

**THE  
PARLIMENTARY DEBATES**

**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**

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**173<sup>rd</sup> Sitting**

**2 p.m.**

**Monday, 8<sup>th</sup> January, 1979**

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**MEMBERS OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (62)**

**Speaker**

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

**Members of Government – People’s National Congress (45)**

**Prime Minister (1)**

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

**(Absent)**

**Deputy Prime Minister (1)**

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

**Senior Ministers (12)**

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

**(Absent – on leave)**

Cde. S.S. Naraine, A.A.,  
Minister of Works and Transport

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

Cde. C.V. Mingo,  
Minister of Home Affairs **(Absent – on leave)**

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

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

\* Cde. F.E. Hope,  
Minister of Finance **(Absent)**

\* Cde. G.B. Kennard, C.C.H., S.C.,  
Minister of Agriculture **(Absent)**

\* Cde. M. Shahabuddeen, C.C.H., S.C.,  
Attorney General and Minister of Justice **(Absent)**

\* Cde. R.E. Jackson,  
Minister of Foreign Affairs **(Absent- on leave)**

\* Cde. J.A. Tyndall, A.A.,  
Minister of Trade and Consumer Protection

### **Ministers (2)**

Cde. S.M. Field – Ridley,  
Minister of Information

Cde. O.E. Clarke,  
Minister – Regional  
(East Berbice/Corentyne) **(Absent)**

### **Ministers of State (10)**

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

Cde. P. Duncan, J.P.,  
Minister of State, Ministry of Economic Development and Co-operatives

### **\* Non-elected Ministers**

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

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

Cde. J.R. Thomas,  
Minister of State, Ministry of Education,  
Social Development and Culture

\* Cde. R.H.O. Corbin,  
Minister of State for Youth and Sport,  
Ministry of National Development

\* Cde. S. Prashad,  
Minister of State – Regional  
(East Demerara/West Coast Berbice)

\* Cde. R.C. Van Sluytman,  
Minister of State,  
Ministry of Agriculture

\* Cde. F.U.A. Campbell,  
Minister of State for Information,  
Ministry of National Development

\* Cde. H. Rashid,  
Minister of State,  
Office of the Prime Minister

### **Parliamentary Secretaries (5)**

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

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

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

**(Absent – on leave)**

### **\* Non-elected Ministers**

Cde. E.M. Bynoe,  
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Trade  
and Consumer Protection.

Cde. C.E. Wrights, J.P.,  
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Economic  
Development and Co-operatives

**Other Members (10)**

Cde. W.G. Carrington, C.C.H.

Cde. S.M. Field – Ridley

Cde. E.H.A Fowler

Cde. J. Gill (Absent)

Cde. W. Hussain

Cde. K.M.E. Jonas

Cde. P.A. Rayman

Cde. A. Salim

Cde. E.M. Stoby, J.P. (Absent)

Cde. S.H. Sukhu, M.S.

Cde. C. Sukul, J.P.

Cde. H.A. Taylor

Cde. H.B. Walcott

Cde. L.E. Willems

Cde. M. Zaheeruddeen (Absent)

**Members of the Opposition (16)**

**(i) Peoples' Progressive Party (14)**

**Leader of the Opposition (1)**

Cde. C. Jagan,  
Leader of the Opposition (Absent)

**Deputy Speaker (1)**

Cde. Ram Karran,  
Deputy Speaker

**Other Members (12)**

Cde. J. Jagan (Absent)

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud, J.P., Opposition Chief Whip

Cde. Narbada Persaud

Cde. C. Collymore

Cde. S.F. Mohamed  
Cde. I. Basir  
Cde. C.C. Belgrave  
Cde. R. Ally  
Cde. Dalchand, J.P.  
Cde. Dindayal  
Cde. H. Nokta  
Cde. P. Sukhai

**(Absent)**

**(Absent – on leave)**

**(ii) Liberator Party (2)**

Mr. M.F. Singh, J.P.  
Mr. M.A. Abraham

**OFFICERS**

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

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

**PRAYERS****ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER****Leave to Members**

**The Speaker:** Leave has been granted to Comrades Mingo. Teekah. Bankcroft, and Van Sluytman and to the hon. Member Mr. Feilden Sign for today's sitting, and to Cde. Corrica to the end of February, 1979.

**PUBLIC BUSINESS****LOCAL AUTHORITIES (POSTPONEMENT OF  
ELECTIONS) BILL 1978**

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to make provision for the future postponement of Elections of Councillors of Local Authorities and for matters connecting therewith.” [**The minister of Economic Development and co-operatives**]

**The Speaker:** Before I call on the Minister of Economic Development I wish to make a small correction in the Bill. In clause 1 substitute 1979 for 1978 in the second line. Cde. Minister of Economic Development.

**The Minister of Economic Development and Co-operatives** (Cde. Hoyte): Cde. Speaker, comrades, hon. Member, on the 24 July, 1978, the Cde. President assented to the Constitution (Amendment) Bill, No. 2 of 1978, which then passed into our statute books. That Bill was a logical outcome of the matter which was put to the electorate of this country at the Referendum. The issue was the question of constitutional change. The people of this country, approved of the proposals by the Government that they, the people of this country should devise a new Constitution in keeping with our own historical experience, our needs, the objective

**8.1.79**

**National Assembly**

**2.15 – 2.20 p.m.**

realities of Guyana and our on ideas as to the future shape and form of this society. Inherent in the issue, Cde. Speaker, was a proposal not only for the transformation of Central Government and its structures, but for the transformation of Local Government. Indeed, in the guidelines which were put out by the Party in support of its case for constitutional change, the following point was made clearly and explicitly to the electorate of this country:

“The composition of Parliament will be modified so as to include in it a Local Government element. This will ensure a constant correlation of thinking and activity between the Regions and the centre.”

**2.20 p.m.**

That section of the guidelines went on to give some idea of the thinking of the Party on the question of Local Government transformation. Indeed, Cde. Speaker, since 1975 in my capacity as Minister responsible for Local Government, I had been in discussions with the Guyana Association of Local Authorities, with the several components of that organizations, with individual Councils and councilors and with people in the various regions of this country on the question of the functioning of Local Authorities.

There is absolutely no doubt that, as organized at the moment, the Local Government system is inadequate to meet the needs of this country, is inadequate to meet the social, economic, cultural and indeed political needs of this country. Several criticisms were made by people in region and rural areas, and there is a remarkable consistency about the nature of the criticisms on one point, namely, that it was useless to tinker with the present system. What was needed was complete structural change. The need to change, as it were, the base of Government in this country was as apparent as the need to change the super structure.

Perhaps it may be useful to indicate some of the difficulties and problems pointed out by people who have spent a life time either as part of the system or within the system of Local Government. They pointed out, in the first place, that the Local Government system which we operate today was in no way different from the Local Government system which formed parcel of the colonial polity, and, in particular, that the Marshall Plan which formed the basis for the

present system of Local Government arose out of criticisms made by the Waddington Commission many years ago, I think in 1954.

Secondly, the system of Local Government was not devised by Guyanese. In fact, it was devised by an Englishman whose knowledge, whose experience, whose outlook were based upon his knowledge of the English Local Government system. He inevitably sought to transpose or transfer his knowledge and his experience to the circumstances of Guyana.

Thirdly, the Local Government system is haphazard. In the first place, it does not cover the entire country. Indeed, it is limited largely to the coastland and, in fact, does not even embrace every piece of land, every area within the coastland.

Fourthly, no logical principle informs the demarcation of boundaries of the Local Government areas. So as a result we have a Local Authority which has an area of a square mile and which has an annual income – if it can collect it – of about \$5,000.

Fifthly, Cde. Speaker, because of this haphazard and totally illogical way in which the Local Government system has grown up and in which the Local Government areas have been demarcated, the revenues available to the Local Government Councils vary widely, therefore depends upon accidental circumstances, the accidental circumstances of the amount of revenue which a Local Authority is capable of generating within its jurisdiction. The revenues themselves are the result of accidental circumstances. For example, whether or not a Local Authority is to proceed with developmental works depends upon whether or not it can raise substantial revenues. This depends again upon whether or not it is lucky enough to have a large industrial complex like GUYMINE within its boundaries or a sugar estate or some large entity which it can tax and from which it can obtain substantial revenues.

The result of this is that most Local Authorities, although they have the potential economic base, although they have the resources which would enable them to develop strong economic bases, have been unable to proceed with adequate development because people say, “well, we are not going to pay our rates and taxes because you are not providing services, you are not providing developmental works,” and the Councils say, on the other hand, “Well, we



cannot provide developmental works because you do not pay your rates and taxes.” So one gets into a circular argument, into the chicken and egg situation. That is why throughout the country, there is such a large sum outstanding to Local Government Authorities representing arrears of rates and taxes.

**2.30 p.m.**

Perhaps, Cde. Speaker, there are two very important points which one ought to note. The first is that, because of the way that the system is structured, the development plans and programmes of Local Authorities are not integrated into the national development plans. Of course, one can understand the reason for this. The system is not geared to enable Local Authorities to plan seriously. Then activities are not co-ordinated with those of the Central Government, and there is no system, indeed there is no legislative compulsion the Central Government to fund development programmes within the Local Authority areas.

That is the point. Indeed, in any case the basics do not exist for the proper application of principle of Central Government funding for Local Authority projects because those projects would have to be properly examined, their feasibility established, and they would have to be integrated into whatever national plan is being devised. But perhaps more important than that is the fact that the Local Government system, as it exists at the moment, does not provide for participation of large numbers of people. It limits actual involvement in the formal Local Government system to a few people who say, “Well we are the Village Fathers, we are the Mayors and Councillors.” The people then look to those few to perform all manner of developmental and other works and to provide all kinds of services, because we have fractured the relationship between the people within the Local Authority area and the system itself. Citizens fail to perceive the fact that they are part and parcel of the whole system and they have a responsibility for management and development of the communities in which they live.

When one has said that the fact that the system does not allow for the formal participation of masses of people. It does not allow for the conferring upon them of duties and obligations, rights and privileges. Such widespread participation would motivate them to accept what we consider to be their rightful role of planning the development of their communities and regions,

implementing those plans, evaluating those plans and being in a general way responsible for the management of their areas. For us, this is the essence of democracy, not merely periodical voting at elections, but participation on a day- to- day basis in the task of managing communities and regions in which people and enterprises in which they work.

Having left the level of rhetoric and theory, one has to establish the institutions the mechanisms the procedures which will enable people to become so involved. Consequently Cde. Speaker, the party proposed in the guidelines, to which I have referred, that as part of the general constitutional re- arrangements the whole system of Local Government should be radically transformed. It should be transformed in a way which would remove those problems to which I referred and in a way which would enable large numbers of people to become involved in the task of Government.

In 1977 when I addressed the Guyana Association of Local Authorities and its affiliates on the occasion of the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the formation of that organization, I suggested that there were nine areas to which we should pay attention on this whole question of Local Government transformation. I would like to advert to those nine areas because because I think that this is the way in which the Party sees the transformation of Local Government and this is the way in which, from my conversations and discussions with people who are intimately involved with the Local Government system, they would like to see Local Government transformed. I would refer to these principles:

First of all, the Local Government system should as far s practicable cover the entire country.

Secondly, Local Authority areas should be geographically extensive.

Thirdly, the development of Local Government areas should not depend upon accidental circumstances, for example, whether or not they are fortunate enough to have a large industrial complex within their boundaries.

Fourthly, the revenue of Local Authority should not depend merely or primarily on rates and taxes.

Fifthly, the development of Local Authorities areas should be integrated into the national development plan and Central Government resources allocated on definite principles for financing such development.

Sixthly, Local Authorities should be vested with the clear and unambiguous duty and responsibility for managing their respective areas.

Seventhly, Local Government management should be development-oriented.

Eighthly, membership of Local Authorities should not be honorific. Every Local Authority Councillor should be assigned some specific work to do in his community and the duties of each Councillor and Councillors collectively should be clearly defined by law. In this connection Councillors and should be made accountable for their stewardship to committees representing the communities in which they serve.

Ninthly, the Local Government system should be so structured that it affords an opportunity for larger numbers of citizens to be involved as members of the system in the work of managing their communities.

In those circumstances, since we are in the process of overthrowing the old Constitution and devising one of our own making, one which represents more definitively to what I consider to be the fundament of our democratic system, that is, local democracy or local Government. Therefore, to us, Cde. Speaker, it seems to make little sense to proceed with any elections under the old system when we are about, in the very near future, in a matter of months, so to speak, to transform the whole electoral system into something new and bring about far-reaching changes which will change dramatically the system which we know.

**2.40 p.m.**

The purpose of this Bill, Cde. Speaker, is to postpone the elections which would normally have been held around this time. This would enable Local Government elections to be held under the new dispensation, so to speak, under a system of local Government which is more reflective of the ideas which we have of people's involvement and people's responsibility for the

development of their country. In other words, as part of our policy and programme for the ongoing democratization of our society, I suggest that this Bill deserves the support of members of this House who are serious about social transformation and democracy.

*Question Proposed.*

**The Speaker:** Dr. Jagan.

**The Leader of the Opposition** (Cde. C Jagan:) Mr. Speaker; from what we have just heard, it seems that the aim of the Government is to give the people more democracy, but the way to get around doing this is to deny them democracy at every step. During the early part of last year, in order to postpone the elections, it was said that Guyana needed a new Constitution, to use the exact words of the Government, in keeping with the national ethos etc. Now, to postpone the Local Government elections, we are hearing the same thing “in keeping with our own national ethos” and so on.

Cde. Speaker, the Minister, in introducing the Bill, gave us a historical account of the waddington Constitution saying that something needed to be done. That was between 1951 and 1952. Then there was the Committee headed by an Englishman of the so-called Marshall Plan and so on. Now, we are hearing that this was the plan which was formulated by a foreigner and imposed by a foreigner - something along those lines. The fact of the matter is that the Marshall Plan was implemented by this some Government, so don't now throw red herrings across the trail and tell us about Englishman imposing this and that. I suppose at that time the P>N>C. and the Government which it headed and the imperialists were so close allies that they didn't see foreign dictation at that time. But our memories are not so short to forget that the same Marshall Plan, I repeat, was implemented by the P.N.C. Government.

I am thinking about borrowing from outside. Looking through my file of clippings this morning, I saw where at one of the meetings, a couple of years ago, it must have been last year, pertaining to the question of the regional setup which is to be implemented, the Prime Minister said that he got the idea after his visit to Zambia and Tanzania. So it is all right not to borrow from Englishmen, although you implement it, but then you go along and borrow from Tanzania

8.1.79

National Assembly

2.40 – 2.50 p.m.

and Zambia. But be that as it may, the fact of the matter is, it is not the form we are concerned about, we are concerned about the content.

You have regionalism now, you have all the blue prints, you have Regional Ministers. Yet we are told now we need a system where there would be integration from the bottom to the top. You have Local Authorities which you have got there, which you have kept there without elections, postponing them every two years successively. You have absolute control over every single Local Authority. You have Regional Ministers. Recently you had set up under the regional system a new area in the North West District which was supposed to be devoid of Local Authority. Now we are told we have to see how this will fit in with the old Constitution, etc.

The fact of the matter is that the system is not working because it denies the fundamental basis of democracy, of people's involvement, we hear criticisms at all levels there is preaching all the time that you need people's involvement, you need democracy.

2.50 p.m.

The Minister of Economic Development at a meeting he addressed on September 9, 1976, said this come out in the **New Nation**:

“We cannot decide the priorities of the people for them, but instead, we have to allow the people to tell us what their priorities are.”

The General Secretary of the P.N.C., talking in the same vein about development, said that if we are to succeed, all the people have to develop. The Development Plan, therefore, has certain meaning for the people, among them the involvement at all levels of the population, the need to pass on the benefit to the people, and the need for continuous efforts. This was reported in **GIS News**, 5/10/76.

Participation: We hear this word repeating itself. I was present at a “Think-In” organized by the C.C.W.U. on July 18, 1976 where the Minister of Economic Development spoke. He said there:

**8.1.79**

**National Assembly**

**2.50 – 3.00 p.m.**

“The essence of the socialist society is democracy. Democracy premises the active participation of workers in all sections of national life. The political sector is unarguably vital.”

He went on to say that what was needed was:

“. . . a system which made for the widest possible participation of people in various processes of national life.”

