

National Assembly Debates

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

19TH SITTING

2.00 PM

Thursday, 6th December, 2001

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (68)

Speaker (1)

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

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

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

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

*Non-Elected Minister

**Elected Member of The United Force

Members of the Opposition (30)

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

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

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

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

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

Mr Ravindra Dev, M.P.

OFFICERS

Mr Frank A. Narain, C.C.H., Clerk of the National Assembly
Mr Sherlock E. Isaacs, Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly
- (Absent-on-Leave)
Maurice B Henry, Executive Secretary of the National Assembly

PRAYERS

The Clerk read the Prayers

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Leave

Hon Members, leave has been granted to the Hon. Members Clement Rohee, Deryck Bernard, Vincent Alexander, Volda Lawrence and Lurlene Nestor for today's sitting.

Condolences to the Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly

Hon. Members, I wish to inform you of the passing in the United States of America of the mother of Mr Sherlock Isaacs, Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly. The body is expected to arrive in Guyana shortly for burial here. Mr Isaacs is, therefore, on special leave in connection with the arrangements.

Assisting at the table is Mr Maurice Henry, former Deputy Clerk and now Executive Secretary to the Constitutional Reform Secretariat, a distinguished person known to most of you.

On behalf of the Members of the Assembly and myself, I place on record and convey our deepest condolences to Mr Sherlock Isaacs

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS, ETC.

(1) By the **Speaker (Chairman of the Committee of Selection)**.

Minutes of the Proceedings of the 3rd Meeting of the Committee of Selection which was held on 29th November, 2001.

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By the **Minister of Finance**

*Constitutional Offices (Remuneration of Holders) Order
2001.*

By the **Minister of Labour, Human Services and Social Security**

*Annual Report of the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund
Committee for the year 2000.*

By the **Hon. Dr Leslie S. Ramsammy, Chairman of the Special
Select Committee on the Medical Practitioners (Amendment) Bill
2001**

*Report of the Special Select Committee on the Medical
Practitioners Amendment Bill 2001 - Bill No. 13 of 2001.*

PUBLIC BUSINESS

MOTIONS

**1. BY THE DEPUTY SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL
ASSEMBLY (MRS CLARISSA S. RIEHL)**

DEATH OF MR ARTHUR ALONSO ALEXANDER, FORMER

DEPUTY SPEAKER

BE IT RESOLVED:

*That this National Assembly record its deep regret at
the death of Mr Arthur Alonzo Alexander and pay tribute
to the dedicated and distinguished service which he
rendered to Guyana and to its Parliament as a Member
and Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly from 24th
November, 1992 to 25th February, 1998.*

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

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That this National Assembly direct that an expression of its sympathy be conveyed to his bereaved family and relatives.

The Speaker: Hon. Members, we will take the first Motion on the Supplementary Order Paper on the passing of Mr Arthur Alexander. **This Motion** is under the name of the Hon. Member, Mrs Clarissa Riehl. Mrs Riehl you may proceed.

Mrs Clarissa S. Riehl: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I stand to move the Motion in my name in this Honourable House here today.

No man is an island entirely of itself, every man is a piece of the Continent, a part of the main. If a cloud is washed away by the sea, you are of the less, as well as if a premonitory world, as well as if a manner of thy friends, or of thine own world. Any man's death diminishes me because I am involved in mankind and therefore it never tend to know for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee.

The words by the poet John Dunn, written in the year 1624, in his devotions upon emergent occasions.

Last Monday afternoon, the bells of Trinity Methodist Church tolled for Arthur Alonzo Alexander, as the last of his mortal remains were conveyed by his brother in a small box down the isle of the church. He exited his earthly life without fanfare in his 64th year.

He was born on the 20th January, 1937 at Cumberland, Canje, Berbice. Like many of us Berbicians at birth, he tarried only a while in that ancient county. In his case, the tarrying wasshort indeed, a mere eleven months, as it was at that very, very tender age, that he was taken to Parade Street, Kingston, to the home of his maternal grandmother and cousins and here he spent his formative years and grew into manhood.

