount was \$18,000. It should be more than \$18,000 now.

8.15 p.m.

Mr. Ramphal: Mr. Chairman, the two observations which my Hon. And learned friend made concerning the special cases of certain Registry Officers are observations which I have come to expect from Hon. And learned Members opposite and it is part of the indulgence we afford legal petitions from time to time to hold these briefs on the occasion of the budget debate. But the situation concerning the differentials between the Chief Registry Officer and Senior registry officers, is a matter which is currently engaging the attention of the Public Service Ministry and I can only assure the Hon. Member that I will ensure that a verbatim of his observations in the Hansard will be drawn to the attention of the appropriate authorities.

As regards the Duty Allowance to the Officer in New Amsterdam, it is a fact that that Officer holds a post of Chief Registry Officer one of those posts which I think my learned Friend was suggesting had been upgraded out of all proportion to other Officers in the Registry and, perhaps, this has a bearing on the fact that it was the substantive post and not the allowance which was revised.

The situation with the National Insurance Contributions is, I understand, that there are a large number of Senior Officers in this Ministry and the contributions have reached a ceiling and this is why you will not expect to find from this point onwards, unless there are changes in the National Insurance Scheme itself, a modification of the annual contributions.

Head 2, Supreme Court of Judicature - \$753,677 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

HEAD 3 – MAGISTRATES

Question proposed that the sum of \$1,041,004 for Head 3, Magistrates, stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Singh.

Mr. M. F. Singh: Sir, there are representations which have been in respect of the grading of magistrates. We have three Senior Magistrates on the A30 scale and seventeen on the A26 scale. Representations have been made for a Chief Magistrate and a Senior Magistrate. There is a lot of frustration among Magistrates at the present moment. There are young Magistrates right up on top and promotion opportunities seem to have reached almost stagnation point. With this kind of dissatisfaction I understand that representations were made. It may well be that they are being given consideration now but I should like to urge the Hon. Minister to speed up consideration of these representations so that we could have our dispensers of justice not as dissatisfaction as they are at the present moment.

Mr. Ramphal: I can assure the Hon. And learned Member that this matter is being pursued. In fact, I have personally had consultations with representatives of the Magistrates' Association; there have been joint discussions with the Chancellor; proposals have been put and agreed to and they are now awaiting final decisions. I am quite certain that within a very time the matter will be resolved and resolved satisfactorily.

Head 3, Magistrates - \$1,041,004 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

HEAD 14 – MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The Chairman: Please turn to pages 43 and 44. On page 44 there is a slight correction. The last column against the item, Official Entertainment, should read “400”.

Question proposed that the sum of \$6,212,938 for Head 14, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Singh.

Mr. M. F. Singh: Mr. Chairman, I should like to start with some general remarks on this Head, Foreign Affairs. Let me preface my remarks by saying – and I want to say it very loud and clear – that on the issue of Guyanese territorial integrity, the United Force stands four square behind the Government. Not one blade of grass will we agree to yield. Having said this, sir, I

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want again to remind the Hon. Minister of the statement made in the Budget Speech that we must tightened our belt first. Who must tighten their belts? Should it be the poor man or should it be all of us? Yet the personal emoluments alone under this head increased. If we look at the last column, it is increased to \$1.2 million and if we add in other charges the increase is, in fact, approximately \$2 million.

Do we, as a small nation, really need all these embassies in all the various countries as at present? Could we not, as a set of poor nations, get together for collective representation as we did in CARICOM, or are we, perhaps, more interested in building up Guyanese personalities?

The small man is asked to make sacrifice. Let us set the example for him by cutting down on our spending abroad on foreign embassies and spend more money here in Guyana. spend some money, for example – I can think of one at the present moment – on improving the drainage and irrigation situation all over the country. The newspapers reported that the Minister of State, Mr. Zaheeruddeen went on a tour recently. The farmers on the Pomeroon have been flooded out time and time again. This is not only as a result of rainfall now; they are always being flooded out. Why we cannot divert some of this very scarce money towards development and helping the plight of the poor man in Guyana?