Well, there is a big, wide gap between precept and practice, between preaching and performance. We know that there is a dialectal inter-relationship and interaction between democracy and socialism. Long before the Ministers became theoreticians, Lenin told us on this question of democracy and socialism:

“Whoever wants to reach socialism by any other path than that of political democracy will inevitably arrive at conclusions that are absurd and reactionary both in the economic and political sense.

Both in the economic and political sense!

So, we come to this House and bandy phrases and repeat them about participation and democracy and involvement but in reality we cannot see it on the ground. You do not see it on the ground, that is why this country today is in an economic mess. There is no workers’ control; there is no economic democracy at the factory level, at the industrial level, at the farmers’ level. The Rice Marketing Board is an example of that. We hear so much about co-operatives, co-operative socialism, but instead, when it comes to practice, an organization is imposed upon the people without the workers, the farmers represented, the producers represented, to squeeze them, and so we have it shown on the ground in lack of production.

At the Local Government level, all around you hear statements that the thing is not working. A previous Minister in charge of this, Hamilton Green, Speaking to the Local Authorities, said:

8.1.79

National Assembly

2.50 – 3.00 p.m.

“I suspect you are not as close to the people as you ought to be; if you are not, then you will fail.”

This was reported in the Mirror of 6<sup>th</sup> March, 1975. Cde. Speaker, if you are not close to the people, why are you not close to the people? If you do not have to answer to the people, you do not have to report to the people, you do not have to be elected by the people, there is no public accountability, the people cannot exercise any form of control, then how can you be near to the people? If you are near to the big “sahibs” in the P.N.C., whether the top governors at the centre, on the local governors at the bottom, then you will stay in power. You will be there! But obviously you will be far from the people.

We have a newspaper report of a statement made by GALA not too long ago. That is the blue-eyed organization which has been propped up by the ruling Party. I know the Chairman of this organisation is a man who has some independence and he speaks out. Maybe he is reaching the time when he has to meet his Maker and so he has to make things right. What does the statement say?

“The Guyana Association of Local Authorities, Individual local authorities and several local authority councilors have within recent time been complaining about what appears to be the declining influence and relevance of local authorities. There can be no doubt that local authorities are in danger of being over-shadowed by the Regional System.”

The regional system, the one imported from Tanzania and Zambia by the Prime Minister himself.

We also have another statement here. These are all from the Government newspaper, the **Chronicle**. This article is headlined “Plaisance ratepayers peeved over roads” and was published on 18<sup>th</sup> June, 1976. The Second paragraph States:

“The six councilors have been disqualified from continuing to be councilors because they have failed to attend a number of council meetings . . .”

No interest! The article continues:

“It was further explained there are now eight vacancies existing on the council . . .”

Another sentence in the same article states:

“One spokesman for the ratepayers pointed out that there is widespread dissatisfaction over the proper running and functioning of the council particularly with respect to the very bad condition of the village roads and streets.”

Here is another article dealing with the same theme, “Council urged to fill three vacant seats.” This was reported in the **Guyana Graphic** on 16<sup>th</sup> September, 1974. They had to bring a special Bill here. All the names that were there previously were run out from the list. They had to keep adding and when those were run out, they added more. What a disgrace! And we keep talking about people’s participation and democracy.

Another clipping states: “GAPE disappointed at little action” and this was reported in the Chronicle of 19<sup>th</sup> January, 1977. Apparently GAPE had set up a little committee called the Voluntary Service Committee to help Local Authorities and this is what the article states:

“But according to the Newsletter that is their newsletter, the Committee was very disappointed to find very little action – in a few instances – but in the majority of cases, no action at all.”

The article goes on:

“Secondly, the composition of the Councils themselves are of people who do not have the necessary ingredients to execute these plans.”

This is not P.P.P. talking now; this is GAPE, Guyana Association of Professional Engineers.

How can you expect results when people either do not care or they are incompetent, when they are not responsible to the people, when they are far divorced, living in a world by themselves; And that shows up in production. That is why in the rice production when you compare the average annual production of the seven years under P.P.P. Government with seven years under P.N.C. Government, there is a 74 per cent increase in rice production under the



**8.1.79**

**National Assembly**

**3.00 – 3. 10 p.m.**

P.P.P. but under the P.N.C., there is 6 per cent for seven years. When you take the whole average annual production for the thirteen-year period, there is an increase by only 2 per cent. This has to do with the kind of undemocratic set up you have at the social level where you do not recognize the people's organizations, where you kick them out of the Rice Marketing Board, and at the Local Government level, where you prop up these undemocratic bodies.

**3.10 p.m.**

Cde. Speaker, this is why in so many countries today there is talk about reforming, fundamentally, the Local Government set up. In Trinidad, there was a move to break away Tobago and because of that the P.N.N. said; No self rule, but the Party is in favour of up-grading Local Government. "Greater Autonomy for Jamaican Parishes" says a clipping from Jamaica on the 10<sup>th</sup> June, 1976.

I would like to deal with this matter in a more fundamental way. The Minister tries to make a distinction between elections, masses of people participating. Let me spell it out. He said what we want is a system where we have masses of people participating, but that elections alone are not the answer. But what is an election but the masses of the people at any particular level participating? It is a specious argument to talk about the need for mass participation while at the same time denying the right of the people to have democratic election, in the case of Local Government, periodically every two years. Out of that election, if there was public accountability and if the elections were free and fair, you will then have not only the elected Members but all the other bodies which can be created around it to have the mass participation.

In countries which are now regarded as revolutionary, democratic and socialist, this is the kind of thing you have. The Cubans did not say, that because they have Committees for the defence of the revolution, therefore, they did not need local assemblies and they did not need other bodies. Fidel Castro once challenged American President Johnson who was talking about human rights and democracy in Cuba, to give guns to all the black people in America and the masses of the workers and farmers in America, as he did in Cuba, and then we will see if

America really has democracy. We cannot compare what we have here, a 10 per cent or 14 per cent Government with a Government which has popular support. To do so would be to compare chalk with cheese.

The Cuban people, the Angolan people, the people of Guinea Bissau have set up a structure. It is a link, a link from local to district or county, to region to centre. But it is not structure alone that is important. There must be a connecting link between all of that, of democracy. But all we are hearing is talk about structure. We see personality conflicts between that Local Government and the regional system and that is because you have appointed bodies, appointed Ministers and so on. You have a Government at the top which does not represent the majority of the people, which stays on in power either by fraud or by postponing the elections; and right at the bottom, the Local Government bodies which stay in power by perpetuation of postponement of elections.

All these nine points we heard about are all well and good. But why are we afraid to have Local Government Elections as you delineated? Tell us that is going to affect your central planning at the moment, if it is going to be any worse than it is at the moment, that is, the link between the bottom and the top? There is no central planning at the moment, I know that. What I am saying is that the Minister is saying that there must be a link between that centre and the local, and presumably, at the centre there will be central planning, and that central planning must be integrated with the local planning right from the bottom. Nobody quarrels with that. There is admission on all sides that the Local Authorities are not working, they are not performing even some of the functions they are supposed to do and if they are only doing routine things, carrying on in their old tradition from the colonial days, it is not their fault, it is the fault of the direction of the Central Government, of the nature of the system of economy which is a Government policy question. If the Government was socialist at the centre, then its arms at the bottom through its Regional Ministers, even though they are non-elected, through its Local Authorities, would be carrying out functions of that kind. But what have they done? **(Interruption)** I am not talking about elected Ministers. **(Interruption)** Ministers are not elected in the same sense that the whole Government is not elected. I am talking about political – **(Interruption)**

3.20 p.m.

The Speaker: Comrades, please do not heckle the Leader of the Opposition. I am giving him 45 minutes. You may have to give him an extension of time if you so wish, so please let him continue.

Cde. C. Jagan: Cde. Speaker, the Minister said that finances sometimes are a problem and a limitation factor in the efficient working of Local Authorities and so on. But he referred to rates and taxes. That is what I meant, that Local Authorities which are functioning today are functioning in the context of the political economy which was traditional from the days of Colonialism despite the talk of a socialist Government. That is what I am talking about – economy. Now, that is because the Government, despite the talk of a socialist Government, has not adopted socialist measures within the country, socialist measures in terms of economy. Therefore, the Local Government which is an arm of the Central Government cannot on its own expand its orbit. Therefore, it continues as in the bad old Colonial days, collecting rates and taxes. Don't blame them. You have to blame yourselves if they do that at the present moment and have been doing that.

That is one side of the coin only. The other side of the coin is what happens to the little money, even the little money that is collected. And because a lot of it is squandered, wasted, stolen, the people do not have confidence. That is why a lot of people do not want to pay, apart from the fact that so many people in Guyana today cannot afford. The cost of living is so high; they cannot afford to pay, so they let the thing lapse.

Cde. Speaker, it is not only a set of points, nine points, nine declarations that will bring in any greater performance at the bottom at the level of the people? What we need are structures such as are being set up, could be set up now, without a new Constitution. There is nothing in the present Constitution which prevents the Government from having a structure such as they have in Cuba, which they have in Angola. In fact, we have that structure without it being

inserted in the Constitution. We have Local Government, we have Regional Ministers, who are supposed to go on a regional system who are supposed to co-ordinate all these Local Authorities and there is a central Government even though we admit that there is not the kind of central planning as they have in the socialist countries. Well, they say they are going ahead with that.

The structure is there. You do not have to wait on a new Constitution for that.

The Minister said that under the P.N.C. guidelines it is intended to change the composition of the parliament by giving a local element and providing for a local element. Ten regional councils will elect one member each to sit in the Parliament. Is that going to make the system work at the bottom? If at the very bottom you do not have democracy, well, we have assumed that when that happens you are going to have elections at the bottom presumably not only for the regional bodies but also for the local district authorities. Cde. Chairman, my point is that you do not have to wait until then. What is humbugging this country today is not only what is happening in this Parliament of the laws made here, but what is happening on the ground. That is fundamental. That is why Angola didn't wait. I am told that in Cuba they waited 19 years. It says here:

“Based on Article 3 of the Constitution which states that through forms of Poder Popular, ‘the masses shall be guaranteed broad, effective participation in the exercise of political power’, the law provides for a structure not unlike that of Guinea-Bissau.

It begins at the village or neighbourhood level, with the village (or neighbourhood) People's Assemble (consisting of all voters over 18) electing People's Commissions. They in turn elect County Commissions, and so it goes, with each level electing the one about it up to the highest national level.”

This is the Cuban model, so they elect from the bottom up. Here it is, talking about factories:

“ Already, in every factory I visited there was a Workers' Commission exercising varying degrees of control (depending largely on technical and administrative capabilities).”

“As in the political domain, the economic realm is designed to allow maximum decentralisation and initiative from below. In state enterprises, management committees are composed equally of workers from the enterprise and those chosen by the government. In each unit of production, all the workers are to compose the workers’ assembly which is to meet at least once a month . . .”

to pay, so they let the thing lapse.

Cde. Speaker, it is not only a set of points, nine points, nine declarations that will bring in any greater performance at the bottom at the level of the people. What we need are structures such as are being set up, could be set up now, without a new Constitution. There is nothing in the present Constitution which prevents the Government from having a structure such as they have in Cuba, which they have in Angola. In fact, we have that structure without it being inserted in the Constitution. We have Local Government, we have Regional Ministers, who are supposed to go on a regional system, who are supposed to co-ordinate all these Local Authorities and there is a central Government even though we admit that there is not the kind of central planning as they have in the socialist countries. Well, they say they are going ahead with that.

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The P.N.C. had to lecture to us that Cuba took 19 years. Well, you are not deceiving me, because Cuba has from the time of the revolution a fundamental democratic structure. Fundamental democracy I am talking about, not bourgeois democracy, but socialist democracy.

Cde. Chairman, in Angola they did not use the excuse that the people are not ready. In Angola, the people have less formal education than the people in Guyana, but yet because democracy grew out of the bowels of a liberation movement which fought with guns in hand, people are in power and the institutions are created accordingly. But not here. A petit bourgeoisie, a mediatory bourgeoisie, a new industrial bourgeoisie is developing and they want to grab as much as they can. And so, they are afraid to give up their positions, so they postpone elections over and over. That is only one aspect of the lack of democracy in the country, as happened elsewhere at the industrial level and other levels. And they talk in glib terms about people’s participation and so on, but they will not fool and deceive because people are not going to be deceived in this country.

They have shown the regime during the last referendum that they were not deceived by the propaganda, that Guyana needs a new Constitution. There is no Constitutional crisis in the same way that there is no structural crisis in relation to integration of central and local government. There is no structural crisis.

What is wrong is that at the centre and at the local level, there is no democracy and that is a question which this regime cannot face up to. This party in power cannot face up to that because it knows that it would be facing the prospect of removal from the seat of power both at the central and Local Government level. The bureaucratic bourgeoisie and the mediatory bourgeoisie do not want to surrender privileges and positions. So, we get more and more demagogic utterances; demagogy in place in democracy; denial of democracy more and more and moving the country backwards into the arms of imperialism who will insist not only that the country modify and change its foreign policy positions and remain within the capitalist camp but that the country internally takes a capitalist course.

Let those who preach and talk so glibly about socialism understand today that people are not fooled; they will be showing that they have basic commonsense and they have the necessary political consciousness to understand what is going on. Even those abroad who were taken in by the propaganda that this is a socialist country, a Marxist Government, now their eyes are being opened also. Out of the unfortunate tragedy of Jonestown which they tried to cover up, one thing has come out at least. Even a judge had been coerced to give up a case. What sordid happenings in Guyana! All of this is now in the world headlines day after day. So one thing has now come out. Guyana did not make the international headlines at the referendum, about the rigging of the 1973 and 1968 elections. Every day! Not all the articles are sensationalism. Some of them now deal with the economic and social realities of Guyana, like the *Financial Times*, like the *New York Times* and so on.

The Government is bringing people here from abroad. One clipping stated that the American Government is now trying to extradite four criminals who are holding high positions here. The name of one of them is Hill who is now Rabbi Washington. The name of the other is Sutherland. One is in the Army and one is in the National Service. Criminals! Is that how you expect to solve...

**The Speaker:** Dr. Jagan, what that particular sentence has to do with this Bill?

**Cde. C. Jagan:** I am showing Cde. Speaker, that they are carrying this country down and down by their undemocratic methods and at the same time they are opening this country to an imperialist type of culture. All we have to do is to listen to the radio and look at the *Chronicle* and see what is being printed. [**Cde. Nascimento:** “The same papers called you a Moscow puppet.”] Called me a Moscow puppet? I am glad for that! I am glad for that! I am not ashamed of being a Moscow puppet if you want to put it that way, [**Laughter.**] because Moscow stands for socialism; it stands for democracy; it stands for proletarian internationalism; it helps liberation movements, not like you. Puppets of C.I.A.! puppets of imperialism! [**Interruption**]

**The Speaker:** Comrades, please let us give the Leader of the Opposition an opportunity to speak. He has four minutes more. Cde. Jagan, I have given you 45 minutes. You will get further time if you get an extension.

**Cde. Jagan:** Cde. Speaker, what I am showing is that a lack of democracy has shown that it has brought this country to an economic and social impasse and inviting more people to come here; consorting with the C.I.A. again and the I.M.F. is not going to get this country out of the backwater. The quicker the Government understands this and the people take the necessary steps, the better for the Guyanese people and nation. It is a disgrace; it is a shame for the Government to come every two years and postpone Local Government elections. It is an insult on the intelligence of the Guyanese people. We oppose this manoeuvre to deny the Guyanese nation the opportunity to govern themselves at least at the Local Government level. We condemn



this Government's use of its automatic majority in this Parliament which it stole at the 1973 elections to deny the rights of the people to live a decent life in various parts of this country, to be involved in the process of building their own future, governing themselves, making laws, regulations etc. for themselves. This is what is now the core of practice even in capitalist countries, not only in socialist countries.

I will read one last clipping and then close. This is from New Zealand. This is also from the *Guyana Graphic*. It is dated 30<sup>th</sup> November, 1974:

“Professor Roberts, a long-time environmentalist and professor of public administration at Victoria University in Wellington, told a recent meeting of the Commonwealth Human Ecology Council in London that the disintegration and alienation which now characterise cities throughout the world – the formation of poor ghettos and the move of the well-to-do suburban ghettos of their own- could be greatly eased by legislation creating small neighbourhood councils with the political strength to obtain the kind of life the community wants, not what the system would impose.”