My introduction to Arthur Alonzo Alexander, known to his friends and to the legal fraternity as Zander, occurred in the academic

year 1973/1974, when I enrolled to do Part I of the LLB Degree at the University of Guyana in the UG/UWI Law Programmes.

Mr Alexander was a Lecturer/Tutor in Contract Law and Legal Systems and Methods in the Faculty of Social Sciences in Law at the University of Guyana. Later, he was to become Assistant Dean of this Faculty.

As our teacher, he challenged us, he analysed for us and constantly, *constantly*, called us to research and analysis, which he saw as the twin pillars of good legal scholarship. Even in this embryonic stage of our legal development, it became evident to our small group that here was indeed a fine legal mind.

Very soon comparisons were being made of the superior methods and teachings of Mr Alexander over that of our other gentlemen/lecturers, who inflicted upon us endless hours of note taking, which notes were readily detected to be a mere regurgitation of chapter after chapter of Smith and Hogan, the basic Criminal law textbook for first year law students.

Arthur Alonzo Alexander exuded that gentility of spirit of the truly educated man, whose inner being had been refined by the learning he had been possessed of and of which he generously shared with others. He was the essence of consideration, not given to arrogance or mean spiritedness. One could easily have mistaken his easy going nature and amiable character for a lack-lustre and non-descript background. One would have been seriously in error.

He was educated at the University of London from whence he was conferred with the Bachelor of Law Degree (Hon). Two years after his Bachelor's Degree from the London School of Economics, he obtained a Master's Degree majoring in Taxation, Revenue and Company Law. He was engaged in preparation for his doctoral thesis in labour law, when he abruptly changed course and returned to Guyana in 1973, taking up the aforementioned position at the

University of Guyana.

Possessed as he was, of a keen legal mind and being engaged in the pursuit of training of lawyers, he soon turned his attention to becoming one himself.

In 1980, he left the academic life and entered Hugh Wooding Law School in Trinidad, graduating two years later with a legal education certificate from that institution.

His was a life predicated on service to his country and its people, service which culminated in his elevation to this Honourable House during the currency of the Sixth Parliament.

Before leaving Guyana to pursue tertiary education abroad, he served as a school teacher both at the primary level at Abram's Zuil Methodist School in the Essequibo and at the secondary level, he was a teacher at the Guyana Oriental College.

When he returned to Guyana in 1973, he became a prominent figure on and off campus. He was Secretary of the UG Staff Association and engrossed himself in its activities serving on many delegations of the Guyana Trades Union Council. His knowledge of Labour Law served him in good stead in his trade union activities and throughout his life he continued to render free legal service to any trade union only for the asking.

Even though his legal training might have led him in the direction of a lucrative civil practice, he gravitated more towards the criminal law. I believe that this was more by design rather than by accident for there resided in his breast, a great need to serve his fellow humans especially the disadvantaged.

He worked in the criminal sessions appearing for the poor and down-trodden who could not afford high-priced lawyers. Often he worked for pepper-corned fees or for a mere promise of payment of fees, a promise seldom honoured after the case was over. The feeling

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among some of his colleagues was that he was being taken advantage of by some of his clients, but the belief is equally shared that his was a genuine altruism and fees were merely incidental.

When spoken to on a number of occasions during his Parliamentary life about the acquisition of an automobile, his answer to me was always that if his clients would pay him, he might be able to afford one. However, his notariety as a bad driver was legendary and it was a standing joke among his friends that he crashed every vehicle that he ever owned.

Arthur Alonzo Alexander entered Parliament of Guyana on the 24th day of November, 1992. He served as Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly until the 25th day of February, 1998. During the Sixth Parliament, he was an MP and in those days, we had a shadow Cabinet with one of its responsibilities being Labour, Human Services and Social Security. That was the designation of the Ministry that he was shadowing. I believe that the Hon Dr Jeffrey was then Minister.