I will now turn to the other page, Mr. Chairman, subhead 16 – Expenses of Guyana Boundaries Commission. The sum of \$20,000 was approved in 1973; the sum of \$20,000 was in the Revised Estimates and the same sum of \$20,000 is in the 1974 Estimates. I wonder whether the Commission is working at the moment. What is it doing at the present moment? Has this money actually been spent or is it going to be spent in 1974? One does not know and one has not heard of any Commission meeting recently, so if the Minister is in a position to say it would be enlightening.

8.25 p.m.

Subhead 26, Contribution to Internal Commission of Jurists. The sum of \$5,000 has been provided each year for as far back as this copy of the Estimates goes, that is from 1971. Presumably, the Government believes in the existence of this organisation and that is why the

Government continues to contribute to this organisation. If that is so, one wonders why it is that the Government has failed to complement the findings of the ICJ. They came here, made recommendations, they submitted a Report and, particularly, they made recommendations about the correcting of imbalances in the Government Services. Perhaps the hon. Minister would like to tell us why this Government has still not implemented those recommendations.

Mr. Ramphal: Mr. Chairman, it is perhaps symptomatic that my Hon. and learned Friend confines himself for the greater part of the time to generalities, but since he did, I must answer some of those generalities. There was a time, indeed, when a Budget presented in this House contained no Head such as Head 14, no expenditure of any kind on Guyana's relations overseas. There were no relations for there was no Guyana foreign policy.

Perhaps what my hon. and learned friend is saying, in an almost subliminal way, is that he wishes to hearken back to that situation, a situation in which we were not responsible for our relations overseas, a situation in which we were in a colonial status, because it is an incident of Independence, it is an inevitable incident of nationhood, that we shall have to guard the interest of Guyana overseas.

The Hon. Deputy prime Minister, just a little while ago, had cause to remind my Hon. and learned Friend of the essentiality of guarding that interest overseas ourselves, and how relevant it is to all that goes on in Guyana, how relevant it is to development, how relevant it is to the same drainage and irrigation works that he wants to see carried out all over Guyana, which we all want to see carried out.

It is part of all that we are doing to maximise the chances of Guyana, not only for development but for improving the quality of life for our people generally. It is to that that the Foreign Service is committed, and it is in that cause that it works.

The hon. and learned member spoke vaguely of reducing these missions and embassies abroad. There is a list on page 45 that he might have looked at. He might have made suggestions as to what might go, but, of course, he cannot. Guyana has set something of a standard among developing countries, in maintaining a low level of formal residential representation abroad. We

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have established overseas, the relatively few missions that have been listed here. There are others we would wish to establish, there are some that we should be establishing now, but in the interest of economy, in the interest of a general overall contribution, we are foregoing. But there are certain essentials that we must maintain, and I suggest to the hon. and learned Member that as he looks through that list, he will find it extremely difficult to make proposals for their further reduction.

The Hon. and learned Member made some more specific observations, one of which was irrelevant to the Head of Foreign Affairs. It concerns recruitment in the Police Force, which I suggest he retains for the attention of the appropriate Minister when he comes.

The contribution to the International Commission of Jurists is a contribution which the Government undertook voluntarily to make some years ago, in order to ensure that the Commission maintained its independence. It is a contribution that we make proudly and will continue to make. Unless I am mistaken, Mr. Chairman, those were all the questions.

Mr. Chairman: I think he raised subhead 16, Expenses of Guyana Boundaries Commission.

Mr. Ramphal: The hon. member asked me for an assurance that the money was spent. I give it to him. Yes, it was. He must not expect this subhead, Expenses of Guyana Boundaries Commission, to deal in great particularity with the ways in which the expenditure is developed, but it is necessary. It covers not one but more than one aspect of our territorial integrity, and the money is provided and is spent in disbursements of this kind and related to these operations.

Mr. M. F. Singh: I should like to tell the Hon. Member that I never asked anything at all about the recruitment in the Police Force. I do not know where he got that from.