It goes on;

“A tall order perhaps, but one which professor Roberts feels the big city politicians must acknowledge, otherwise, “they will find more and more that they will confront sullen masses that resist the central government.”

We know that a lot of people ran away from the ghettos of California and United States to come to an unfortunate tragic end in Guyana but we also see a lot of people escaping from this country to find a life somewhere else because of the same kind of alienation which is going on here. Only this week we heard Government or somebody was concerned about drugs at Linden, Wismar and Georgetown. So we are heading in the same direction. If you lie in bed with the imperialist, the imperialist bug is bound to bite you. This is where this country is heading and we

call upon the people of this country to stand up and resist the autocratic measure this Government is dealing out year after year and taking this country deeper and deeper in the mud. We ask this Government, if it is interested in the masses, not to proceed with this Bill. Instead, it must go ahead and hold Local Government elections so the people can participate in the process of decision-making and nation building.

**The Speaker:** Cde. Dalchand.

**3.30 p.m.**

**Cde. Dalchand:** Cde. Speaker, it is rather surprising this afternoon, after thirteen years in office, for the Minister responsible for Local Government to come and tell us here that the system inherited is stink and bad. What is the state of affairs in the country today? We are not only in economic shambles, but we are disintegrated and whatever is the position, the blame must be squarely put on the shoulders of the administrators, the P.N.C. Government. Today, a bill is in front of this House seeking to postpone Local Government Elections for the fourth time. The first time they said that the Councillors did not have enough time to carry out their programme. Maybe that is true. They wanted to see fair play that those they perpetuated in the office as Councillors were square pegs and were not able to give efficient service to the community.

The improvement of many Local Authorities today is something to be desired. The previous Minister responsible for Local Government, the present Minister, and the head of GALA, have all remarked on different occasions that Local Authorities are not functioning. Recently the head of GALA went to Wales to hold a meeting and to his surprise, Councillors did not attend. Moreover, when these people attend these meetings they are paid. The fact that they do not attend shows clearly that the people who are serving in these positions have no interest. The services to be offered to the people under the control of these various Local Government bodies have deteriorated beyond repair. The only good thing to do now is for this Government to

scrap this bill and hold Local Government elections where we can have people democratically elected and where we will have people who will serve in the interest of their community.

With respect to rural development, I would like the Minister to tell us where we can see rural development. We cannot see it. Instead of development we have got backwardness. There are many Local Authorities which cannot function because at meetings they do not get a quorum. There are District Councils being administered by four Councillors when the full complement is fifteen Councillors. There are vacancies existing for eighteen months now which cannot be filled as yet. This is because they cannot find people. The present Councillors are not interested. Most of the people serving in Local Government units are civil servants and interested people cannot be found. This is why they are failing.

Ratepayers are today fed up. It is not a question of paying rates but people who have no interest at all sit there and frame estimates for huge sums of money. At Leguan ratepayers are now taking the District Council to court for not carrying out certain services they have budgeted for. Cde. Speaker, I want to assure you that this is the state in many Local Authority areas. On the West Bank people did work since 27<sup>th</sup> November and up to now they cannot be paid. There is always a shortage of money to carry out essential services but there is never a shortage of funds to pay wages. All the money that is collected is being utilised for the bureaucracy, the paying of salaries. To give you an idea, one Local Authority's whole estimate for 1070 was \$38,000. Today that same Local Authority's estimate is \$181,000. The amount that was used to run the Local Authority is now being used to pay personal emoluments. This is the situation.

Ratepayers are frustrated, they are fed up. As I said before, production will continue to drop because Local Authorities were bodies that acted as liaison between the people and central Government for what developments should take place. These people are not acting in this purpose and, therefore, services that are essential to development are degenerating, production is dropping. We have been hearing about mass production, growing production. Let us look at what Cde. John Yates had to say when he faced the nation Saturday evening. He said production has

dropped. Meagrely, he said, there has been an increase in one or two areas. This is a fact. There have been decreases in production of all types because the services necessary for development are not there.

Cde. Speaker, to give you an idea of how Councillors are spending ratepayers' money, since March last year the Local Authority has been paying a tractor operator who is not working because the tractor has been laid up since that time. It is in the garage in Georgetown. The man employed as an operator has received his salary up to the end of December and provision is

### **3.40 p.m.**

being made in the Estimates for the man to receive salary for this year. This is why they do not have money to do work that is essential in the areas.

The Minister made the point that the new Constitution is going to help bring better Councillors. What we need is not a new Constitution that will bring better Councillors, we need elections now, democratic elections. People are fed up, the situation is very bad, the bureaucracy is growing, the burden is on the ratepayers and if this continues any longer, there is going to be an exodus for many rural areas. I myself was Chairman for a Local Authority for a very long period. My Local Authority was made agent for the Drainage and Irrigation Board and we carried out drainage and irrigation works. The Minister of Works can tell you how successfully that Local Authority operated. We were also agents for the Pure Water Supply Department. We extended pipe lines through the length and breadth of our area from local resources. We were answerable to the people and therefore we had to do the work that was necessary. Today you do not do the work. As long as you can find patronage with the Minister or someone in the P.N.C., you are there, and, therefore, production is dropping. As I said I want to ask the Minister this afternoon in good sense to scrap this Local Government elections postponement Bill, hold local government elections, remove these incompetent and impotent bodies and let Guyana move forward progressively with a good and vibrant local government. If this is not done I am sure that

at all levels there is going to be a complete breakdown in production. People are quarrelling, people are not being allowed to participate; there is no interest.

There is one Chairman who alone runs the Local Authority. He even ordered the Overseer out of the office when the Overseer made a request to pay wages to people who did some work. The Chairman asked them out of the office. This is the type of democratic Local Government people put there by the P.N.C. Cde. Chairman, I again want to emphasise that the situation in the Local Government areas is bad, the people are suffering. If you visit these areas you will see. And the question is not money. Look at the extra neuclear housing areas where Guysuco pays its rates. You can go and see the condition of the community centres, the streets, and the drains. At Belle Vue, for example, the drains have not been cleaned for the past three or four years and the people are afraid that there will be a serious outbreak of disease. The roads are deplorable, the people cannot get in to the streets and Guysuco is paying its rates.

Where are the competent people that they have? The Chairmen of the Local Authorities receive an honorarium of over \$500. They are paid for every day they attend meetings. They are paid travelling and subsistence allowances. During the time of the P.P.P., we did not receive payment for attending meetings; we did not receive any honorarium; we received no travelling allowance for inside areas only travelling allowance for outside areas. All these things were done to perpetuate these people in office and to keep them there.

Cde. Speaker, they have hopelessly failed and I want to ask the Minister responsible for Local Government to scrap this Bill and let us have Local Government elections urgently where we can have a progressive group of people participating and giving real development to rural communities.

**The Speaker:** Cde. Basir.

**Cde. Basir:** Cde. Speaker, first of all I want to say that for the short time I have been in this Parliament, I have got to know the hon. Minister and I want to say that I found him to be not very consistent, from since our last discussion on the Budget. He had made very few promises. I did not ask much and it seems as if those promises have gone down the drain. As such I am a bit upset to take seriously what he has to say today.

I want to say that I like his attitude in the way he puts over his points and I hope that that is going to be the attitude when he is going to reply because he is a personality of mixed attitudes. It is rather unfortunate to come here in the early stages of January, 1979 to perpetuate the old order. Flimsy excuses about having a Constitution, all sorts of statements but above all this there seems to be some ulterior motive. We have learnt it the hard way. We are being asked to postpone the Local Government elections as it was done in 1972/1974 and perhaps this is the fourth time. Asking to postpone the Local Government elections is asking to postpone democracy and this is concomitant of this regime. And when you ask to postpone democracy it means that you are postponing progress; it means that you will directly postpone production. For the hon. Minister to come to this Parliament to ask the Guyanese nation to postpone Local Government elections is somewhat primitive. Such asking can only come from people with a primitive mentality. Because democracy is a human right; it is a modern system and I am sorry to be a part of a Parliament where you have people who still share primitive ideas.

I want to inform this Parliament of some happenings on the Essequibo Coast and I want to invite members of this Parliament to go down to the Essequibo Coast to verify what I am saying because I am not going to spare one moment to put any picture here to mislead this hon. House. Cde. Speaker, let me make it brief. I had arranged a farmers' delegation to meet the Three Friends-Walton Hall Local Authority. I have the letter here seeking the appointment. Very surprisingly, when the delegation arrived at the Local Authority office, the Chief Executive Officer quickly locked his door and escaped. The delegation and I would have like to discuss a situation which arose recently on the Essequibo Coast where thousands of acres of rice lands have been flooded out. **[Interruption]** Of course, I expected that from you because if you had

**8.1.79**

**National Assembly**

**3.40 -3.50 p.m.**

accepted the delegation which I asked you to receive on the 24<sup>th</sup> August, 1978, that could not have happened on the Essequibo Coast. Up to now I am still waiting for a reply from the regional office. I have your letter here, I can read it, because I am not here to mislead.

Cde. Speaker, let us take the community ground at Anna Regina which falls under the jurisdiction of the Three Friends – Walton Hall Local Government District. The community ground is always in a bad state and it is difficult for any organisation to have the use of that community ground. There are people of lesser ability who have better grounds than an organisation such as the Three Friends – Walton Hall Local Government District Council. And this is very diminutive of a Council of such vast jurisdiction that it cannot have the necessary recreational facilities.

**3.50 p.m.**

I want to make it also very clear that while I happen to be a member of the People's Progressive Party, I have tried directly and indirectly to assist this Government and we have put forward offers, not only to the Three Friends – Walton Hall Local Government District Council, one big farmer has offered more than \$8,000 to run 500 feet of pipe to facilitate 50 families and the Local Government District Council cannot say yes or no about that up to now. If you go into Danielstown District way down the Essequibo Coast, there are plenty of lights but no streets. If you go into the Henrietta back street, if you go to Cotton Field you will see the deterioration of these streets, and I am very upset to know where the money has been spent because money is being collected.

Let me mention the Aberdeen/Zorg-En-Vlyt district which happens to be the area where there is the Queenstown village. When I went into the Community Centre a few weeks ago, the chief Executive Officer told me: "Well, Cde. Basir, this is the position here: rain is coming in; the whole building is coming down and somebody from the Regional Development Office

offered us a set of materials and for the past eight months we cannot get it.” I do not know if that concerns the Regional Minister.

Cde. Speaker, if you go down to Queenstown Village, you will see that it is becoming destitute. And, if we are to move a little further, let us go to Annandale/Riverstown district. We have been visiting the area quite regularly. There is an area which is known as the Perseverance/Cullen area. I have written the Council offering to collect 1,000 feet of pipe if they would give me the permission to bring the pipes so that fifty or sixty families can have water. This was since 3<sup>rd</sup> January last year – I have the documents here – but they cannot say “yes” or “no”. So, who are we to help? How must we help people? **[Interruption]** All right, I do not want to go into that.

**The Speaker:** Comrades, please all the member to continue.

**Cde. Basir:** Cde. Speaker, I am sorry I am touching these things but I would not go into all the details because I know some of the little manoeuvres of the other comrades down there. Things are so difficult what when a well should have been sunk at Walton Hall it nearly went to Hampton Court. I do not want to go further into that but, I know all the ticklish spots of those comrades and then they come here into Parliament to impress people that they are doing their work correctly.

Cde. Speaker, I want to refer to the problem of a koker in the very area of Adventure which has passed the life of two or three Ministers and maybe will pass another Minister, too. This koker, because of the neglect...**[Interruption]** Because of the condition of this koker...**[Interruption]**

**The Speaker:** Cde. Chowritmootoo, if you do not behave, I will adjourn.



**Cde. Basir:** Cde. Speaker, I have a State responsibility. I am a member of the People's Progressive Party and I have a State responsibility. I will defend the Government when it becomes necessary and therefore when sabotage is being done indirectly or directly, I have to speak about that. I feel that certain things are being done against the wishes of the people. It is for you to discuss by whom.

Let me go a little further. Pomona/Good Hope. I went there a few weeks ago. I am saying these things because I do not just come and sit in this Parliament. I am a man in the field. I do not travel by helicopter to spend New Year's night in Essequibo. I keep moving on the ground and that is why I speak with authority here. I went to the Huis t'Dieren area, that is, Pomona/Good Hope area. The main koker there is taking in a lot of salt water and to my surprise the drains are also in a bad state. I am sorry that I have to worry this House with all these petty details. But more surprisingly, there is a typist there for several months without a typewriter. **[Laughter]** Cde. Speaker, Local Authorities were and are still, in my opinion, petit citadels where a particular group of people create havoc with taxpayers' and public funds.

Incidentally, I noticed where the Political Analyst, Cde. Alves, asked some questions about co-operatives ...

**The Speaker:** Cde. Basir, you do not make reference to people who cannot reply to you in Parliament.

**Cde. Basir:** Cde. Speaker, I am not so well aware of all the procedures you will have to forgive me.

**The Speaker:** That is why I am telling you.

**Cde. Basir:** But what I am hoping is that similar questions would be asked about the functioning of the Local Authorities.

I want to close by saying that while the hon. Minister is coming to this House and perhaps all my colleagues have pre-meditated what to say and what not to say, the Councillors themselves in the respective areas are asking that we have Local Government elections, because they are just trying to keep their necks above the water. Cde. Speaker, it is unfortunate that we are going to ask this House to detain the process of history but in doing so, we will also detain development, production, productivity which are the salvation of this country as enunciated by the Prime Minister.

**The Speaker:** Cde. Roshan Ally.

**Cde. R. Ally:** Cde. Speaker, I must say that I am in agreement with my colleague Cde. Basir when he said that for this Government to ask to postpone Local Government elections, it is really asking to postpone democracy and production. This Government is talking so much about production. It is calling on the nation to produce. Produce what and how? Under the present system of these Local Authorities, thousands of acres of land are left unplanted owing to maladministration. Inefficient people are put in positions where they do not know a thing! If you want a driver to drive a car, you cannot hire a donkey to drive the car. That makes no sense! We have people who do not know anything about farming, never did farming in their lives but they are Chairman and Councillors of farming areas in those Local Authorities. They do not know a thing and until this day they are not farmers, they are not doing anything at all. They are working outside of the areas and as a result of this, the areas are in a miserable condition. People are fed up; they get frustrated; people are leaving their lands and are going away; people are going across to other countries to work, leaving their own lands here because they just simply cannot produce. For instance, right now, the people who own water pumps are pumping their own water into their rice lands because they want to produce. They have the lands; they will have to pay rates. The Minister said sometimes the people do not pay rates. They do not pay rates because they cannot produce and if they cannot produce, they cannot pay rates. It is logical. That is where you expect to get the money from and if the farmers cannot get to produce, they cannot produce because it is the fault of the Local Authorities.

I have a clipping here from the *Chronicle* where Cde. Hamilton Green said that Members of Parliament, that must be P.N.C. members of Parliament, and local administrators are the number one enemies of this Government. But not of the Government, of the people!

**The Speaker:** Cde. Roshan Ally, what is the date of that newspaper?

**Cde. R. Ally:** *Sunday Graphic*, 20<sup>th</sup> May, 1973, page one. Since then! And up to now they keep on postponing Local Government elections although they knew long ago that owing to the system of Local Government, these people are inexperienced and they do not know what to do and do not know how to go about doing anything. For instance, I doubt whether the Minister would be in a position to tell us here when last some of the Local Authorities, for instance, Crabwood Creek, East Corentyne, that is 52 to 74 Local Authority, No. 51, the Good Hope, had a ratepayers' meeting. Never yet! From 1970 onto this day. They are not consulting the people within the area who are really the ratepayers of the area and they cannot because they have not got the ability. The farmers are going into the office and making suggestions and they do not accept them. They do not accept suggestions at all.

Cde. Speaker, I think that the Minister and this Government are only paying lip service when they are talking about production. They do not have any interest where production or the economy of this country is concerned. They do not care. All they interest they have is P.N.C. interest and not the interest of Guyana and Guyanese.