He participated fully in the life and work of this august body. In 1996, in the budget debate, he called upon the government to formulate a policy on Amerindian Affairs. He spoke frequently on youth issues, which in those early years of this Administration were being relegated to the back burners as he saw it.

In the 1990s, during the currency of the Sixth Parliament also, he represented the People's National Congress on a Parliamentary delegation, headed by the then Speaker, the Hon. Dereck Jagan, to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Meeting in Sri Lanka.

Mr Speaker, some say that he was generous through a fault, but was he without fault? There was a great predilection for the bottle, but he strove valiantly to ensure that this weakness did not interfere unduly with his commitment to his work.

Before his passing, he spent many months in and out of hospital in London at the expense of kind friends. This in itself is a testament

to the character of the man who gave generously of himself and in the final analysis received uncommon generosity in return.

Arthur Alonzo Alexander with all his human frailties was a fine specimen of the human race. In our Society today, where greed, crudity, rudeness abound, he stood out as a true gentleman. Our lives are enriched for having known him and his passing as the great poet says, diminishes each and all of us. May he rest in peace.

Mr Speaker, I now move that this National Assembly record its deep regret at the death of Mr Arthur Alonzo Alexander and pay tribute to the dedicated and distinguished service which he rendered to Guyana and to its Parliament as a Member and Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly from 24th November, 1992 to 25th February, 1998. And I further move that this National Assembly direct that an expression of its sympathy be conveyed to his bereaved family and relatives.

The Speaker: Hon. Members, the Motion is proposed.

The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs.

Hon Reepu Daman Persaud: Mr Speaker, permit me the opportunity to associate the Government with the Motion.

Death is an inevitable experience, inescapable. At the time of death an individual's life is recounted and one admires when one finds in the life of someone a readiness and a willingness to give of his talent, his knowledge, his scholarship and experience. Arthur Alexander obviously had those attributes.

I want this afternoon, to state that I knew him very well. We interacted, we spoke freely and I found him to be a fine gentleman. Who is without weakness? Who is without frailties? I suppose though I am Hindu, the biblical quotation, *he that is without sin let him cast the first stone.*

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Arthur will be remembered - he was likable, he was a good debator. I support the Motion of condolences and the expression of sympathy on behalf of the Government.

The Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Member.

The Hon. Member Mrs Sheila Holder.

Mrs Sheila V.A. Holder: Mr Speaker, it is my duty to add my words of support of this Motion. I regretfully do not know Mr Alexander, but the fact that he was a Member of this Honourable House, indicated that he was someone willing to give service to his fellow man and to his country. For that we are grateful and having listened to Mrs Clarissa Riehl talk so valiantly about the gentleman, I believe that we have missed something in not having known him personally.

I rise, on our side of the House, to be associated with the Motion and to express our condolences to his family.

The Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Member.

Motion put and carried.

The Speaker: Will Members kindly stand for one minute as a mark of respect?

[Members stand in silence for one minute]

Thank you, Hon. Members.

2. CONSIDERATION OF FINANCIAL PAPER No. 2/2001

BE IT RESOLVED:

That this Assembly approve of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 2/2001 - Supplementary Estimates (Current and Capital) totalling \$742,265,595 - for the period 5th July, 2001 to 9th November, 2001- Advances made from the Contingencies Fund.

The Speaker: Hon Members, we will now deal with Item 1 on our main Order Paper, which is the consideration of the Financial Paper 2/2001. The Assembly will resolve itself into Committee of Supply to consider this Financial Paper.

In Committee

The Chairman: The Hon. Minister of Finance, you may now proceed.

Hon. Saisnarine Kowlessar: Mr Chairman, in accordance with article 171 (2) of the Constitution I signify that Cabinet has recommended for consideration by the National Assembly the Motion for the approval of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 2/2001, Schedule of Supplementary Provisions for Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$742,265,595 for the period 5th July, 2001 to 9th November, 2001 - Advances made from the Contingencies Fund, and I now move the Motion.

Question proposed.

The Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Member. We will now consider the proposals in the Financial Paper. I will like to draw your attention to Section A, Current Estimates, Page 1. Any questions? *[Pause]*

The Hon. Member, Mr Winston Murray.