Head 14, Ministry of Foreign Affairs - \$6,212,938 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

DIVISION IX – MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Question proposed that the sum of \$500,000 for Division IX, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. M. F. Singh: All these subheads 1, 2, 3 and 4 represent taxpayers' money and, as taxpayers, we are entitled to have proper explanations as to how the money is being spent. We do not expect the Minister to go into details of little things like toilet paper, and pens, and that kind of thing, but when a significant amount of money like \$100,000 for purchase of equipment is listed, and the legend says: "...purchase of miscellaneous equipment", one would expect that the hon. Minister would give us some idea of what this equipment is. We appreciate it cannot be listed here in the Estimates, but that is what we are here for, to get explanations and to get some idea of what miscellaneous equipment is meant here.

The next subhead is to provide for purchase of buildings. Where are these buildings to be purchased and at what cost? The sum is relatively small in comparison with the purchase of a building, \$150,000 (Guyana), so that when the legend says: "To provide for the purchase of buildings", one wonders what buildings would cost \$150,000.

I was pointing out – the hon. Minister is not hearing what I am saying – this sum against subhead 2, Acquisition of Overseas Officers and Residence, \$150,000. The legend says: "To provide for the purchase of buildings." If it is \$150,000, and knowing the cost of buildings overseas, one wonders what buildings and where, would be bought for the sum of \$150,000. It seems a relatively small sum. If it is balance of payments, that might explain the situation.

Subhead 3, Heads of Missions' Residences. Redecorations etc. This has been going up over the years and we are told this is as a result of the increase in the number of residences, but there seems to be no end to it. The legend states: "To provide for the refurnishing and redecoration of residence." Over the years, we have been given different ones, and I would have thought by now all of them would have been refurnished and redecorated. Perhaps there are some I do not know about that the Minister can enlighten me about.

8.35 p.m.

“Subhead 4, Overseas Offices – furnishing etc.”, again the Legend says, “To provide for the restructuring and furnishing of Offices.” Now, where are these offices? This is another head that keeps increasing over the years so we should like to know the answers to these questions.

The Chairman: Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs and Justice.

Mr. Ramphal: Mr. Chairman, the hon. and learned Member has so often been the recipient of hospitality from our ambassadors abroad that I am surprised that he raises these questions concerning the furnishings of homes and offices. He knows perfectly well, he was once a Minister of this Government charged with responsibilities for public buildings, and he knows what goes into the business of providing adequate accommodation at the level of Guyana’s principle representatives.

We are dealing with our chancelleries, we are dealing with our ambassadors’ residences and we are pursuing within the modesty of our means a policy of purchasing rather than renting eternally. Real estate values in the main capitals abroad keep increasing every year and if we go on renting on the relatively short-term basis, which is the only basis available, we will in the end purchase these properties many times over and therefore the Government has taken a decision, in principle, that whatever possible it will purchase.

We cannot, of course, disburse large amounts for the purpose of making purchases of this kind and therefore we are attempting, where we can, to finance purchases overseas from overseas financing sources and we are endeavouring to restrict the burden on the recurrent finances of the Government down-payments. What the hon. member sees here and has questioned as a relatively small amount represents the amount we hope to disburse this year on a down-payment probably in respect of only one residence. If we were extremely lucky, possible in respect of two but I doubt that. And so if we were to do this every year, purchasing now in London, now in Washington, now in Lusaka, now in Caracas we shall, over a period of time, find ourselves owners of these properties.

As we do this we have to maintain them and we have to maintain them not only in terms of an adequate standard of appearance and amenities but as an investment and therefore we have to ensure that they are constantly refurbished, redecorated, kept in a good state of repair and so on. That accounts for these heads which will appear every year. The hon. Member must accept from us and reserves the right to raise in any appropriate forum such as the Public Accounts Committee the minutiae of the expenditure. But I assure him these are the purposes for which these heads are provided.