**4 p.m.**

Cde. Speaker, I think I made mention of this for some years now in this House. The Minister, at one time promised that he will look into it immediately and that is the No. 47/48 koker. The koker is still in that form of disrepair. There is salt water right down the second depth now and it is not only affecting the rice cultivation areas now but farmers along the first and second depths. There are the savannahs and reefs so people plant rice on the flat lands, and on

8.1.79

National Assembly

4 – 4.03 p.m.

the reefs, they engage in green and ground provision farming. When the weather becomes dry, the farmers use little water pumps so as to get a little water in their farms. This has become impossible now owing to salt water being in the trench. They cannot do farming at the moment. Where will they find money to pay rates? How can they survive if this Government does not have the interest of the people at heart? Really, I thought they were going to hold Local Government elections some years ago.

I would also like to say that bridges, for instance across the facade, are in disrepair. The Farmers', the Ratepayers' and the tenants' Associations met Local Authorities several times and they also met members of the Drainage and Irrigation Department. The Local Authorities are not concerned. The Chairman of the Corentyne Local Authority is not there until 6 – 6.30 p.m. so you cannot see him for he is working with the G.R.B. at Springlands. They hold meetings in the night from 6 p.m. and dinner and drinks are prepared for every meeting from the funds of the taxpayers. This is what some of these fellows have been enjoying there.

**The Speaker:** Cde. Roshan ally, I do not want to stop you. It is 4 o'clock, are you going to be very long?

**Cde. R. Ally:** I will take some time.

**The Speaker:** Well then, we will suspend now. The Sitting of the House is suspended until 4.30 p.m.

*Sitting suspended at 4 p.m.*

4.25 p.m.

*On resumption –*

**Cde. R. Ally:** Cde. Speaker, I was making the point that in these Local Authorities we do have inexperienced people. when I made reference to the fact that if you need a driver for a car you cannot hire a donkey to do such a job, what I really wanted to say was that owing to inexperienced people, people who are not farmers and those who do not have any interest whatsoever in the Local Authority area, our production has been falling. Let us take the last rice crop, the autumn crop. The Chairman is employed at Springlands Rice Marketing Board and most of the members of the Local Authority are not farmers, they are not involved in the field. As a result of this, the Local Authority sent in a dragline to block out all the internal drainage trenches. While the dragline was doing this the farmers came out in protest. They picketed the Local Authority Office because they were planting and this thing was causing flooding. Three days later the Local Authority had another meeting and took another decision so as to re-open all the drainage trenches. This is where they are mis-spending the money of ratepayers when there is other important work to be done in that area. There is another important matter. Farmers approached me and told me they went to the Local Authority Office to see the Chairman and he was not there. From Monday to Saturday you cannot see him because he is at Springlands. If you go in the night he says, “This is time for me to rest, I do not have time for you people, get out. If you want to see me, you must see me in my office.” If he is not there, how can you see him? It is impossible.

I went to the No. 63 Village to the Superintendent of Drainage and Irrigation and I asked him why he is not supplying the necessary irrigation water to the farmers. He said the Local Authority has not made any request. When I went to the Overseer, he said he cannot make decisions; the Local Authority would have to do it. Therefore, the farmers are suffering. As I said before, at this moment, the farmers are pumping their own water. More than 50 per cent of the rice planted will remain there because the time has already passed for the spring crop and this is affecting production. When you are talking about foreign exchange, rice is bringing in a lot of foreign exchange in this country. But the Government does not care. If they were interested they would have held Local Government elections. Owing to inefficiency we cannot get production and the people are suffering.

Before the 1970 elections, the Local Government fenced a big area within the 52/74 Local Authority, that is the Corentyne East Local Authority, and they created that area as a farming area. Since this P.N.C. Local Authority took office from 1970, if you go there now, you cannot identify where the farming area is supposed to be. Even the coconuts which the people planted are destroyed. Everything has disappeared and nobody is giving account for it. Just next to the Village Office people were selling, people closely related to the P.N.C. In the same farming area there was a cemetery and the previous Local Authority built a shed and fenced around the cemetery. That shed is not there, the fence is not there. Everything has disappeared. There is a lot of destruction. People have spent solid cash for these things. It cost them somewhere around \$70,000. They have all disappeared. This is the type of thing going on at the moment.

I would like to ask the Minister of Works and Communication to go up to the Corentyne and see what is going on right now, which is going to cost the people not thousands but perhaps millions of dollars. It was only a few days ago I was asking two Parliamentarians whether they had seen it because one of them travels on the Corentyne road every now and again. From the edge of the bitumen the proprietors' fence, there is an area of land approximately 22 feet. The Local Authority has put on a dragline there now. I approached them several times and they said they cannot do anything about it because those are the officers in charge. They are digging a trench 6 feet in width and 4 feet in depth and not more than 3 to 4 feet away from the bitumen edge of the road. You know what this will mean to the road, it will break the entire shoulder of this road. Inexperienced people! I am warning this Government. You put taxpayers to unnecessary expense. I am not laughing. If you want to make it a joke, it is up to you.

At one time I told this House that there was machinery filling little holes in the trench. I told them that would not serve any useful purpose digging these trenches as they were doing, because they road trenches and the streets around the residential area would automatically form a water pen. They would have to clean the external trench leading to the main drainage trench. That is the most important thing that the people need in the area, not to dig the road trench,

destroying the road and everything. People's children will not be safe. I think the Government should look into it seriously and right now too.

Cde. Speaker, I think the Minister, and the Ministers of this Government in general, and I notice that the Minister of Agriculture is not here, will remember the flooding of Crabwood Creek not too long ago. If the Chairman and Councillors of the Local Authority were farmers they would have known beforehand that by closing that sluice for eight days water could have flooded the entire place but because they are not farmers, they are not going into the backdam, they have no interest in the backdam, so they did not know what was going on although the farmers came out and they were making reports. They took it very lightly because they did not care a thing.

I would like to advise the Minister concerned that the present system of Local authority is something of the British type, but the British do not have the experience that we are faced with. I would like to warn him that the type of people he has in the Local Authorities are even worse than the British; they do not know anything at all. In the interest of production, in the interest of foreign exchange, in the interest of the economy of this country, I would like to call on this Government to scrap this Bill now and hold Local Government Elections if they do have the interest of this country and the nation as a whole at heart.

**The Speaker:** Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud.

**Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud:** Cde. Speaker, I would like to make a very brief contribution to this debate. The Cde. Minister in introducing this Bill alluded to many areas which the Government feels need changes. But what the Minister has not done is to deal with the relevant issues of the bill itself. Our contention is very simple and straightforward. We are not, at this point, looking into what changes out to take place in the Local Government system, whether the current system is adequate or inadequate. What we are questioning and strongly opposing is the obvious determination of the Government to pay absolutely no respect and heed to

democracy and even to the letter of the law as it exists. Section 24 part II Chapter 28:01 of the Municipal and District Council Act, Term of Office of City Councillors states:

“Subject to this Act, the term of office of the City Councillors shall be three years, commencing on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of January after the declaration, under section 101 of the Local Authorities (Elections) Act, of the election results for the City.”

Now let me put the election in relation to the city in its correct perspective. That election took place in August 1970 and from August 1970 to January 8, 1979, there has been no election. What is clear is that the Council has been serving two additional periods without facing the electorate. If elections were held in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government (Elections) Act and the Minister had come to the Parliament in 1979 and had said “Well look, elections were due in fact since 31<sup>st</sup> October, 1978, and we are not holding them because we have got a certain constitutional exercise going on” – not that I necessarily agree with it – it would have meant that we would have been dealing with a single postponement. But what in fact the Parliament is dealing with this afternoon is a series of postponements though the Bill seeks a single postponement of elections due on the 31<sup>st</sup> October, 1978. This to my mind, indicts the Government and it is indefensible.

One acknowledges the Minister’s background as a lawyer and probably his capacity to debate and speak well, but I cannot see how he can explain this series of postponements of Local Government Elections, pointing as his principal reason the fact that they are going to need constitutional changes which Bill for such changes was passed only on the 10<sup>th</sup> July, 1978, and came into operation when the President gave his assent.

This debate must be seen in its proper perspective. The people in this country at all levels are being hoodwinked. There is no respect for the electorate. The Government is far removed from the populace and the time has come when the people must become aware of the fact so that they will be able to assess exactly where the country is going and what is happening with



democracy. I refer to the 31<sup>st</sup> October which is an operative date. Even the Parliament and the people superior to the Parliament have always shared that view. There is great contempt for this Parliament, Cde. Speaker, over which you preside. I make that point because of this fact that all actions after the 31<sup>st</sup> October were not legal. In fact, the elections of the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor, Chairman and Vice Chairman of all Councils throughout the country were illegal because their terms of office came to an end and if there was need to postpone elections this Bill should have come prior to the 31<sup>st</sup> October, 1978.

What we have got before the House this afternoon is a Clause, Clause 3 of the Bill, to validate all actions of the Councils, in fact, retroactive legislation. Probably there may be some issues where one may not have any complaint in so far as retroactive legislation is concerned, but generally speaking, Cde. Speaker, we are opposed to retroactive legislation.

All the Councils are functioning without even the mandate of the Parliament, Consultation with the people ended. We have moved to the point where the Parliament was being used to give that authority simply to legalise the actions of the Council. But, in this case, that has not even been done. It shows gross contempt in my view: “Don’t bother; let them have their elections; let them carry all the activities though illegal; we will come in due course in our own time and we will present a Bill in this House and ask the Parliament to validate all the actions that were done...”, and the words used are, “in good faith.” Who will assess the good faith is left to be seen. So, our objections, our opposition, and our voting against this Bill this afternoon are founded on those sound premises which I say cannot be logically and intelligibly defended this afternoon because the one point is, new Constitution, certain changes. But, I said that is as now.

Let me, sir, refer to the explanatory note of Bill No. 12 of 1972, Local Authorities (Postponement of Elections) Bill. The Bill came under the name of O.E. Clarke, then Minister of Home Affairs.

“This Bill seeks to provide for the postponement of elections of councillors of local authorities due to be held during the period 1<sup>st</sup> November, 1972 to 7<sup>th</sup> December, 1972.

With the introduction of local government reform, the councillors who were first elected have not been in office for a full terms and it is considered desirable that in this initial period of the implementation of reforms in the system of local government those councillors of local authorities who were first elected under the new system of local government should be permitted to remain in office not later than the end of 1974 in the interests of the administration of the affairs of the respective local authorities. The annual election of Mayors, Deputy Mayors, Chairmen, Vice – Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen of Local Authorities will, however, be held.”

So, Cde. Speaker, the explanatory note gives the reason and that is, that they did not have enough time then but that election would be held or had to be held not later than 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1974, because only the year is stated. Four years have passed; we have entered the fifth and no election has been held. Moreover, the excuse now is a new one, what in fact we are having are devices and excuses to help this Government not to face the electorate. Why is the Government against the verdict of the people? When talking about democracy, the verdict of the people is primary and vital. The verdict of the people in this country means nothing any longer and that is the reason why there is such a high rate of migration; it is founded on dissatisfaction. People are prepared to work in this country probably for small salaries, to serve their own country, to live in an environment, in a climate they are accustomed to. I do not think any Guyanese wants to face the change from winter to summer. They like the tropics. Why should they not? This is the country of their birth. But when they choose to migrate and when we see the long lines at all the Embassies, it is because of these factors which are real and true and which need to be examine.

Without casting aspersion on any of the people at any level in the Local Government process, I think they should re-think their own position and I think one of the most admirable things they can do at the moment is for all the people in all the Village Councils to follow in the

footsteps of the Linden people who, some two years ago or thereabout, resigned from the Council. [A Comrade: “That never happened.”] That never happened? Well is probably did not come all together but if the Minister was to do some homework he will find how many Councils there are – not only Linden – from which people have resigned. [Interruption] All right, let me put the point stronger. Whether it has occurred before or not, any man who wants to serve in the process of democracy particularly Local Government which has to do with the people, most of those people are people who are living in the community; you have to see them every day; they are not looked away like Ministers in officers under air-conditioning and that kind of thing. They are common people; people have to face them; all the areas have countless problems, roads, drainage or what have you and indeed they are serving without the will, they are serving without the support, they are serving without the mandate. I am sure, even if the Minister takes me up on that, I make the stronger point with every conviction, that all the Councillors ought to resign and call upon the Government to have elections and face the people, and if the people feel that they have done a good job or they are capable of still doing a good job, let the people put them back.

The current laws as they affect the Local Government system are enforced. I am talking of the Elections Act, not forgetting, of course, my earlier point of the validation because the period expired. The laws are enforced and elections can be held not necessarily in all the areas at the same time. Make a start, because those people are not there with the mandate of the people. They have no moral right and now I make the very positive point that cannot be contradicted, no moral and no legal right. It is only this Act now that will give them the legal right. The moral right, they lost long ago. The legal right they lost on 31<sup>st</sup> October, 1978. This Parliament meets today to give them that right to continue to enforce themselves on the people against the wishes, will, desires and aspirations of the people, and those are the premises upon which we found our opposition to this Bill.

So Cde. Speaker, that is our contention. We are a people who respect change. It is the natural law probably of nature and of life. We are not opposed to change or changes that will move towards giving the people greater democracy and greater freedom and allow them to live

in an atmosphere of justice, an atmosphere of equality, an atmosphere in which they can make their full contribution in the social, economic and political fields of this country. We are not opposed to any reasonable proposal. But, what we do oppose and strongly oppose is what the Government is doing to deny the people's right, take away their right and even validate elections that are illegal.

In fact, all Councillors will be well within their right to just walk out. They do not have to resign now because nothing exists. The system had completely broken down on 31<sup>st</sup> October, 1978. From what will they resign? The Mayor does not exist in law; the Deputy Mayor does not, neither do the Chairmen and Vice Chairmen. To whom will they tender their resignations? Probably the Clerks of the Councils! They are appointed people and probably they can hand them in to them for respect. But there is no need even to do that. They have lost their bosses. They cannot impose any decision at the moment. Unfortunately, however, we have – with every respect and speaking on the constitutional position only with no aspersion on the President at all – a decorative presidential system where probably compulsorily he has to say, “I assent”. But if we had a system where the President had the right to refuse to give his assent, and I think the time has come when the populace, when the people of this country should have, even if this Parliament passed this Bill this afternoon, we would have called on the President not to give his assent.

**4.50 p.m.**

Cde. Speaker, section 38 of the Municipal and District Councils Act, Chapter 28:01 puts the Councils in no different position, for it clearly states:

“(1) The district councillors shall be elected in accordance with the Local Authorities (Elections) Act at elections held every three years during the period commencing on 1<sup>st</sup> November and ending on 7<sup>th</sup> December and every district council shall be a local authority...”

The operative portion of this section is that outside of the city area, District Councils too should have their elections every three years. I do not know how this Government could have any sort of reference. How it can really treat a nation, how it can treat a people who are supposed to be living in an Independent and sovereign State with such contempt? I use that for the want of a better word. That is the state that this country has reached, that this does not have direct bearing on the Local Government system. This is a recent address from the President of GALA, on Thursday, November 2, 1978, and published in the *Chronicle*.

“President of the Guyana Association of Local Authorities Hulbert McGowan has appealed to village councillors not to reduce the organisation into what he called an inept and parasite making body and said they must be “watchers of the people”, and be of useful service to them.”

He continued:

“...councillors must also behave in a way that would command respect and restige. He also hit out at the poor turn-out at the meeting and added that such small attendance at conferences of this kind could not truly serve the interest of the people whom the councillors are supposed to be serving.”

In fact, GALA is that body that is representative of all the Councils and they meet annually to examine common problems and to seek out common approaches, probably to the multitude of problems that exist in the various districts. What seems very clear here is that they have failed to attract a decent number of people, so much so that the President of GALA had to lash out against the poor attendance. But the poor attendance at GALA must be traced to the poor attendance at the Village Council meetings because they are not getting a quorum. I challenge the Minister to carry out an investigation and to be able to come back to this House to say that the Councils have complied with the Act which requires the Council to meet every month.