Mr Winston S. Murray: Mr Chairman, Item 4, Section A, is the Minister aware that Chart of Accounts No. 232 relates to Subsidies and Contributions to Foreign Organisations, and if so, could he explain why, in this particular case, this item is put under Chart of Accounts 232?

The Chairman: The Hon. Member, Mr Hoyte.

Mr Hugh Desmond Hoyte: Mr Chairman, Item 3: Can the Hon. Minister say, what are the total arrears to GPL and secondly, if he could give us a breakdown showing the various Agencies which are

alleged to owe this amount of \$50 Million?

The Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Member. Any other questions?
[Pause]

The Hon. Minister.

Hon Saisnarine Kowlessar: Mr Chairman, in response to the question by the Hon. Member, Mr Murray, I wish to apologise for the error there, it should not have been *Local* it should have been *Foreign Organisation*. So I think that will take care of that question.

Secondly, the question by the Hon. Member, My Hoyte, I cannot at this time give the total arrears of the Government to GPL as we are still working on the numbers. I promise to give to him or to the Members of the National Assembly the breakdown of the various Agencies, but generally it has to do with the Government Agencies.

The Chairman: The Hon. Member, Mr Murray.

Mr Winston S. Murray: May I ask a supplementary question? Could the Minister then say, given his answer to Item 4, to what International Organisation was a donation to the Indian Earthquake Fund sent?

Hon. Saisnarine Kowlessar: Mr Chairman, the Indian Earthquake Fund was being run by the Indian High Commission.

The Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Member. Any other questions?
[Pause]

Hon. Members, please turn to page 2, which has Items 8 to 10 on the Current Estimates. Any questions?

Hon. Winston S. Murray: Item 9 - Could the Hon. Minister kindly inform this House in respect of Chart of Accounts 184, what of this supplementary provision of \$3 million is intended for preparation of the elections petition and to whom is whatever that sum being

paid?

The Chairman: Any other questions? *[Pause]*

The Hon. Minister.

Hon. Saisnarine Kowlessar: Mr Chairman, the bulk of the funds is for the Elections Petition. I do not have the exact number.

The other question has to do with the name of the contractor. Is that the question?

Mr Winston S. Murray: Mr Chairman, I don't know if it is a contractor, but I am asking to whom, Sir? Is this money of \$3 million (he said almost all of it) being paid for the preparation of Elections Petition?

Hon. Saisnarine Kowlessar: Mr Chairman, I do not have the name of the contractor at this moment, but I will supply that.

The Chairman: Any further questions? *[Pause]*

Hon. Members, may I draw your attention to Section B, Capital Estimates.

The Hon. Member Mr Murray.

Mr Winston S. Murray: Item 8, Section B: There is a supplementary of \$13.5 million being requested, could the Minister please indicate whether the National Exhibition Centre is a Government Agency and if so, on what basis was GUYEXPO being refunded a sum of \$3.5 million?

The Chairman: The Hon. Minister. Sorry, the Hon. Member, Mr Hoyte.

Mr Hugh Desmond Hoyte: Mr Chairman, Item 12, Subhead 45012 - Could the Hon. Ministers say whether the amount sought represents

the total market value [*Pause*]

Sorry Mr Chairman.

The Chairman: The Hon. Minister.

Hon Saisnarine Kowlessar: The question was whether the National Exhibition Centre is a Government Agency. The answer is *Yes* and prior to August 2001, GUYEXPO was in charge of its own funds.

The Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Members. This completes consideration of the Financial Paper. I will now put the Motion which is, that this National Assembly approve the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 2/2001 - Supplementary Estimates (Current and Capital) totalling - \$742,265,595, for the period 5th July, 2001 to 9th November, 2001 - Advances made from the Contingencies Fund.

Question put and agreed to.