Purchase of equipment, I thought he would be in a position to know the office equipment is something which has to be provided if a mission is to function at all and the miscellaneous equipment provided against them (i) is miscellaneous equipment for the purposes of making the office an efficient and effective office.

Division IX, Ministry of Foreign Affairs - \$150,000,000 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

HEAD 6 – OMBUDSMAN

Question proposed that the sum of \$29,064 for Head 6, Ombudsman, start part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Singh.

Mr. M. F. Singh: Just a general remark on this Head. We have not had any report from the Ombudsman for some time now. I wonder whether the Hon. Minister knows when we can expect reports from the Ombudsman to be laid before this honourable House as is required.

I am reminded that the Hon. Prime Minister had promised to enlarge the powers of the Ombudsman so that he can function more realistically with more powers and so that his office does not remain the sinecure that it seems to be at the moment. I am sorry the Hon. Prime Minister is not here but that was a promise, that was an undertaking given in the honourable House and we wonder how soon that undertaking would be fulfilled.

The Chairman: There is a slight correction on page 28. “To be voted” in the column “1972 Actual” should read “\$18,977” not “\$19,001”. Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs and Justice.

Mr. Ramphal: Mr. Chairman, as the hon. And learned Member knows the Ombudsman holds a constitutional office and is immune from control by any authority in the Land. Any report which the Ombudsman makes for presentation to Parliament will be presented to Parliament as soon as it is made for that purpose.

So far as the question concerning the enlargement of the powers of the Ombudsman is concerned, the hon. and learned Member would be aware that the last Parliament established a Select Committee which was charged with the responsibility of inquiring into this matter and making recommendations on it. Unfortunately, due largely to the delinquency of members of the Opposition who were members of that Committee, the Committee did not finalise its report. The situation has now been reached where presumably as a result of that lapse on the part of the Opposition this generous offer made by the government has not reached fruition and the hon. Member should look inwards perhaps to empty Opposition benches for the answer to that question.

Head 6, Ombudsman - \$29,064 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

HEAD 8 – PUBLIC PROSECUTIONS

The Chairman: Page 30, there is a slight correction. “Total Appropriation, 1973 Revised Estimates” should read “\$130,072” and not “\$132,920”.

Question proposed that the sum of \$166,378 for Head 8, Public Prosecutions, stand part of the Estimates.

Head 8, Public Prosecutions - \$166,378 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

HEAD 15 – ATTORNEY GENERAL

The Chairman: There are two minor corrections on pages 46 and 47. Head 15, figure 1 should be inserted in column 4, under subhead No. in line with Personal Emoluments. Subhead 1 (10) should read Supernumerary Senior Legal Affairs. The legend at (c) should read: See (12) above. The legend for “(15) Additional Legal Assistant” should read “(15)” and not “(16)”. Page 47, head 15: Total Other Charges under the column “1973 Revised Estimates” should read “\$67,774” and not “\$66,774”.

8.45 p.m.

Question proposed that the sum of \$382,597 for Head 15, Attorney General, stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Singh.

Mr. M. F. Singh: Mr. Chairman, I should like to make a few general remarks on this Head and I am very pleased to make these remarks. Two new appointments recently have been made in this Department and I should like very heartily to commend the authorities on these appointments. I should like to say that Guyana is indeed very fortunate that this very important Department is now headed by two of the most brilliant sons of Guyana, Dr. Shahabuddeen as Attorney General and Mr. J. C. Gonsalves-Sabola as Solicitor General.

Dr. Shahabuddeen is well known to us as a brilliant jurist. Mr. Sabola has distinguished himself as a judge of the High Court. He was liked and respected by all as a Judge of the highest integrity and dedication even when he gave judgement against people; as we all know everybody cannot win, one side must lose. The only regret, and this has been voiced in many quarters, is that the Judiciary has now lost the services of Mr. Sabola. I myself have learnt a lot from this worthy gentleman. Over twenty years ago my first public speaking was done as a member of a team with Joe Sabola as a member of that team, in the Dragon Shield debate and we won for three consecutive years.