On many occasions over the years, Councils have not been meeting for long periods. We have read this even in the press and we know this as a fact, so it is not easy to say –and that is the point the Minister made – “that I have been in consultation with the body that is representative of the Council”, obviously referring to GALA. GALA cannot even get a decent crowd at its own conference, even GALA cannot speak for the people of this country. If the membership of GALA owes its origin to the village councils, they are in the same position. With every respect to the people who have been Village Fathers for years, who have undoubtedly made a contribution, I cannot fail to very strongly record the protest of the Opposition in this matter so that it can be clearly understood why we are so strongly opposed to this amendment to further postpone Local Government elections. People may forget and we may probably carry on this debate treating it as a normal and simple postponement, forgetting completely that this postponement has been recurrent. In the years 1972, 1974, 1976, 1978, action was taken by the Government to postpone Local Government elections. The final one was Order No. 94 of 1976, made on 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 1976. So on the 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 1976 it was postponed and here we come before the House in January, 1979 for yet another postponement. I reiterate for emphasis the years, 1972, 1974, 1976 and 1978.

Cde. Speaker, I notice you said that there was a correction in the Bill, to substitute 1979 for 1978. I could not trace it but what does seem clear looking at clause 3, and I hope I am right, is that “As if a reference to 31<sup>st</sup> October, 1980 had been substituted for the reference to 31<sup>st</sup> October, 1978” would be interpreted in my contribution to now go on to October 1980. I was not sure where that 1979 must go.

**The Speaker:** The substitution of 1979 for 1978 applies to the second line of clause 1.

**Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud:** So that my contention is fortified in that the postponement goes now to 1980. When the Referendum Bill was introduced and debated in this House, a period of fifteen months was allowed for the new General Elections to be held. Is this an indication that even General Elections will not take place within that period? I am all prepared to

see the argument that not because 1980 is stated that it means you have to hold General Elections in 1980l. You can hold it before. The Minister had an opportunity to indicate to the nation today. not to give that flexibility to go on to October 1980, because the Bill does give that flexibility, if I understand it right, but it can be held within the fifteen months as stated in the explanatory note. It can also be held in October 1980 or it can be held before the end of October 1980, because the law states ...

**The Speaker:** Cde. Persaud, the Minister in his address to us did say that this is going to form part of the larger constitution and it is from these bodies that members will be selected to be part of the House. So it would not follow that election for Local Government will be held after, they will be held before.

**Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud:** Sir, probably I failed to communicate my point clearly. I am linking the Local Government election with the general election. The point I make is that there is nothing wrong with the Government, bearing in mind what the Constitution is now, coming when that fifteen-month period is nearing its end to say, “we extend that period to take it to October 1980.” Instead of the Local Government Act coming forward, there is nothing to stop the Government from taking General Elections to October 1980.

The Minister says the Constituent Assembly is still to be decided. I have always advised myself that despite what the Government has said in this House, it can come back and say, Look, we went through the process of Constituent Assembly, and members who made up that Assembly, including the advisers and those who have submitted memoranda for examination, and those who have given oral evidence, have suggested that that is not the right time, or they may suggest that Local Government elections must not be held at the same time with general elections, which is a logical point and which supports me. Then the Government can say that Local Government can say that Local Government elections have until 1980. You see, unfortunately, the Minister has not been the Minister all the time. It dates back to Cde. Llewellyn John, and the Bill in 1972, to which I referred, speaks of Cde. Clarke. There have been changes.

So you might have another Minister altogether saying something new and you can say the Minister that preceded you said so, and it was not I. It would probably be a good point then. But we speak against a background, what we would wish to term, if you would permit it, of straight rascality on the part of the Government with that kind of background. With that kind of deception, no guarantee in this Parliament has been honoured. And it is because of our experience of what we have seen in reality in this House that we strongly oppose this amendment.

**5 p.m.**

Let me state very clearly that the Opposition will vote against this Amendment. We see it as further evidence of the Government disposing completely of the democratic process. This country is in danger and the liberty of the people of this country is in danger.

**The Speaker:** Cde. Ram Karran.

**Cde. Ram Karran:** If you will allow me to travel even only in spirit...

**The Speaker:** You have just come back from a very long travel.

**Cde. Ram Karran:** I planned to go in person because I know my friends over there will no doubt monopolise that country to which I refer, South Africa. I think I can see Peter Botha getting up and speaking with the same sort of emotion as my friend showed when he spoke about the independence of Namibia. It is with the same spirit that he has sought to dish out democracy to us which is in fact a denial of democracy of the people living in the rural areas and the city of Georgetown. How can you expand democracy when you are taking it away? Does the hon. Minister not stand on the same pedestal as the Prime Minister of South Africa? Surely, he does. Brezhnev does not deny democracy; Brezhnev extends democracy but I am loath to speak for Brezhnev. I think he can do it far better than I can.



What is happening here? The same rhetoric and the same hypocrisy we had with South African whites dishing out independence to Namibia and the other territories and in fact to the citizens of that country. Another feature of this Bill which is before us, is that it comes on the second anniversary, the second birthday of a Motion moved by my colleagues on my left, Cde. Persaud, calling for elections for Local Government. If I may read the Motion which was published on even date, today's date 1977, it says:

“Whereas Local Government elections which should have been held in 1972, 1974 and 1976 have been postponed each time they become due. And whereas absenteeism and the general appearance of disinterestedness among councillors on the affairs of the people in each of the P.N.C. dominated Local Authorities are so prevalent and visible;

And whereas the Government has amended the Municipal and Districts Councils Act to provide for the appointment of persons not originally listed to replace councillors whose places have been declared vacant;

And whereas such nominations of persons undermines the whole concept of elected representations and in practice further widens the gap between the people and those Local Authorities in which they are nominated members.

And whereas Local Authorities throughout Guyana are unrepresentative and unpopular and do not enjoy the confidence of the electorate in the respective areas:

Be it resolved that this National Assembly recommends to the Government the setting up immediately of the machinery for the holding of Local Government elections.”

Instead of this Motion being debated, instead of this Motion being taken and that aspect of democracy, which we are led to believe prevails in Guyana, taking place, and having a debate on this matter, we have this Bill. But, as you know, sir, in this House, the exception is the rule. Members table Motions, Members table Questions, and these things never see the light of day. I have in my hand a few motions which are particularly relevant today. There is one moved by my

colleague on my left, who is absent, and that, of course, was published on the 24<sup>th</sup> November. I hope that the Government or the relevant Minister will make it possible for us to debate that Motion on the massive loss of life by murder and/or suicide at the People's Temple commune. I hope that we will be able to discuss it as we have failed to discuss...

**The Speaker:** Cde. Ram Karran what relevance has that to the postponement of elections?

**Cde. Ram Karran:** It has a lot of relevance. We are discussing democracy and I think that the hon. Minister referred to democracy on several occasions. This is democracy not at the Local Government level. What is the use talking about democracy when members' Motions are not discussed? What sort of democracy is that? [**Interruption**] I am not going to get heart failure. Those of you who failed to live up to the standard required in this Chamber are not going to die from heart failure, you are probably going to commit mass suicide. Probably the time is ripe for that.

My friend, Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud, on the 24<sup>th</sup> November, asked relevant questions which can be described as Local Government measure with respect to the Community living at Jonestown, with respect to the supply of arms and ammunition, with respect to the supply of lands to these people, an aspect of Local Government. Those motions have not been discussed with the result that the tragedy has overtaken us. Hon. Members are not aware of the shame to which Guyanese have been subjected. I was recently abroad and I can tell you that it is not only the P.N.C. that is subjected to ridicule and shame and disgrace, but all Guyanese. And I as a patriotic and a proud Guyanese felt very much ashamed as people asked what the hell is happening in Guyana where so many people can take their lives and can be killed in one massive act. There are things that are likely to occur in our country and more than that because of the persistence of the rascality of those who are supposed to be the leaders in our community, the Government.

I have asked questions, my colleagues have asked questions relative to Local Government and the particular Ministry that we are dealing with here today, why is it that the cooperative known as the Non Pariel Cattle Farmers and Rice Farmers has been disbanded? The books for that organisation were with the Ministry of Local Government for one year. They accused the people of not keeping proper books. The books have been returned and there is not one letter that is wrong as has been admitted by the former Minister, yet the lands have not been returned to these people; these people who have been producing have not been able to produce and their successors to the land, who are adherents, who are blind followers of the P.N.C., hold the land and all they get from it is pound fees when people's cows stray on those lands. Is that how we are going to produce? Is that how we are going to develop democracy in this country? Let me give you another example.

**5.10 p.m.**

The city of Georgetown was extended to Industry on the East Coast and for two years, without the Municipality doing one single thing in that area, like building roads, joining taps, maintenance works, it received a considerable amount of revenue from the impounding of people's cows in that area. That is development? Cde. Speaker, I have never seen. I drew to the attention of this House that the city was extended but the bee that was in the bonnet of the Council was to catch the cows and carry them to the pound. That is not development. And, we are not going to ever develop this country if we retain that felling which the Government has been carrying out about its superiority in dealing with the communities in the country.

Let me refer to another case which has a bearing on the local authorities. The farmers in Essequibo lost their crops a few years ago. They demanded compensation. The Prime Minister got up in this House and said, "Are we a nation of compensation seekers?" The same Prime Minister on the eve of the election to Local Government threatened, "if you don't vote for the P.N.C., no grants, no loans, no assistance will be given to you." Is that the democracy Cde.

Hoyte was talking about? We have the case of Local Authorities. Are they getting loans? I do not see that they are getting any.

The estimates from the Local Authority in Leguan dated 9/11/78 at the Council's Office, reveal one thing which has been supported by my colleagues who spoke before me. They have the minutes here of two meetings. At both, the Chairman was absent; at one, even the Vice Chairman was absent. What does the estimate state? It states for Personal Emoluments, \$32,045. The total estimate is \$181,150, out of which arrears of rates total \$68,962. And, there have been arrears for some time, I am told. So what do we have? We have a situation where the Local Authority is behaving just like its parent, the Central Government. It is putting money in the estimate but it does not have it and it does not expect to get it.

We have another illustration here which is very clear. Tractor expenditure totals \$11,665 and the revenue from tractor will be roughly \$12,000. That is the sort of business the P.N.C. knows how to do. Their expenses are almost the same as their revenue. They raise it here: valuation, \$89,000 and I told you, sir, that arrears of rates are \$68,000. But where is the assistance? I remember in the elections of 1968, the P.N.C. said they had made a breakthrough in Leguan, in particular, and some other places and, therefore, Leguan should qualify for grants, for aids and for other assistance from the Central Government, but Leguan Local Authority, like all the Local Authorities, has itself to provide the capital needs of the district.

Now, we have been told that the colonial system is a bad system, the colonial system which the British brought here, which was undoubtedly introduced as a result of English experience. We are not saying otherwise. And I do not want to praise the colonial system; I think it has ended and it is a blessing; in fact, it should have been ended long before. But, we must compare what we had in the colonial system where the people's representatives, even though they had a limited franchise, had more sympathy, and grants, loans and aids were afforded Local Authorities. But, since this "creature" came into being, those who swear by democracy, like Peter Botha, have denied these people of any grant, any loan, any aid, any assistance whatever,

and as I said just now, they terrorise them by carrying their animals to the pound; not only there but all over the country. In fact, they have increased the pound fee to \$10 per head. That is no manner in which one can develop democracy.

The basic ingredient in the speech by my friend is democracy. He referred and perhaps it is unfortunate that he did refer to that aspect of this measure, to His Excellency the President who assented to a certain Bill. The Bill and this measure before us, and the denial of Local Government elections, I think, can best be described in those famous words used by a former member Mr. Checks when he was in this House, when he said that Guyanese will recall with shame through the corridors of time, a certain incident. But, I think we are adding more and more to that description and in fact, what we say in July of last year, the so-called referendum, examining the wishes of the people, assented to by the President, makes it a disgrace for the hon. Minister to refer to it in this House again. I think it is best forgotten.

I was speaking in this Chamber Your Honour, when I drew your attention to the dispensing of democracy, when thugs were downstairs of this Chamber, armed with sticks and resulting in – and I think we all know and I do not think Your Honour will stop me from speaking about it – incidents where people were beaten on the road right outside here, where armed policemen were all around. Those thugs were fed on the steps of the Chamber, bringing further disgrace to what we have here, and that hooliganism extended right up to the Mall where other people were beaten. Is that the type of democracy that they are clouding under these innocent-looking words and phrases that they are using in talking to us? That is the democracy understood in South Africa and dispensed by Malan and Botha. Surely, we have not reached that stage. After all, Malan and Botha and the rest of them are blood brothers of Samoja and Pinochet. Surely, my friends who want to be in the middle of the Non Aligned movement, who sometimes call themselves socialist, are not going to dispense that type of democracy to the Guyanese people.

My friend talks about the English system which is inadequate. Surely it is inadequate. He did not, during the course of his speech, tell us what he intends to introduce in the form of Local Authority. What did he say? Sir, if I may refer to my notes, he did make a long speech but like everything else, his speeches are always empty. He said that many of his colleagues, GALA, Councillors, Chairmen, Mayors – he did not talk about stallions – have all advised him. They were all unanimous in their advice to him and they concluded on the social and economic, cultural and political deficiencies, but none of them remembered to tell him about the moral deficiency and how does he propose to change it in a non-colonial way. Does he intend to set up tribal communities and from them will emerge a modern local government system? Does he intend to set up the ... system and allow a local government to emerge? Surely, he does not mean to go back. At least we have had something. At least the progenitors of that system, the anti-working class, the colonials, had called it democracy. Can we not build on that and can we not have elections until such time as you are able to remove the inadequacies of that to have a modern socialist Local Government? Why do we have to rub out all and bring back rascality? Surely, that is not in keeping with the present trends. We cannot afford to go back.

**5.20 p.m.**

My friend said he has been advised by people who have years of experience and a lifetime in Local Government. Was he referring to George Young? Was he referring to Remington? Was he referring to...

**The Speaker:** Cde. Ram Karran, you are experienced enough to know not to call the names of people who cannot answer.

**Cde. Ram Karran:** George Young is a very revered member of Local Government. Is he here? Congratulations! I was not saying anything about him, I was only asking whether the hon. Minister was referring to people like them. They would not restrict their criticism to social, economic, cultural and political deficiencies without referring to the moral deficiencies of this Bill and all the Bills relating to the postponement of Local Government elections and, indeed, to

the referendum with which this Government has been stained and which it will never be able to wash out from its record.

I sympathise with the Minister who has now found fault with Marshall. But I hold on to the point made by my colleague on my left, who said that the successor would probably say “it is not I”. His predecessors on this side of the House had been tearing their throats for Marshall. Now they have got it, the excuse is, in order to deny democracy, “we do not believe in Marshall.” Let the record speak, let the Hansard show that repeatedly the front bench of the last Opposition in this House had been demanding Marshall. They have been pushing left and right to get Marshall. This is just like when they wanted the Constitution which they wrote – Sonny Ramphal wrote it – and now they are denying. They cannot under those systems continue to feel the people, so they want to change it. We are not afraid of change. They accuse us sometimes of not wanting to change. We want change, but change for the better. We do not want change to bring about a situation where you cannot get food, you cannot get eggs, you cannot get many of essential commodities. Even the P.N.C. members come and ask us if GIMPEX does not have anything.

My friend has been referring to the deficiency of the system. I gave a few examples. There is a case now at a place called Seven Beds at Industry. That area is between Greater Georgetown and the Local Authority at Plaisance. To go into that area where sugar workers like – unfortunately I have to speak for sugar workers – you have to go right up to your waist in mud in rainy season, to get to the houses of these people. Their children are supposed to go to school, but they cannot. This is no exaggeration.

**The Speaker:** Cde. Ram Karran, you have 5 minutes more.

**Cde. Ram Karran:** The situation is complicated. The Local Authority in Georgetown said this is outside of their boundary, therefore they cannot spend money. The Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund which is responsible for capital works in these areas said “your turn will

come”. Do we need to amend Constitution to provide that sort of service? The Government cannot provide it. I went the other day when five workers were killed in an accident at Enmore and believe me – comrades will think this is exaggeration – people had to walk up to their knees in mud.

**The Speaker:** How are you making out?

**Cde. Ram Karran:** I live in Greater Georgetown. I am saying that the Government is only making a mockery of the system of democracy. You do not need an amended Constitution, you do not need to further deny elections in order to adjust these things. Indeed, what will adjust these matters is to hold free and fair elections in the Local Government areas. Then all will be happy, except perhaps a sprinkling of the P.N.C. members who are contracting day after day. They are the only ones who will be unhappy because their stomachs will be a little empty like the rest of the population and their pockets will have less to spend on things.