Assembly Resumes

The Speaker: The Hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon Saisnarine Kowlessar: Mr Speaker, I beg to report that the Committee of Supply considered Financial Paper No 2/2001 and approved of the proposals set out therein. I now move that the Assembly doth agree with the Committee on the said resolution.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried

3. CONSIDERATION OF FINANCIAL PAPER NO. 3/2001

BE IT RESOLVED:

That this Assembly approve of the proposals set out in

Financial Paper No. 3/2001 - Supplementary Estimates (Current and Capital) totalling \$7,405,529,861 - for the period ending 31st December, 2001.

The Speaker: Hon. Members, we will now deal with Item 2 on the main Order Paper, which is the consideration of Financial Paper No. 3/2001. The Assembly will resolve itself into Committee of Supply to consider Financial Paper No. 3/2001.

In Committee

The Chairman: The Hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Saisnarine Kowlessar: Mr Chairman, in accordance with Article 171(2) of the Constitution I signify that Cabinet has recommended for consideration by the National Assembly the Motion for the approval of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 3/2001, Schedule of Supplemental Provisions for Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$7,405,529,861 for the period ending 2001-12-31 and I now move the Motion.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Question proposed.

The Chairman: Hon. Members, we will now consider the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 3/2001, Section A, Current Estimates, page 1.

The Hon. Member, Mr Murray.

Mr Winston S. Murray: Mr Chairman, Item 2, Chart of Accounts 231: Is the Minister aware that the supplementary provision being sought is more than twice the original voted provision? And could he explain how that could come about, when exports of rice to the European Union would be less in 2001 than in 2002? Whether in those circumstances there has been any increase in the levy, which

means that there is a higher sum to be refunded? And since there has been no increase in quantity, does he agree that that is the only basis on which there could be such re-doubling of a provision? And whether he is exercising the necessary care and attention to ensure that these refunds are being made in respect of bona fide transactions given this level?

The Chairman: The Hon. Member, Mr Hoyte.

Mr Hugh Desmond Hoyte: Mr Chairman, could the Hon. Minister explain how the new GMC is assisting copra farmers? I refer to Chart of Accounts 231.

The Chairman: The Hon. Member, Mr Ivor Allen.

Mr Ivor Allen: Further to the question of the Hon. Member Mr Hoyte, could the Hon. Minister say, in relation to Item 3, Chart of Accounts 231, in which areas of Guyana would the copra farmers benefit and further, if the \$4.2 million asked for is adequate to meet the current needs of copra farmers given the dilemma of the copra industry across the country?

The Chairman: The Hon. Member, Mrs Sheila Holder.

Mrs Sheila V.A. Holder: Mr Chairman, I refer to Item 1, Chart of Accounts 172 - Electricity Charges: I see in the budgetary allocations some forty per cent increase had been made to accommodate increases in electricity charges, yet I see an additional sum of a large amount here. I wonder if this is related to inadequate provision in the budget or what would the Minister account for in this large amount? Could he give me the details please?

The Chairman: The Hon. Minister.

Hon. Saisnarine Kowlessar: Mr Chairman, in relation to the question by the Hon. Member Mr Murray, it is accurate to say that the sum being asked here now is double that in the voted provision, but not

all the funds allocated for in the voted provision was for the rice levy, only about \$50 million was for the rice levy, the others were for the local organisations, like the GRA, Guyana Revenue Authority and so on. So that sum is not totally for the rice levy.

The second question had to do with electricity. The increase being sought now is because of under projections, increases in rates as well as increased use of electricity over the period.

Mr Winston S. Murray: Mr Chairman, a supplementary question, please: Mr Chairman, does the Minister not agree that the revised provision for 2000 for the Guyana Rice Development Board was \$1,800,000 and that even using that figure, we are about doubling what is being sought for at this time? Can the Minister, if he agrees, explain how that could be possible, in circumstances in which Guyana would be exporting less rice in 2001 to the European Union? How does that come about?

Hon. Saisnarine Kowlessar: Mr Chairman, a large percentage, about ninety per cent of that sum was in respect of cheques that had to be refunded for the preceding year, about \$900 million.