I should like to extend the very best wishes of the Opposition Members of Parliament and I think I would echo the wishes of all the Members of this honourable House to wish these two gentlemen the very best in their new posts. Now we shall look at the Estimates proper. There seems to be a very great disparity between the salaries of Chief Parliamentary Counsel and Senior Parliamentary Counsel. One is \$21,600 and the other, who presumably must be his deputy, is \$12,012; and even the others perhaps would need to be looked at. I wonder whether the Hon. Minister would not like to give consideration to this disparity and consider upgrading these posts. Because one is quite aware of the huge amount of work done by the members of this particular office. We see the great volume of work in terms of legislation that comes before this House. In addition to Acts of Parliament, there are orders, regulations and the like. This is a specialized field.

First of all, the disparity seems to be far too great; it seems to be in need of revision to maintain a smooth line. There obviously cannot be a smooth line when the deputy is getting so much less than the Chief. Perhaps the whole lot of salaries should be looked at in this Parliament.

The Chairman: The Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs and Justice.

Mr. Ramphal: Mr. Chairman, I should first of all, like to thank my Hon. and learned Friend for the very generous remarks which he made about my colleagues in the Attorney General's Chambers and which as he rightly said are sentiments fully shared by all Members of this House.

The observations which were made about the office of Chief Parliamentary Counsel bear a relationship to the consultations which I spoke about a while ago concerning the Magistrates. In fact those consultations required us to look at a number of related legal posts. I can assure the Hon. and learned Member that the question which he raised has received attention and is likely to be dealt with in the final decisions that are made.

I fully endorse what he had to say about the volume of work of a very high professional standard which fall upon legal draftsmen who are among the scarcest legal commodities. Their duties are onerous and exacting and it is eminently right that they should be rewarded financially

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for their professional skills. I should like to assure him that those considerations are very germane to the recommendations that are being considered.

Head 15, Attorney-General-\$382,597-agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

HEAD 16 – OFFICIAL RECEIVER

Question proposed that the sum of \$118,227, for Head 16, Official Receiver, stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Singh.

Mr. M. F. Singh: Mr. Chairman, subheads 1 and 6. I asked the question last year in respect of subhead 1, about the post of Official Receiver, Public Trustees and State Solicitor. It is a very important post. Apparently there has been some difficulty in filling it. I am not sure what the position is now and I should like some enlightenment on this. Has this post been filled by a civil servant – a contract officer? What is the position as regards this post? As I said this is a very important post and one would like to know that it is filled by an officer who devotes his whole time and attention to the affairs of this office and that the backlog of work, which I understand is quite considerable, should be cleared up.

8.55 p.m.

This office deals with so many things, for example, intestate estates of people who have no representatives, and it needs some attention. It has been neglected for years now, I note that in subhead 1 (6) the post of Trust Officer is vacant. The legend says “Post Vacant”. This post of Trust Officer is a very important post. A number of duties devolve around this office. Therefore, we would like to know what are the prospects of filling this vacant post. I understand that the work is behind hand. There have been a lot of complaints about the backlog and even though one recognises the problems of filling the position of head of the department, maybe the job in respect of Trust Officer is not so insurmountable.

The Chairman: Hon. Minister of Justice.

Mr. Ramphal: Because I share so fully the sentiments of my hon. and learned friend regarding the offices of Official Receiver, Public Trustees and State Solicitor, I hope it is not a question that he will have to ask again next year. Steps are being taken to remedy the situation to which the hon. Member has drawn attention and which has existed for some time. There are, however, certain statutory requirements in terms of the qualifications to the post which, for example, are not now possessed by the deputy and he is himself well aware professionally of the great difficulties attendant upon filling this post in the normal way. But it is receiving our closest attention.

The post of Trust Officer is, indeed, vacant but the vacancy arose only in August and steps are being taken in the normal way for the post to be filled substantively. I really do not think that the hon. and learned Member could fairly complain that there has been inordinate delay in filling this post.