We cannot afford to deny the people their right. We cannot continue to have rigged elections in this country because that will bring no happiness to our people, but, indeed, greater unhappiness. If the members of the P.N.C. indulge in enjoyment because of the denial of democracy and because they see the large number of people not aligned to their party unhappy, I can assure you that that situation will create a condition where they themselves will have to do like Jim Jones and the people of the People’s Temple, commit mass suicide.

**The Speaker:** Cde. Hoyte.

**Cde. Hoyte (replying):** Cde. Speaker, it is always a source of profound regret to me when we have serious matters to debate in this House and Members on the Opposition Benches demonstrate an inability to rise to the level of the subject. The Member, Cde. Basir said he hoped that I would respond in a calm and dispassionate way. He referred to the fact that my interventions and my replies have a way of varying in tone and temper. I would like to say to him



that I accept his observation as being accurate. If there is a courteous intervention, my reply would be courteous. I do not believe in turning the other cheek and I meet a man on the level on which he chooses to contest. That is why I was a little disappointed that such an inexperienced Member as my friend, Cde. Ram Karran, should have descended to certain depths. I understand that there is an epidemic of diarrhoea around which has afflicted him and he has some problems with his normal aperture so that the waste comes through his mouth. But it is unfortunate that he should have chosen this honourable House to relieve himself of his problems.

In my opening speech, I attempted to examine the present structure of the Local Government system. I identified the problems which were inherent in that system, I analysed the reasons for the problems and I proposed a set of principles which, in the view of the Party, if elaborated into a system, would resolve the problems, would get to the root of the matter and, in fact, would set up a system of local government covering practically the whole of this country and involving broad masses of the people. Then I explained the reasons for the Bill, since such transformation, since such a rearrangement, such a total re-organisation was intimately and inextricably connected with the constitutional arrangements which we have in hand.

It was a marked inconsistency for members of the Opposition, led by the Leader of the Opposition, to allege that we were not proposing a democratic system, we were denying democracy, when the purport and intent of these proposals is to expand considerably the base of Local Government to involve more people. One of the observations I made, arising from criticisms which have been repeated throughout the country, is that there are too few people legally involved in the system of Local Government.

**5.30 p.m.**

The Party and the Government have been accused of inconsistency of consorting with the bourgeoisie and the capitalists and in particular with the “imperialist, capitalist U.S.A. Government.” We have been accused of having a decorative President who did not have powers

of veto and intervention. We have been accused of being wedded to democracy because we rig elections. All kinds of accusations were made here this afternoon. I think that it is time that we take a stand to expose the hypocrisy of those who get up and put on the mantle of political morality which they are not entitled to wear.

Let us look at the record. In 1964, the People's Progressive Party put out a manifesto, a copy of which I have here with the photograph of the Leader of the Party decorating the front page. Probably some evidence of the pursuit of the cult of the personality. This is what that Party had to say in relation to matters about which they have accused us. I am sure that some of my friends on the other side who have made these allegations do not even know of the existence of this document.

“Under the provision voting at eighteen, the P.P.P. said that if it won three elections” and indeed this was an old plank of that party, “the franchise would be extended to all Guyanese who attain the age of eighteen.”

In 1973, we witnessed in this very House, the P.P.P. combining with the United Force to oppose the vote at eighteen and it was the People's National Congress alone, by virtue of its two-thirds majority.

**Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud:** Cde. Speaker, on a point of order: the Cde. Minister, probably not deliberately, is misleading the House. When that debate took place I was in this House and I contributed and I voted. Our position to vote against it was due to the fact that the P.N.C. had rigged the registration and excluded people. It was not a fair system. But we still supported the system. It was not a question of the P.P.P. being opposed to voting at eighteen.

**Cde. Hoyte:** That was not a point of order, but it has validated my point. Anybody can say “I'm in favour” but when put to the test fail to perform. Again, Cde. Speaker, in this very document, what do we find? I quote again for the section bearing the caption “Private Property”,

because we are told by the Leader of the Opposition that we are trying to create a new property-owning class, a new class of compradors, businessmen, and all sorts of fancy terms that he has read about. And what did he say in this document? I hope my comrades there who do not know of this document will get a copy to understand where the inconsistencies, where the serpentine policies and tactics are to be found and where hypocrisy forms part of political policy. Not on this side. This is what he said:

“Contrary to malicious opposition allegations about interference with property rights, the P.P.P. Government has extended the ownership of private property.”

And then a little later on he said on “Private Capital”:

“As explained in the introduction, the Party is committed to a mixed tri-sectored economy, in which private capital, local and foreign, will have ample scope to develop by itself and also in combination with public capital”.

Yet we are being accused of inconsistencies, we are being accused of consorting with the capitalists, of giving them an opportunity to invest in this country. And not only did they say that they would encourage private capital, they went further to say that it would be protected. And I quote again, Cde. Speaker:

“Adequate incentives to private capital and protection for infant industries would continue to be given. The Party will be prepared to discriminate in the matter of granting concessions in favour of co-operatives whenever concerned with credit marketing or production.”

Again, Cde. Speaker, we have been accused of not nationalising enough or not nationalising in a revolutionary way. And what do they say here?

“It is not the party’s policy to nationalise any industry but if it becomes necessary in the national interest to do so fair and adequate compensation will be made.”

We have been excoriated for agreeing to pay compensation for the industries we have nationalised when they have got it written down here that they will pay fair and adequate compensation. And I would explain for the benefit of the rank and file P.P.P. that “fair and adequate compensation” is a term of art which appeared in our Constitution which mean market value. It was this Government which changed the Constitution to enable it to pay less than market value for Demba, Reynolds and the Bookers interests. Comrades, before you interrupt, listen:

“The P.P.P. reaffirm that it will **not** nationalise the sugar and bauxite industries but it believes that these industries can make a greater contribution to the economy and the Party will make a greater contribution to the economy and the Party will intensify its efforts to bring about this desirable objective.”

Who are the inconsistent people? Who are the people attempting to fool the electorate? Who are the people twisting and turning like Chubby Checkers? Who are the people gyrating and jumping and hopping from leg to leg like John Travolta? Cde. Speaker, let me continue. Keep quiet and listen and learn so that when Cheddie is speaking you will put your tongue in your cheek because he is laughing at you also. It is not only the people outside he is laughing at. Listen to what he said on “External Affairs”. Cde. Jagan stood up in this House when he believed that the Soviet Union was opposed to the Non-Aligned Movement at the time they were holding their Conference of Foreign Ministers of No-Aligned countries in Georgetown and took that Conference as a circus. Of course, a little later on when he realised that the Soviet Union was backing it, he did a *volte-face*, a roundabout turn, a twist around like Chubby Checker, John Travolta again.

But what does he say? Listen and discover whether he is talking about colonial times or non-colonial times. I quote:

“On Independence, the P.P.P. will pursue a path of non alignment.”

He criticises us for being non-aligned and then he went on to say what he meant by non-alignment. So, you will see whether it is mis-alignment or what kind of alignment.

5.40 p.m.

“By non-alignment we mean:

- (1) the pursuit of an independent policy based on peaceful co-existence;
- (2) the non-participation in multilateral military alliances, for example, NATO, the Warsaw Pact;
- (3) the non-participation in bilateral military alliances with great powers, the absence of foreign military bases in the country's territory. In this connection, the P.P.P. declares that it is not a Communist Party.”

You hear that comrades? The P.P.P. declares that it is not a Communist Party! Yet, Jagan went the other day to Moscow to receive a medal for services to the Soviet people, and that is why today he had the effrontery, he had the – I do not know what term to apply to it – to get up in this House and say that he is proud to be a puppet of the Soviet Union. [**Interruption**] He said so! He stood up and said that he was proud to be a puppet of Moscow! The People's National Congress is not a puppet of any country and no member of this Party will express any pride in being a puppet.

But let us go on to read because we are talking about attacks upon the integrity of this Party and attacks upon its consistency and its policies. The document goes to elaborate P.P.P. foreign policy. We were attacked here for allegedly being hand-in-glove with the United States of America. All right, let us for the sake of argument concede that we are. But what did the P.P.P. state? And I quote:

“The Party will continue its effort to win the goodwill and co-operation of the Government and people of the United States of America.” **[Interruption]**

Listen!

“The Party will disseminate information in the United States to show...”

Listen to this:

“... that the policies which are being pursued are such that the people of the United States have supported them in their own country and which they could support in this country.”

What policy do the people in the United States support other than capitalism? [**Cde. Ram Karran**: “You ever heard about independence?”] Is that the internal policies you are talking about? Independence? Jagan is talking about after independence! And then he went further:

“The Party will endeavour to secure increasing technical assistance from the United States to provide more and better facilities, health and social services and to undertake the development of the country’s resources. The Party will also strive to promote an increase in the number of students receiving education in the United States.”

Of course, that was probably for his son Joey’s benefit; he wanted to get him there.

I can go on at length. The P.P.P. went on to talk about expanding links with other countries and explained that the Party had already visited Italy, West Germany and France; the Capitalist West, the E.E.C., and the People’s Republic of China. Now where is the authority with

8.1.79

National Assembly

5.40 – 5.50 p.m.

which anybody on that side can talk about inconsistency on the part of the People's National Congress? Where can we talk about this Party associating with bourgeois countries when they themselves have asserted that they would do so when they become independent. How could they talk about a decorative system? **[Interruption]** You were not here when your leader was talking? That is why I told your memory is not good. He talked about decorative President; yet in the manifesto I am referring to, you proposed a titular Head of State. The P.P.P. talked about rigging and lack of democracy on the part of this Government. We will come to that.

The record shows that during the period of office of the People's Progressive Party Government, for seven years, that Party never held a single Local Government Election. It was not necessary in your time! You had democracy because your Party was in!

**Cde. Dalchand:** Cde. Speaker, on a point of order, that is not true!

**The Speaker:** What is the point of order?

**Cde. Dalchand:** Cde. Speaker, Local Government elections were held in 1961. That was the middle of the P.P.P.'s terms in office. He is misinforming the House.

**The Speaker:** Cde. Dalchand, please sit.

**Cde. Hoyte:** Then they talked about rigging. I refer Cde. Speaker, to an extract from the *Daily Chronicle* newspaper of Tuesday, April 24, 1972. **[Interruption]** Balram Singh Rai, a member of the People's Progressive Party and I believe, Chairman of the Party at one time, issued this statement:

“The P.P.P. elections just concluded were the foulest ever held in British Guiana. Fraud and coercion were features. Dozens of genuine delegates from party grouped were

discredited while others supporting the present clique were accredited while not entitled to delegate status. Several persons were given more than one ballot paper...”

This is a P.P.P. member talking about the P.P.P.!

“...Dr. Jagan viciously attacked those delegates who were supporting me for so doing. Truly Dr. Jagan and other leaders of the P.P.P. should hang their heads in shame. No longer should they speak of democracy; no longer should they complain of unfair elections or gerrymandered constituencies...”

And then he went on:

“...I challenge Dr. Jagan and Mr. Benn to hold fresh and fair elections.”

Sounds familiar, does it not?

Cde. Speaker, I do not want to spend further time in showing that the People’s Progressive Party spends its time in posturing. The member, Cde. Ram Karran, made the allegation that my contribution was empty. Perhaps it was, but the fact remains that we have not had a single response at an intellectual and conceptual level from him or his colleagues on this question of Local Government transformation.

**5.50 p.m.**

Cde. Speaker, this matter of Local Government reform is not something which has just been thought about. As I said, for several years now this matter has been agitating the minds of people involved in the Local Government system. The Member Cde. Ram Karran himself has



seen many of the Local Government stalwarts sitting in the public gallery listening to this debate because they have an interest. They have not come here because they have time to waste. They have an interest in the transformation, the re-organisation, about which I have been speaking.

I note from my file that in March 1978, there was a meeting between GALA and myself of local Government reform. Prior to that, there had been many discussions; and following that March meeting GALA wrote on the 8<sup>th</sup> June asking for a continuation of the discussions begun on the question of the new Constitution insofar as it related to Local Government re-organisation. On the 31<sup>st</sup> July, 1978, GALA submitted a memorandum setting out a number of far-reaching and proposals and principles which undoubtedly would have a major influence upon the kind of structure we eventually come up with. I regret that I cannot accept the position of Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud that his position is the same as that of his Leader Dr. Jagan. It is fundamentally different. His Leader is saying that we do not need local government transformation at all, that the system we have is adequate, and that all we have to do is to hold elections. My friend, Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud, has taken a legalistic position. He is saying that the law prescribed a certain time within which elections should be held, and they should have been held even if it meant that in the course of this year we would have to hold fresh election. We are saying that that is a waste of time. We cannot accept that.

Dr. Jagan's position was different. His position is that, first of all, we do not need to link the Local Government reform with the reform of the Central Government. On that matter I beg to disagree profoundly. I beg to disagree because, as I have said, in the proposals of the Party and in the proposals of GALA, and in the proposals from the people with whom I have discussed this matter at great length, there was strong, persistent criticism about the hiatus between the Central Government and the Local Government systems and the failure to integrate, either economically or politically, the systems. This is crucial to the whole set of reforms we have to put in train. Unless we establish such links I suspect that we will labour in vain. That is why these Local Government comrades are here to listen to ideas which, I am sure, they hoped would have flowed from this debate, which would have stimulated them to further thought about the essential

issues. There cannot be the kind of democracy that so many members of the Opposition spoke about without expanding the Local Government base.

I have heard here a number of criticisms from the other side which only highlighted the very problems I was talking about, namely, that the Councils do not have money, that a few people were there doing nothing, that there was no accountability and all that kind of thing. I discussed these matters in my opening speech I said that they were inherent in the present system. There is nothing we can do about them unless we change the system. If we get the people with the greatest goodwill and ability and put them to run the local government system, they would be able to do nothing because of the uncertainty of finances, and because of the fact that even if you put a million dollars into some areas they are not economically viable. In the final analysis, unless the system permits of mass participation, we would get back into the same difficulties which we have faced over the years and which we face today. So it is wrong to say that the system only needs more people. It does not only need more people, it does not only need new people. It needs changing and with the changes it needs people, more people, new people, however you choose to describe them. It needs a broader base for participation.

I believe that the very contradictions which were inherent in the contributions made by the Leader of the Opposition have informed the thinking of people who have been urging change. The mistake which is being made on the other side is to think that these reforms, these changes, call them what you will, are being made at the instance of the Government or the Party. They are not being made from the top. They are being agitated for from the bottom by the people who have been attempting to manage the system and who know that it is not working.

Then there is this misunderstanding of the nature of the regional system. The Leader of the Opposition says we have the regional system, why not let that work. The regional system has been explained from time to time in the House and outside. The regional system is not intended to replace Local Government, it is not intended to be a substitute for Local Government; it is not intended to be some kind of overshadowing authority which will dwarf or diminish the influence

of Local Government. In his speech to the Second Biennial congress, the Cde. Leader made this point at page 26 of the published Report. It states:

“The Regional Ministry of any given area must always work closely with and co-ordinate all the Party and Government agencies at all levels. This, however, must now dwarf or render impotent any other such agencies especially the Local Government ones.”

But what has in fact happened is that as the regional system developed the very dwarfing or overshadowing has been taking place; and the dwarfing or overshadowing has been taking place because of the way in which the Local Government system is structured. So we need a restructuring which will give local authorities the competence, the responsibility, along with the human, financial and material resources. That is why we say that all these things need to be done. It calls for a lot of work by a lot of people. I know that at a Local Government level, GALA and its affiliates have been doing work not only in terms of conceptualising the new system, but in formalising their ideas into writing and debating and discussing them.

I wish to say finally, that the Party is not saying it is going to impose anything. What I have set out as principles here and what we are discussing with GALA are ideas which will form the basis of proposals to the Constituent Assembly. It is a Constituent Assembly in the final analysis which will decide what form we have. [**Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud:** “The Parliament.”] The Parliament in the final analysis, you are legally right. The Constituent Assembly has the task of formulating the final set of proposals out of the mass of memoranda and evidence and putting up for the consideration of the Parliament a draft Constitution. Parliament could throw it out or change it. But I hope in the Constituent Assembly, the People’s Progressive Party will play its part. It is no use standing up and saying something or the other is no good, that something or the other is no undemocratic. If you are going to fight for the rights of the people, you cannot do so by merely talking at street corners and hoping to create unrest and confusion. You have got to fight for them in the constitutional forums which exist. This gives you an opportunity to influence and form policies; this gives you an opportunity to create

**8.1.79**

**National Assembly**

**5.50 - 6 p.m.**

relevant institutions; this gives you an opportunity to set up the mechanisms for the strengthening of the democratic process.