Mr Winston S. Murray: Mr Chairman, I do not want to appear to be pressing the Minister, but, Sir, I believe that great care has to be taken in the administration of this refund operation. Even if you took \$900 million away from this sum, you are left with approximately \$3 billion which is at least \$1 billion more than the \$1.8 billion plus the \$900 million which is \$2.7 billion. You are still left with a further billion dollars. How could you be paying out additional refunds - higher levels of refunds - in a year in which exports to the Union would have fallen? That is an incomprehensible mathematical possibility.

Hon. Saisnarine Kowlessar: Mr Chairman, the figures are about the same as last year, when you take out the \$900 million, the remainder is about \$2.7 billion, about the same as last year.

The Chairman: The Hon. Member, Mr Sawh.

Hon Satyadeow Sawh: Thank you, Mr Chairman. Permit me to respond to the questions posed on the copra issue posed by the Hon. Member of the Opposition, Mr Hoyte: How is the new GMC assisting the farmers?

The new GMC intervened in 1998: \$4 million to purchase copra from farmers and again in 2001 for the amount of money sought. What this new GMC does, is to purchase the copra. We have set up four agents in the Pomeroun area particularly Akawini to Sea Coast; Hackney to Enterprise; Enterprise to Marlborough; Marlborough to Charity. Farmers are paid in cash. New GMC stores the Copra and eventually sells it back on the market. The amount in 1998 is fully repaid and the amount in 2001 is partially paid. The farmers have access to cash immediately rather than the bartering arrangement.

Regarding the second question posed by the Hon. Member, Mr Ivor Allen as to which community of farmers benefitted ... It was the Pomeroun area primarily.

The third question, the adequacy of the amount: Mr Chairman, there is never any *full* adequacy of finances that one can allocate, but it is an amount that helps the farmers for that short term period and as the economy and the particular sector bounces back farmers are able to go back on their feet.

Mr Winston S. Murray: Mr Chairman, a follow-up question please. Given the Minister's admission that this level of funding is inadequate, could the Minister please tell the National Assembly what are the objective criteria that he has determined that will enable him to ensure he uses the resources for the most deserving farmers?

The Chairman: The Hon. Member, Mr Kadir

Mr Abdul Kadir: Mr Chairman, I am referring to Item 1, Chart of Accounts 172 - Will the Minister care to explain \$200 million, what

percentage part of the arrears this represents and what is the value of the liability remaining of the Government to GPL?

The Chairman: The Hon. Minister.

Hon. Satyadeow Sawh: Thank you, Mr Chairman. In responding to the question posed by the Hon. Member Mr Murray I repeat, Mr Chairman, there is never any *full* adequacy of finances one can allocate in terms of assisting in alleviating problems faced by farmers in particular areas. The amount of money allocated as I said, will spread out in the Pomeroun area. Agents were set up right across the Pomeroun to buy from particularly small farmers. A total of 273,253 lbs of copra were purchased from approximately three hundred and fifty small farmers and those are the people that we try to assist first and foremost, who needed the care most.

The Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Members. Can we now move to Section B, Capital Estimates? There are fourteen Items, any questions?

The Hon. Member, Mr Kadir.

Mr Abdul Kadir: Mr Chairman, may I rephrase my question? I was asking if the Minister would care to explain the \$200 million, what percentage of the arrears ... *[Interruption]*

The Chairman: Hon. Member, we have moved to Section B of the Capital Estimates. I don't think you are permitted to rephrase your question.

Mr Abdul Kadir: Mr Chairman, the question was not answered.

The Chairman: Section B, Capital Estimates. Do you have any questions on Section B- Capital Estimates, I will take it?

Hon. Member Mr Kadir, we went through that on the last occasion whether a question is unanswered or not. We dealt with that and I fully explained that to you.

The Hon. Member Mr Hoyte.

Mr Hugh Desmond Hoyte: Item No. 12, Subhead 45012 - Could the Hon. Minister say whether this amount requested represents the total market value of the land to be acquired? If not, what is the total market value? If that answer is no, would he explain why he has not come to this National Assembly for the total market value?