Head 16, Attorney General, Official Receiver - \$118,227 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

HEAD 17 – ATTORNEY GENERAL

DEEDS REGISTRY

The Chairman: Page 49. There is one slight correction against subhead 1 item (9), Acting Allowance. Insert ‘90’ in the last column.

Question proposed that the sum of \$173,918 for Head 17, Deeds Registry, stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Singh.

Mr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, this again is a very important department and I should know because I was in it for eight years. This department is understaffed and is sadly in need of more accommodation. I invite the hon. and learned Minister of Justice to walk into that office and he will see what trying conditions this staff works under, particularly, at the present time when two officers are being prepared for a Registrar and Deputy. They are nice officers and they will take

up a little more space than was normally occupied by the previous officers, but it will further reduce the space in that department. I know that there are problems as regards space but I would like the hon. and learned Minister of Justice to bear in mind that this department is very cramped and it needs some more space. It may not be possible now but I shall like the hon. Minister to bear this in mind.

The next question is one which he answered when I was dealing with Supreme Court but I did not even ask it then, I am going to ask it now. I think your Adviser anticipated me and dealt with it under the wrong head. There is a great disparity between the salaries of Deputy Registrar and Assistant Registrar, which is quite apparent. One is \$11,064 and the other is \$6,672 which is a very big gap in salaries. This may well be another head that is under consideration.

Sir, there is yet another question. The hon. Minister of Justice will remember when we were dealing with Supreme Court that the order was Registrar, Deputy Registrar, Assistant Registrar and then there was another item, Chief Registry Officers, but there is no post of Chief Officer here. After Assistant Registrar there are Senior Registry Officers. I know that recommendations have been made for these Senior Registry Officers to be regarded as Chief Registry Officers. The recommendation is that Senior Registry Officers on the A20 scale should be reclassified Chief Registry Officers as in the case of the Supreme Court. For example, the Judicial Officer in the Supreme Court is designated Chief Registry Officer and he is on scale A25 whereas the Conveyancing Officer, who is his counterpart in the Deeds Registry, and the Notarial Officer are merely designated Senior Registry Officers and not Chief Registry Officers and they are on scale A20 which is lower. We all know that Notarial Officers, Conveyancing Officers and Judicial Officers are all about the same standard. Why, therefore, have one in a higher category than the other? Why have the posts of Chief Registry Officers existing in the Supreme Court and not also in the Deeds Registry? Perhaps, this is another one under consideration and, perhaps, we could hurry up and stop the frustration which is now rampant in the department. Let there be some feeling of hope among the staff that something will be done for them because I understand that this recommendation has been made for some time now.

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I would just like to ask one more question under item (7), Clerical Establishment. There are six posts of Legal Clerk II and my information is that all of these are vacant. There are people who can fill these positions and we should like something to be done to speed up these appointments.

The Chairman: Hon. Minister of Justice.

Mr. Ramphal: Mr. Chairman, when my hon. and learned friend started by drawing attention to his great familiarity with this department and experience in it and then went on to draw attention to the fact that it was understaffed, I thought for one fleeting moment that he was offering his services. But, of course, that was not to be.

The positions of the staffing situation to which the hon. Member has drawn attention are ones that have been receiving consideration. They are not being dealt with under the consultations I spoke about which concern the professional officers. It had been hoped that they would have been dealt with in a satisfactory way under the job evaluation exercise. They are now the subject of the appeals and Review Procedure under that exercise and I think that all I can assure my hon. and learned friend is that the points he made will be brought to the attention of the appropriate authorities. They are fully appreciated and they are fully shared.

9.05 p.m.

The situation with the Legal Clerks II is one of filling vacancies in the normal way. The six Legal Clerk II officers are now acting as Clerks III. Recommendations have been made for appointment and I have no reason to believe that there will be long delay. I thank the Hon. Member.

Head 17, Attorney General, Deeds Registry - \$173,918 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

HEAD 4 – PARLIAMENT OFFICE

The Chairman: We will return to pages 24 and 25. There is a slight correction on page 25, Head 4, in the legend for subhead 3. There is a slight error in spelling. The word should be “increase”.