**6 p.m.**

Cde. Speaker, I believe that this Bill is necessary in order to enable us to proceed with the things which are important in this country, that is, putting in place the arrangements, setting up all the facilities for people to play their part in the work of the Constituent Assembly. Within that framework, we as a nation can devise a constitution which will provide for and guarantee real democracy, that is people's involvement in the management and decision-making functions in the various sectors of national life.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

*Bill read a Second time.*

*Assembly in Committee.*

*Clause 1.*

**The Speaker:** Comrades, you will recall that I made a correction in Clause 1, that is "1979" should be substituted for "1978" in the second line.

*Clause 1 as corrected, agreed to, and ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Clauses 2 and 3 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Clause 4.*

**The Speaker:** In respect of Clause 4, there are some small corrections: substitute “deemed” and “and” for “deemed” and “and” in the sixth line of subsection (1); and substitute “Chairmen” for “Chairman” in the first line of subsection 92).

*Clause 4, as corrected, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Assembly resumed.*

**Cde. Hoyte:** Cde. Speaker, I beg to report that the Local Authorities (Postponement of Elections) Bill 1979 was considered in Committee clause by clause and was passed with corrections. I now propose that the Bill be read the Third time and passed as corrected.

*Question –*

*“That the Bill be read the Third time and passed as corrected.”*

*Assembly divided: Ayes 26, Noes 10, as follows:*

**Ayes**

Cde. Willems  
Cde. Taylor  
Cde. Sukul  
Cde. Sukhu  
Cde. Salim  
Cde. Rayman  
Cde. Ramson  
Cde. Jonas  
Cde. Hussain  
Cde. Gill

**Noes**

Mr. Abraham  
Cde. Sukhai  
Cde. Nokta  
Cde. Dalchand  
Cde. Ally  
Cde. Belgrave  
Cde. Collymore  
Cde. N. Peraud  
Cde. Peepu Daman Persaud  
Cde. Ram Karran - 10

8.1.79

National Assembly

6 – 6.10 p.m.

Cde. Fowler

Cde. Carrington

Cde. Wrights

Cde. Bynoe

Cde. Ambrose

Cde. Ackman

Cde. Durant

Cde. Prashad

Cde. Thomas

Cde. Chowritmootoo

Cde. Nascimento

Cde. Duncan

Cde. Clarke

Cde. Ramsaroop

Cde. Narine

Cde. Hoyte - 26

*Motion carried.*

*Bill, as corrected, considered; read the Third time and passed.*

### **GUYANA FORESTRY COMMISSION BILL 1978**

**The Speaker:** I wish to make some corrections to the Bill which corrections, I think, were circulated.

*Clause 1*

Substitute “1979” for “1978” in the second line.

*Clause 2*

Substitute “Forests” for “Forest” in the last line.

*Clause 4*

Substitute a colon for the semi-colon after “value” in the sixth line of paragraph (f).

*Clause 10*

Delete the comma after “Act” in the third line.

*First Schedule*

**Paragraph 1**

Substitute “appointed” in the third line of sub-paragraph (2).

**Paragraph 4**

Delete “the Commission,” in the fourth line of sub-paragraph (3) Renumber paragraph 4 (1) as sub-paragraph (4).

Renumber paragraph 4 (1) as sub-paragraph (4).

Substitute “Five members of the Commission shall constitute a” for the first line of the renumbered sub-paragraph (4).

Substitute “co-opt” for “coopt” in subparagraph (6).

**Paragraph 8**

Substitute “allowances” for “allowance” in the third line.

**Second Schedule**

**Forest Act (Cap. 67:01)**

Insert closing quotation marks after “Commission” in the amendment to section 5 (1) (b).

**Guyana Timber Export Bond Act (Cap. 67:03)**

Insert “Act” after “Board” in the title.

**Timber Marketing Act (Cap. 67:04)**

Substitute a single closing quotation mark for the double closing quotation marks in the last line of the amendment to section 2.

“A Bill intituled:

An Act to provide for the Establishment and the functions of the Guyana Forestry Commission and for purposes connected therewith.” [**The Minister of Energy and Natural Resources**]

**The Speaker:** Cde. Minister of Energy and Natural Resources.

**6.10 p.m.**

**The Minister of Energy and Natural Resources (Cde. Jack):** Cde. Speaker, Comrades, and hon. Member, the Bill now before this House, intituled the Guyana Forestry Commission bill 1979, is intended as the explanatory memorandum states, to create a body corporate to be known as the Guyana Forestry Commission Bill 1979, is intended as the explanatory memorandum states, to create a body corporate to be known as the Guyana Forestry Commission and the functions as specified in clause 3, particularly, of the Bill, are comprehensive enough to allow for the various activities which it is envisaged this Commission would be engaged in.

The Commission, when established, will take over the function of the Forestry Department and the officers and other employees will become officers and employees of the Commission. Provision is also made for amendment to existing legislation relating to forestry and marketing of timber for regularising the functions of the Commission when it is established.



Cde. Speaker, when the Timber Export Board was established some four years ago, our exports at that time stood at something in the region of \$5 million. Despite the difficulties of 1978 and despite the fact that one of the largest of the timber producing concerns in this country, the Guyana Timbers Limited was out of operations due to a fire which had taken place the previous year, our sales at the end of 1978 had passed the \$10 million mark. It is envisaged that with the plans already in hand, the total amount of sales for 1979 should be in the region of some \$15 million if not more, an increase of something like 50 per cent.

However, it would be true to say that while our sales have been increasing our production has not gone up commensurate with those sales. As a matter of fact, due largely to the fact that Guyana Timbers, which at one time accounted for about 40 per cent of the export trade, was out of operation, the actual production was down. Never-the-less, I think it is a remarkable achievement when one considers that with 40 per cent production out of operation we were still able to maintain the standards which we have maintained.

I am sure that hon. members will be aware of the fact that the Guyana Government has been engaged in plans for the development of a very large and comprehensive forestry complex in the Upper Demerara region, a complex which will cost at the latest estimation something in the region of \$31.8 million (US) or something like \$81 million (Guyana). The plans for this new enterprise are well in hand and we expect to start operations this year. With the commencement of operations, that is, with the commencement of building of this project, we expect to make some rather significant dents in the employment situation as regards forestry workers. The purpose of this Bill is only at one instance related to the Upper Demerara Forestry Project.

Over the years it has occurred to us that if we are to make a thrust in the forestry sector, if we are to get the greatest benefit out of our country forestry resources then the vehicle which we use for the development of those resources would need to be so structured as to allow for long range planning and for acceleration of activity. For this reason, the Forestry Commission which we propose to set up will result in a restructuring of what is at present the Forestry Department

and a division of the Commission into sections dealing with specific areas of forestry development. One of the most important areas to my mind will be the development of a network throughout this country of forestry roads.

During the past year, in association with assistance from CIDA of Canada, we have been able to give some very significant assistance to the forest industry by way of loans for equipment and an amount of something like \$7 million (Canadian) has been expended in this direction. This money has gone primarily into the field of sawmilling equipment and logging equipment but one of the bottle-necks which we do recognise is that unless there is an adequate network of roads then maintenance costs will continue to be high and the life of the equipment which we do manage to get either by way of these loans or by sources, will be very short indeed.

Apart from this, the Government has taken a decision that during the course of this year Government agencies will buy in the case of non-greenheart lumber and timber, mixed tropical hard woods for governmental and State use which have been treated with preservation. There have been two main methods of preservation which the Forestry Department has examined. One is a pressure treatment method and another is the diffusion method and I am advised that the cheaper and more effective and more suitable method in our situation would be preservation by the diffusion method. One of the early tasks of this Forestry Commission will be the promotion of preservation throughout the country so that we could have a greater utilisation of our forestry resources and so that we can encourage people who have traditionally been wedded to greenheart as the only wood which they have any confidence in and who, with the assurance that the other timbers would last as long and would be equally useful, would then be prepared to shift to these other timbers. This would have some effect in bringing down the cost of timber since we would be able to move from the present state of selective logging into a wider utilisation of our forestry resources.

We have been engaged in discussions with certain agencies overseas with a view to developing certain processing facilities in this country so that we could get a greater return from

our forestry resources. Another of the main features of this Commission would be the further examination of the possibilities for such processing. The Forestry Department had embarked some time ago upon a change of land holding from the traditional lease to timber sales agreements. These are agreements whereby every year the logger or sawmiller would indicate the quantum of timber that he requires for his business and upon a proper inventory of an area of land which would supply his needs adequately, he would have a contract with the State organisation for the utilisation of such timber. Now this has been a departure and since we are all accustomed to being reluctant to accept change, there has been some reluctance to accept that change, but I am certain that in the coming year, sawmillers and loggers will find that there is nothing uncertain or nothing chancy about the new methods. They will be advised and invited to hold discussions with the Forest Commission with a view to developing long range planning for inventories of areas of forestry so that they can plan and so that the Government can plan.

**6.20 p.m.**

Apart from this, there is the necessity of looking at the utilisation of various species of wood with a view to entering into the Caribbean market. We have sent out teams of marketing officers into the Caribbean and I am assured that there is a vast market for our timbers in the Caricom area if we are prepared to give guarantees as regards the length of life of the timber that we sell and if we are prepared to give guarantees that the timber we see is treated with preservative. This is one of the things we will have to be looking into very carefully during this year and we believe that the Commission which we propose to establish will assist in the acceleration of this activity.

One of the problems that has faced us in the past is that the Forestry Department has been merely a department of the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources and as such the department has suffered a buffet of budget-making whereby at the end of each year as we come to make the budget we have to cut our corners and cut our shirt, as it were, to suit our cloth. What we are hoping to do is to have this Commission so funded, primarily out of royalties, that it

would have an assured source of funds, so that it can plan intelligently for the benefit of the industry.

There has been a tendency by some members of the industry to expect to get assistance from the State but to pay very little for that assistance. We hope to persuade people in the industry that it is in their own interest to see that the Forestry Commission is well endowed with funds so that it can embark upon proper investigations of the forest resources, so that it can engage in things like building forest roads, so that it can be engaged also in things like looking at preservation, selecting specific species of logs for particular uses such as furniture, etc. It will be necessary to revise the royalty rates in keeping with the requirements of an acceleration in forestry development and we would expect that later in the year such revision will take place.

As I see it, this Commission, properly staffed and properly planned, will go a long way towards making the forestry sector a vibrant and fast-growing sector in our economy which, I am sure, it will become. With these remarks I beg to have the Guyana Forestry Commission Bill read a Second time.

*Question proposed.*

#### **SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER NO. 9(2)**

**The Speaker:** Cde. Ram Karran, I think before you start, perhaps the Leader of the House may wish to move the suspension so that we can continue without stopping.

**The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House (Cde. Ramsaroop):** Cde. Speaker, permit me to move the suspension of Standing Order 9(2) to enable us to complete the final consideration of this measure.

*Question put and agreed to*

*Motion carried.*

**Cde. Ram Karran:** It is not my intention, Your Honour, to speak very lengthily on this measure, nor is it the Opposition's view, in keeping with our policy of critical support, to criticise merely for the sake of criticism. With a measure like this one would naturally like to get some more information from the hon. Minister. Since the Bill does not seem to be controversial in any way, in fact, it would appear that the Minister belatedly –belatedly, I say, advisedly –seeks to build an empire in a department which we have never heard had been functioning properly. In all his lengthy speech, part of which was to read out the explanatory memorandum which we all did, the only thing he seemed to have said which is in relation to the need for the expansion of this, is the fate of the Ministry with respect to budgeting difficulties because I can well understand that there is always competition for money at the preparation of the budget. However, I would like to ask a few more questions. Perhaps the hon. Minister would be kind enough to reply.

I do not wish to go into the details of the Bill, except to look at the omnibus description of it or, rather, the explanation within the Bill embodying so many things that this Commission is going to be responsible for. So many things, with which I agree, but cannot understand how you are going to have competing responsibility with respect to, for instance, the National Parks. I think that the Minister of Health, Housing and Labour has responsibility for the National Parks and buildings at the moment. Maybe the National Parks here have a different definition from the National Parks which the hon. Minister of Health, Housing and Labour has responsibility for.

Another thing one would like to know is why the funding of this responsibility, which is very important, I conceive, cannot be done by the setting up of a Board or some such organisation which has the responsibility and the knowledge of doing these things. Why do you have to go ahead and set up this big organisation calling it a Commission which really will have in its staff the entire Forestry Department? Surely, it has been our experience in the past that the setting up of Corporations, Commissions, Boards and that sort of thing, and these empire-

building activities of these separate organisations, tend to create confusion. For instance, we have the Works and Transport Ministry which is responsible for roads. On top of that we are going to build a new organisation to be responsible for forest roads.

**6.30 p.m.**

I make that comparison because of my experience in the House with respect to the empire building of this Government. The Works and Transport Ministry has all the knowledge, it has all the equipment, it has all the experience, research and all that with respect to roads. The Housing Ministry at one time began to assemble equipment for the construction of roads in housing areas. We have the municipality building roads on the old archaic system getting bricks and covering with bitumen, whereas the Works and Transport Ministry, which has done research, has found that the cheaper material available nearby is the bauxite clay and it makes far better roads.

And so we spend and spend. What kind of road is this Commission going to build? Are we going to employ in addition to forestry officers, silviculturists and the rest of them? Are we going to employ also engineers? Why can't they, for instance, having got the money by loans, or by whatever means, or royalties from timber, or grants from the Government, commission the Works and Transport Ministry to build a set of roads in some areas. This set of roads seems to remind me of a former Member of this House, Mr. D'Aguiar, who used to talk about a magic circle of roads. Have we been taking into account the need for roads in these areas? Have we compared that with water transport? Have we really thought of the cost, what kind of roads, who is going to build them, etc.? surely, the Forestry Ministry can ascertain from the Ministry of Works what type of roads, where you are going to build them, once the money is available, to give them out by contract to be supervised by the Ministry of Works rather than to expand in their empire building, the Parkinson's law to fan out, bearing in mind that all these things cost a tremendous lot of money.

There is one final thing I would like to talk about and that is the question of the Minister advising himself. I have often heard the Prime Minister say, “he who advises himself has a fool for a client.” The Minister is responsible for the appointment of the Chairman but in instances where the Chairman is not appointed, the Minister himself becomes the Chairman. How can the Minister advise himself? The idea of appointing a Commission to be independent and to be knowledgeable in things to advise him can be understood but when he goes like a previous bit legislation and says “if I don’t appoint the Chairman, then I become my own adviser”, seems a little out of the way. The hon. Minister said that people are reluctant to accept change. I am not one of those people and I am sure that my Party is not afraid of change except changes that deprive people of rights. And this is the point in respect to the new system of a year by year allocation of land for foresters. I know there are foresters, millers, big and small with a tremendous lot of equipment, and there are people who use primitive methods. I would like the hon. Minister to tell us how it is going to work out. Let us say that Toolsie Persaud or Guyana Timbers, the giants in the industry, either one has an allocation of 100 acres of land in an area here, and Hamilton or Muhammed, either one has an allocation of land near the allocation previously mentioned, which has transportation problems in relation to its own capital or its area. What happens when either Toolsie Persaud or Guyana Timbers sees an excellent piece of thing and applies for it? What would be the function and how would it be allocated? How would it be decided? I know that this Government has been accused – I am not saying that it is guilty – of taking sides for big businesses. How do we know that justice and all that would prevail and influences are not going to affect the situation?

One final point, Cde. Speaker. This House has repeatedly heard of Government’s proposals, not only this Government but previous P.N.C. Governments, about its activities on silvi culture. The hon. Minister in the Bill talks about “other related matters” and I would have thought of silvi culture, particularly in the areas that have been deprived of their vegetation by industrial activities in Linden. I know that more developed and progressive countries have been insisting on operators in these areas replacing the vegetation that is removed in this way. This possibly might be one of the activities of this Commission but that has not been dealt with. I

think that is a sore point in our country particularly in relation to those areas where we are building deserts. We have succeeded in establishing a desert in the vicinity of the Linden Highway. The Minister talks about environment and pollution. I think those are aspects that need more emphasis. The hon. Minister ought to have mentioned them in his presentation of the Bill.