Finally, assuming he has a total market value, would he explain how he arrived at that figure?

The Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Member.

The Hon. Minister.

Hon. Saisnarine Kowlessar: Mr Chairman, at the moment this is the price offered by the government. Whether it is a market value or not, that would be determined by the Court. The matter is in Court at the moment and if there is a requirement that we have to vote more then we will come back to Parliament.

The Chairman: Any other question?

The Hon. Member, Mr Hoyte.

Mr Hugh Desmond Hoyte: Mr Chairman, the Hon. Member knows he can't fog me off with an answer like that. It is not the Court. The Court has to determine the market value when the owner of the property disputes the value which the Government has arrived at and applies to the Court, but under the law the Government has to offer the market value for the properties they are about to acquire. I am now asking, what is that market value? If the Hon. Member is saying that the Government hasn't got a market value, well then, this number here of \$50 million has been snatched out of the skies. It is not based on any logic or principle.

Hon. Saisnarine Kowlessar: Mr Chairman, the records will show

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that the acquisition cost of that land by Mr Toolsie Persaud is \$2.7 million and this offer is over twenty times that value at the present time.

The Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Member.

The Hon. Member, Mr Ravindra Dev.

Mr Ravindra Dev: Mr Chairman, I refer to Item 12, Subhead 45012 - Land Acquisition: I think the Hon. Minister knows that market value in no shape or form is in any way related to initial purchase price. I would like to ask the Hon. Minister to explain again as to what is the basis for the Government determining the market value at \$50 million in a manner that makes some degree of sense.

Secondly, why has the Government rejected TPL's suggestion of an independent valuer to assess it, who will be agreeable to both sides to determine the value in a professional and acceptable way because this is the way market value is accepted; and would not an imposed valuation lead to a protracted Court action which would impede Government's use of the land in a timely manner or even prevent it altogether?

The Chairman: The Hon. Minister.

Hon. Saisnarine Kowlessar: Mr Chairman, as I said, the matter is engaging the Court's attention and I do not believe that we can proceed with any further discussion on this issue.

The Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Member. If there are no other questions, this completes consideration of the Financial Paper. I will put this Motion, which is, that this National Assembly approve of the proposals set out in Financial Paper 3/2001 - Schedule of Supplementary Provision on the Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$7,405,529,861 for the period ended 2001-12-31.

Motion put and carried.

Assembly Resumes

The Speaker: The Hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Saisnarine Kowlessar: Mr Speaker, I beg to report that the Committee of Supply considered Financial Paper No. 3/2001 and approved of the proposals set out therein. I now move that the Assembly doth agree with the Committee in the said resolution.

Question put and agreed to.

Motion carried.

**4. MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS (AMENDMENT) BILL 2001
- Bill No. 13/2001**

Report from Select Committee and Third Reading

The **Minister of Health** to move -

(i) That the Report of the Special Select Committee on the Medical Practitioners (Amendment) Bill 2001, be adopted and

(ii) That the Medical Practitioners (Amendment) Bill 2001, be read the third time and passed as amended.

The Speaker: Hon. Members, we will now turn our attention to Item 2 on the Supplementary Order Paper, which is the Motion in the name of the Minister of Health for the adoption of the Special Select Committee's Report for the Medical Practitioners (Amendment) Bill 2001 and the third reading of the said Bill.

The Hon. Minister of Health, you may proceed..

Hon. Dr Leslie S. Ramsammy: Mr Speaker, I wish to move that the Report of the Special Select Committee on the Medical Practitioners

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(Amendment) Bill 2001, be adopted and that the Medical Practitioners (Amendment) Bill 2001, be read the third time and passed as amended.

Motion proposed, put and carried.

Bill reported with amendments, as amended read the third time and passed as amended.

The Speaker: Hon. Members, this concludes our business for today.

The Hon. Minister of Parliamentary Affairs.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. Repu Daman Persaud: I move that the National Assembly stand adjourned to a date to be fixed.

Adjourned accordingly at 14:56H