Question proposed that the sum of \$163,380 for Head 4, Parliament Office, stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, subhead 2, provision for travelling expenses and subsistence allowance etc., I am not sure whether this is a statutory provision. I draw to the hon. Minister's attention subhead 5, that there are fantastic disparities in this subhead, Telephones, and perhaps the hon. Minister would like to look into it. The 1973 Approved Estimates was \$9,500; the Revised Estimates was \$57,060, and the provision in the 1974 Estimates is \$30,000. It may well be that in 1973 the Estimates were way out. There is a legend: "Increase in the number of residential telephones", and "Underprovided in 1973." May I urge the hon. Minister to pay his 1973 bills as early as possible?

Subhead 7, Grant to Commonwealth Parliamentary Association: This amount is \$18,701 in the 1974 Estimates and it has been that for 1973, and for 1972, a little bit more. I was wondering whether it is necessary to include this amount here at all because apart from the periodicals that we receive, this subhead seems to have become real farce. I am told by members of the Government that they will not allow the Opposition to go to any of these Commonwealth Parliamentary Association meeting or gatherings, and the reason is that when we go, members of the Opposition criticise the Government, so that they will not allow the Opposition to go. And since, apparently, it would look very bad for them to go alone, nobody goes at all. So if nobody goes, why bother to put it here, unless there is some commitment as a Member of the Commonwealth to put it in. Even then, we can put it in a token provision. There is absolutely no sense in putting it down if we are not making use of the services and forum it provides.

The Chairman: Hon. Leader of the House.

Mr. Ramsaroop: I think the Hon. Member has partly answered some of the questions himself. Just a brief comment on the telephones. It is true that there seems to be a disparity between the figures stated here. The 1973 Estimates however contemplated the payment of arrears that were chalked up in 1972, hence the usually high figure.

On the question of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, I said for the nth time in this House, that it is beyond the propriety of this Chamber to comment with respect to our membership and participation in that Association. It is true that Guyana is a member of this Association and the question of attendance or otherwise is a question that falls squarely within the competence of the branch to decide. It is certainly beyond the ethics and the propriety of any member of this House to prejudge what ought to be the composition or representation of the Branch and I do not seek to split a hair that there is a distinction as between Government and the Branch with respect to this matter. That is all I wish to say on this matter and I hope that the next time it will be raised at the proper level.

Head 4, Parliament Office - \$163,380 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

HEAD 11 – MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS

Question proposed that the sum of \$20, 082 for Head 11, Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. M.F. Singh: Item (1), the Hon. Minister presumably had a confidential secretary on the secretary's scale A12. No problem there, but when we look at subhead 5, it says: "Remuneration of Ministerial Private Secretaries, \$4,440." Is this part of the expanding bureaucracy? To whom are these secretaries? If they are secretaries to the Minister, then perhaps he would tell us how many secretaries he has. One would have thought it was only one secretary he needed. Certainly, the confidential secretary, fair enough, but, then, item (5), how many secretaries, what are their salary scales, how are they being paid? This seems to be a new Head that needs some explanation.

Subhead 2, Transport and Travelling: I wonder whether we can seriously justify this. What travelling has a Minister of Parliamentary Affairs got to do amount to \$5000? Political travelling. Surely it cannot be travelling in connection with Parliamentary Affairs. Let us put it straight. If it is political travelling, let us accept it as such but it should not be here. It should be paid by the P.N.C. This is really very sad. The Minister's travelling as Minister of Parliamentary

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Affairs would properly be here, if he could tell us what he travels around to do as Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, but certainly not \$5,000 as Minister of Parliamentary Affairs.

9.15 p.m.

The Chairman: Hon. Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House.