Finally I want to say that we see no reason to oppose this measure and since it is necessary, I think it ought to have been brought long before. It took the hon. Minister a fairly long time to come to this conclusion and having come to it he presents a measure here that does not seem to have been presented in such a manner to satisfy the House that the hon. Minister knows everything that should be known about it, especially since he is going to be an adviser to himself on this Committee.

**The Speaker:** Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud.

**Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud:** I have spoken before in this House on our undoubted resources in this area. I think to be more specific, an area of 70,000 square miles of our 83,000 square miles is under forest. That would be roughly about 83 per cent. This is an area that can produce and enrich us in the local sense and generate funds in terms of foreign exchange, if we can increase our exports. The figures given by the hon. Minister show, undoubtedly, progress. But he must concede that we should have been in a better position after fourteen years. I have, from time to time, referred to the weakness that existed and the need to move very speedily to arrest the situation so that we can really better our economic position.

At last some step is being taken and, as the speaker before me said, we are always willing to support measures that are in the interest of the country. Probably the Minister will be disposed to tell us what amount is collected in royalties each year. I would have thought that in a debate like this he would have had that information because he has got to talk about Government's approach and so on, so that we can see what we get at the moment, or let him give us figures for



a period so that we will be able to assess what is being done in the forestry area. There are difficulties at the moment, there can be no doubt.

**6.40 p.m.**

Cde. Speaker, with respect to reforestation, one of the problems that I recall which still exists is the transport problem where loggers have to go deeper and deeper into the forest. As a result, that contributed to higher cost of our timber. In fact, when people come from abroad and they look at our wooden buildings they are impressed because we have the facilities, but one necessarily must look at the cost when that examination is carried out. Several factors may be involved and I am sure that they can move into more scientific development of the forestry with a view to reducing cost of production generally and making prices more reasonable for those who would wish to build homes for themselves. So, this is an area that helps locally in the economic sense, generating foreign exchange and thirdly, helping our people to house themselves. If it is neglected we would have been doing a great disservice to that segment, to our people and undoubtedly, to the economy.

Cde. Speaker, the first schedule deals with the composition of the Commission. I want to refer to (c) which states:

“not more than twelve other persons appointed by the Minister.”

That is, assuming that the Minister has the right to appoint a Chairman and if no Chairman is appointed that he himself becomes the Chairman and the amendment says, of course, he would not have to seek the approval of the Minister. In fact, if the Bill remained as it is, it would be a joke. He would have been seeking the approval of himself, whoever that Minister may be, from time to time. I am concerned with the composition of the Board because we are talking of involvement and I would wish the Minister to state in this House this afternoon because we would like producers to be involved, we would like the workers to be involved. Our concern is

the way the thing is managed after its creation because the country is not without experience; the House is not without experience and information of mismanagement. We do not want this Commission to be another, if I may put it this way, “P.N.C. creature”. We want it to be something that has people with experience, with knowledge and people who are directly involved. Will there be positive workers’ involvement? Let them be involved. Let the producers be involved because clause 1 (2) of the First Schedule states:

“The persons appointed by the Minister as members of the Commission pursuant to sub-paragraph (1) shall be persons who, in his opinion, are qualified for appointment by reason of their experience of, and shown capacity in, matters relating to the functions of the Commission or matters which will be advantageous to the Commission in the performance of its functions.”

Well, we want to ensure that the Minister does not say “Look, those are men who, I feel, are experienced enough” because in other institutions – and one has to refer to the Rice Marketing Board – that is not so. Without casting any aspersions, the person who heads that Board does not know anything about rice. He has been well known for years as a business man operating in a field that is totally strange to rice and the rice industry. And, these are some of the reasons why the country is in such a bad way economically. No one denies international problems, no one denies that you might have various types of influences both internally and externally, but while these influences are there, we must so equip ourselves and arrange our affairs that we will be able not only to surmount the problems but to cover come and do so positively. Guyana has the resources and the potential to do those things but we have not been doing them; we have been failing.

I have been looking over the figures and I do not want to bore the House with any of them. As I said, they are not very attractive, while there has been improvement. I looked at the figure in one area which showed some seven million feet then there was decrease and that kind of thing. I have read the report of the Commission of Enquiry headed by David Ford and so I am not unaware of what is taking place and what the recommendations of that Commission are.

Perhaps the Minister could bear in mind these observations that we make and at this point in time ensure that the interest of the industry is placed first and that one excludes from one's consideration petty political considerations and move really to establish the institution with a view to allowing it to function dynamically. Then we would have no quarrel. If not, what we will have is another bureaucratic institution, wasting money and not making any progress. That would not be a step in the right direction.

Cde. Speaker, I hope that the Minister will bear these points in mind and let us know what would be his primary consideration in setting up the Board, indeed, what the figures are in so far as royalty is concerned and what is his projection. I think Guyana Timbers Limited was mentioned and I think that company holds the largest area of about 768,000 acres. If I am not right, I can recheck but I am just speaking from memory. I know that it is not operating fully at the moment. I note too, that it is to set up new equipment and all of that. But even when it was operating in full, my information is that it was losing money running into some \$1 million per year or possibly more. That is now taken over by the Government.

Again, we need not only to ensure that the right people constitute the Commission and run it efficiently, but it is vitally necessary to look into those institutions that have been taken over and nationalised by the Government to see that those are run efficiently too. If not, instead of the segment becoming visible, the possibility is, viable as the resources are, you can lose. So, I thought that I ought to allude the Minister to that fact. I think those are the points I wish to raise this afternoon.

**Cde. Jack (replying):** Cde. Speaker, I deliberately made my presentation short so as to allow the hon. Members to ask questions and to raise issues in their interventions which I am now in a position to answer. First of all, on the question of national parks, there is a proviso on page 4, clause 4(f) which clearly indicates that there will be no over-lapping between the concept of the national parks, which would come under the aegis of the Forestry Commission, and the

national parks which would fall under the purview of the National Parks Commission and it is there set out in the words:

“Provided that the functions conferred on the Commission by this paragraph shall not derogate from the functions conferred on the National Trust and the National Parks Commission by the National Trust Act and that National Parks Commission Act, respectively;”

So, it is quite clear there that what is contemplated is not that there should be any over-lapping in authority between this Commission and the present parks that come under the authority of the National Parks Act. What we are thinking of is a national park such as is set up at Kaieteur. Some people may not know, but there is a national park at Kaieteur and we have been advised by the previous Conservator of Forest of other areas where it would be in the interest of the State to have national parks established.

**6.50 p.m.**

A question has been asked, why set up a Commission and why we could not set up a Board. It really would not have mattered if, in fact, you set up a Board and created a corporate entity, whether you call it Board, Commission or Corporation. What is intended here is to give a certain independence and a certain authority to the Commission so that it can act like a Corporation with some degree of speed. In this context I must point out that far from wanting to build an empire, one is divesting oneself of an empire. The authority of the Minister will be lessened in as much as some of the things that come directly to him now will be handled by the Commission. So really, if one wants to speak of empire, then I can say that the Ministry is in a state of decolonisation, rather than empire-building. We are not building any empire at all.

However, I think I may mention it now, there is an amendment which I am going to be proposing which, because of the fact that the Chairman may be the Minister at some time, there would not be the necessity, when the Chairman is the Minister, for matters passed by the Commission still to go back to the Minister again. Let me explain what the Ministry has in

mind. The Ministry does not want to take over excess burdens. But it is felt that in the formative stage of the Commission that it would be advisable to have the guiding hand of the Minister in relation to the principles, the activities and the setting up of the Commission, and that the discussions which will take place with regard to staffing, etc., can be undertaken expeditiously. In any case, it has been our experience that wherever you have to choose a Chairman, if you are going to choose a good man you are going to take somebody who is already recognised as being a good man and, therefore, already burdened with responsibilities of one kind or another.

In the case of the Guyana Timber Export Board, for instance, we have had to call upon the services of Cde. Carmichael, who is the Chief Marketing Officer of BIDCO and ask him to double up, as it were, and carry out the functions of Chairman. It is not an easy thing to pick a Chairman for a Corporation, or something like this Commission, off the shelf. One of the problems you will face is this, people who are knowledgeable in the timber industry would be either members of the Forestry Department, and the head of that will be the Conservator. Unless you make him the Chairman, you will have a situation in which he may find that he is head of the department but some other person junior to him in his department is the Chairman. If you did not take somebody knowledgeable in the timber industry from the Government side, then you will have to choose one of the persons who already are engaged in the timber industry. Here you run up against the possibility of a conflict of interests. There are many people I can think of in the private sector who could be suitable to be the Chairman of such a Commission, but unless they were at the time divested of their own business interest, there may be a question of clash of interests if there were made Chairman. So while we are looking towards getting the most suitable person to choose for Chairman, it is felt that the Minister could carry out the function. Let me assure this House that particularly this Minister has no desire to add to his very narrow shoulders extra burdens of Chairmanship of any kind of Corporation whatsoever.

I mentioned forestry roads specifically because I think it has been an area where we have been efficient. I pointed out it is no point supplying the industry with equipment to run on roads and then not assisting in developing the roads. Only today some of the sawmillers from the

Corentyne paid a visit to my Ministry to discuss the question of assistance in connection with a road which should open up a significant area for forestry exploitation. We have decided that one of the very first things which the Forestry Commission would do would be to turn its attention to a comprehensive development of a road network to accelerate forestry extraction. The question is do we have to set up a completely new road-building agency? This is not necessary. We may in some cases where it is felt most appropriate to do so, build roads ourselves. But the suggestion made by Cde. Ram Karran that we could use the services of the Ministry of Works and Transport and any other Ministry that is already engaged in road-building, that suggestion I would like to assure this House has already been considered by us. As a matter of fact, one particular road moving in that direction is already under consideration so that there is really no conflict whatsoever on that question.

I think what I have already said about the need for the Minister to chair the Commission for a short period of time covers the question about advising himself. The Minister will not be advising himself. The Commission will include, among other people the Conservator of Forest and other persons who are knowledgeable in the forest industry and he will take advice from them, whether he takes it sitting in the Chairman's chair at the board room of the Commission or sitting in the Minister's chair at the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources. He will take advice.

The question of a year allocation is something I am very glad has been raised, as it gives one an opportunity of laying at rest some fears. First of all, the Timber Sale Agreement envisages a contract with the Commission or the State and some private producer of logs for a period of, say, ten years. This will be done upon a request by the logger for a yearly quantum of logs projected over a period of, as I said, ten years. It is expected that an inventory of the area will be undertaken and that an allocation of specific blocks of the area will be set out so that from year to year the logger or the sawmiller can utilise all of the species or almost all of the species that are merchantable within that block.

This is where it would differ from the lease, that when that time has passed and when he is finished using that area, it will be available to other people who may want to do other things there. The lease arrangement which obtained in the past allowed someone to hold, say, 100,000 acres or 200,000 acres and even although he was not using or may have worked out a particular portion of it he still held it, no one else could use it. This was particularly detrimental to forestry development when one considers that the practice of selective logging, particularly for greenheart, has been almost a sickness with the industry. A man would go, select just the greenheart from the area, leave the wallaba, leave the crabwood, leave the determa, and everything, he is not using it anymore, because he is concentrating on greenheart, and no one else can use it either. Our position is this, we are very happy if he will use the greenheart and if he will use the other species. So long as he is prepared to use what is there, he can have it. But when he has decided that what is left is of no interest to him, at that stage the State would reserve the right to put somebody else in if that other person has an interest in using what is left.

We have had extensive discussions with the industry on this and we do not believe that there would be any great difficulty in coming to an understanding in what we set out to do. I want to give the assurance to this House and the public at large, that as far as we are concerned we are prepared to ensure that the investor will have at all times sufficient lumber available to him to keep his operation in full-time activity. In other words, whether he wants to run one shift or two shifts, we accept the proposition that he must have sufficient forest; that he is not short. But we do not accept the proposition that he must have five times that amount. Hold on to it to prevent other people from using it, while he is not using it. That is the position.

**7 p.m.**

Now, there is a section of silviculture and that section will become a department of silviculture under the Commission. While I share the sentiments of the hon. Member Ram Karran about the necessity and desirability of replanting and reforestation some of the areas at Linden which have been worked out by mining, I must confess that we are not in a financial position at

this time to undertake the massive financial outlay which would be necessary to carry out reforestation in that area. It is something that we will plan for but it is certainly not something that I would think in the present financial circumstances of this country could be justified for an allocation of funds.

Silviculture as we see it must concentrate here upon developing our indigenous species and also producing species from abroad which could grow economically under our conditions. One of the things that face us is that there is very little research done on reforesting lands which contain white sand. Many of the plantations which have been reforested have been plantations on brown sand and other soils. There is a paucity of knowledge about the efficacy of reforestation activities on the white sand area. This is one of the things which the silviculturists will be looking into.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud wanted to know the amount collected in royalties. It is in the vicinity of about \$½ million per year. In my view, having regard to the fact that the royalty rates have not been changed for the last thirty years, it represents an inadequate return on the exploitation of a national resource. One must remember, having regard to what I have just said that the replanting on the white sand is in its infancy, that unlike other countries there is no reforestation legislation in this country, so that a logger is not compelled as he is in most other countries of the world to replant when he cuts, contrary to the injunction in the Bible that one should not reap where one has not sown. The timber dealer or the logger is allowed in this instant case to reap where he has not sown and not to replant as well. That being the case we do realise that something has to be done urgently with regard to making royalties more commensurate with the value of a national product, a national resource which is owned, as I said, not by the logger as such but by the nation as a whole.

With regard to reforestation, we are going to be pursuing this question along with assistance which we will be getting from agencies abroad including C.I.D.A. It was said that loggers have to go deeper and deeper into the forest but this is largely because loggers go for



only one species, that is greenheart. There are many areas which are supposed to be worked-out forest but which have an abundance of merchantable timber which the logger will not cut because of the particular attraction of greenheart. It is true, however, that in many cases if he is to utilise the other species he will have to go into preservation and in this context we have an order already, a preservation plan, and we have a kiln on order. We are getting assistance both from C.I.D.A. and the U.N. and I understand that a U.N. expert is on his way to the country at the moment.

A question was raised about the composition of the Board. I myself was a little puzzled at the fear expressed about the composition of the Board. The Timber Export Board which was set up by my Ministry does in fact, have representatives from the industry and it also has sitting on the Board, a representative from the workers. Therefore, I fail to see why there should be this apprehension that one would not want to take into account the legitimate interest which may reflect on the Board. I will not say at this stage whether there will be or will not be representatives of workers or representatives of private industry. What I will be prepared to say is that the history of the behaviour of the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources should give no cause for either speculation or alarm in this regard, so I need not mention or go into any comparisons about other institutions where this does not obtain. It does obtain in the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources.

The figure 768 acres was mentioned. This is not accurate. When this G.T.L. was owned by C.D.C. they had something like 700,000 or 800,000 or perhaps 900,000 acres in tow large blocks, one in the Bartica area and one in the Winiperu area. Since then, the larger of the blocks was given up at the time of the take-over by the State of the G.T.L. holdings. The G.T.L. holdings should be something in the region of 300,000 acres and there are other privately owned timber producers who have had areas of approximately the same size.

I think, Cde. Speaker, that that in effect covers the salient points which were raised and I trust that I have answered them to the satisfaction of the members who have raised them.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

*Bill read a Second time.*

*Assembly in Committee.*

*Clauses 1 to 3 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Clause 4.*

**Cde. Jack:** Cde. Chairman, I beg to move the following Amendment:

That Clause 4 be renumbered as Clause 4(1) and the following be inserted as subsection (2) –

“(2) Where the exercise of any function by the Commission under this Act or any other law is subject to the approval of the Minister, it shall not be necessary to obtain that approval if the Minister is the Chairman of the Commission.”

*Amendment proposed, put, and agreed to.*

*Clause 4, as amended, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Clauses 5 to 35 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*First and Second Schedules agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Bill reported with an amendment to clause 4; as amended, considered, read the Third time, and passed.*

**8.1.79**

**National Assembly**

**7 – 7.10 p.m.**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**RESOLVED**, “That this Assembly do now adjourn to a date to be fixed.”

*[The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House]*

**Adjourned accordingly at 7.17 p.m.**

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