Mr. Ramsaroop: Mr. Chairman, I am sure that the Hon. Member will not begrudge the Minister's private secretary or confidential secretary. Hence the demolition of his argument with respect to the first point he raised about confidential secretary. On the question of remuneration of Ministerial Private Secretaries if the Hon. Member had done a little homework he would have noted that the subhead represents a transfer of expenditure which previously came under Head 9, Office of the Prime Minister, which makes provision for the remuneration of Ministerial Private Secretaries but, for administrative neatness and coherence it has been decided that the allocation should be in the institution in which it belongs rather than under the broader umbrella of the Office of the Prime Minister. It belongs properly under the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs. For the information of the Hon. Member, sir, the Ministry enjoys the services of 1 Ministerial Private Secretary.

It is a matter of some distress that one views the work of Parliament in a rather cloistered way, in a rather limited way and it would appear questioning the responsibilities of this Ministry that the Hon. Member is guilty of that aberration.

The Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, as the title implies, is concerned with the totality of parliamentary matters covering the broad gamut of activities in the country. It would be naive to contemplate the work of this Ministry as being limited to the disposition of Government's legislative business in this House. Parliamentary work straddles visits to several parts of the country to bring the Ministry *au fait* with developments which can be more expeditiously put before Parliament for action and for implementation. The scope of the Ministry therefore, perforce, cannot be limited but will cover the broad complex of developmental matters which now agitate the economy of this country. So I should be very happy if the Hon. Member in future

can look at the work of this Ministry in a more generous way and not restrict it to the parliamentary work *simpliciter*.

Consequently, because of what I said before, travelling becomes a necessity for the Ministry for how can one observe projects, programmes, activities unless one goes on the scene hence the necessity, the desirability, the imperative need to travel beyond the perimeters of Parliament. Hence the justification of this item of travelling for \$5,000. That is all I wish to say on the questions raised by the hon. Member.

The Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Singh.

Mr. M. F. Singh: Mr. Chairman, there seems to be a very definite conflict between what the hon. Minister said about transport and travelling and travelling of the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, and the philosophy of the Government in respect of Regional Ministers.

If you have Regional Ministers, one would expect them to be *au fait* with the problems, the progress, the schemes, the whole gamut of activities in their particular areas and if there is coordination among Ministers then one would expect that those Ministers would keep their brother Ministers informed about these matters so that if the hon. Minister of Parliamentary Affairs has to go around the country to these places to see for himself one wonders what the Regional Ministers will be doing and maybe one of these days there might be a clash between the hon. Minister and his colleagues in the area.

Head 11, Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs - \$20,082 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

HEAD 5 – AUDIT

Question proposed that the sum of \$601,568 for Head 5, Audit, stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Singh.

Mr. M. F. Singh: Mr. Chairman, I do not want to go over what I said before but merely to urge that the Director of Audit – I am sorry that he is not here but he did hear me. The last report was for 1967 and we do hope that the later reports will be forthcoming. On subhead 8, Training of Auditors, I wish to commend the Government for the foresight in expanding the training programmes for auditors. I think this is very good indeed because it is very necessary to have the Audit Department well staffed with trained people so that they can perform their work properly and efficiently.

Head 5, Audit - \$601,568 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Are we in a position to proceed with the Ministry of Information and Culture? Hon. Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House.

Mr. Ramsaroop: After consulting the Hon. Member, we have agreed to finish with the last head, Audit. It does not appear that the Hon. Member is in a position to do the Ministry of Information and Culture at this stage. It is proposed, however, that, subject to the pleasure of this House, on Monday, 17th December, 1973, we will do those Heads that come within the competence of the Hon. Prime Minister and also the Ministry of Information and Culture, the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of National Development and Agriculture. Hopefully, sir, if we finish those Ministries and matters, we have two Bills which, with the consent of the Hon. Member, we propose to do: the Municipal and District Councils (Amendment) Bill and the Guyana Timber Export Board (Amendment) Bill. This I say, sir, for the records of the House.

The Chairman: It seems that many of the records have to be changed. We have been saying lots of things and we are not keeping pace with them.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister, would you please move the Adjournment?

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved “That this Assembly do now adjourn until Monday, 17th December, 1973, at 2 p.m.” [Mr. Ramsaroop]

Adjourned accordingly at 9.25 p.m.
