

T H E  
P A R L I A M E N T A R Y   D E B A T E S

O F F I C I A L   R E P O R T S

VOLUME 10

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE THIRD SESSION (1983) OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FOURTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA

1st            Sitting                            17:00 hrs    Monday                            1983-02-07

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (74)

Speaker (1)

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

Members of the Government - People's National Congress (61)

Prime Minister (1)

- Cde. Dr. P.A. Reid, O.E., M.P.,  
    Prime Minister

Other Vice-Presidents (4)

- Cde. S.S. Naraine, A.A., M.P.,  
    Vice-President, Works, Transport and Housing            (Absent - on Leave)
- Cde. H.D. Hoyte, S.C., M.P.,  
    Vice-President, Economic Planning and Finance
- Cde. H. Green, M.P.,  
    Vice-President, Agriculture
- Cde. B. Ramsaroop, M.P.,  
    Vice-President, Party and State Matters

Senior Ministers (7)

- Cde. R. Chandisingh, M.P.  
    Minister of Education
- Cde. R.H.O. Corbin, M.P.,  
    Minister of National and Regional  
    Development
- \* Cde. F.E. Hope, M.P.,  
    Minister of Internal Trade and  
    Consumer Protection
- \* Cde. H.O. Jack, M.P.,  
    Minister of Energy and Mines
- \* Cde. Dr. M. Shahabuddeen, O.R., S.C., M.P.,  
    Attorney General and Minister of Justice            (Absent)
- \* Cde. R.E. Jackson, M.P.,  
    Minister of Foreign Affairs
- \* Cde. J.R. Thomas, M.P.,  
    Minister of Home Affairs

- \* Non-elected Member

Ministers (6)

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

Ministers of State (2)

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

Parliamentary Secretaries (3)

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

\* Non-elected Member

Other Members (26)

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

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

Cde. R. Bishop, M.S., M.P. (Absence - on Leave)  
Cde. B. Latchminarayan, M.P.

Members from the Regional Democratic Councils (10)

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

Members of the Minority (12)

(i) People's Progressive Party (10)

Minority Leader (1)

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

Deputy Speaker (1)

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

Other Members (8)

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

(ii) United Force (2)

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

OFFICERS

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

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

PRAYERS

National Assembly

PROCLAMATION SUMMONING THE SESSION OF PARLIAMENT

The Speaker: The Clerk of the National Assembly will read the Proclamation which was issued by His Excellency the President.

The Clerk read the Proclamation as follows:

PROCLAMATION

By the President of the  
Co-operative Republic of  
Guyana.

(Sgd.) L.F.S. Burnham  
President

Whereas by Proclamation, dated 21st January, 1983, issued under article (1) of the Constitution, Parliament was prorogued with effect from that date:

Now, therefore, in pursuance of the powers conferred upon me by article 69 (1) of the Constitution, I do hereby appoint the Parliament Chamber, Public Buildings, Georgetown, Guyana, as the place where a session of Parliament shall be held at 5 o'clock in the afternoon on the 7th February, 1983, as the time when such session shall begin.

Given under my hand and the Seal of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana at Georgetown, Guyana, this 21st day of January, 1983, in the thirteenth year of the Republic.

By the President's Command.

(Sgd) C.E. Douglas  
Head of the Presidential Secretariat."

PRAYERS

The Clerk read the following Prayer:

"Almighty God, we, who are here gathered together, do most humbly beseech Thee to guide us in all our consultations, so that we may together build a land where knowledge is free, where the mind is without fear and the head is held high, and where words come from the depth of truth.

Grant us, O God, Thine aid and guidance, so that we may deal justly, with the several causes that come before us, laying aside all private interests, prejudices and personal preference, so that the result of our counsels may be to the glory of Thy Blessed Name, the maintenance of true religion, the preservation of justice, the safety, honour and happiness of the President and the peace and prosperity of Guyana.

Grant us, O God, the vision so to lead, that all the people of this fair land may enter into that state of brotherhood and unity, where the mind is led forward by Thee into ever-widening thought and action."

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

The Speaker: Comrades and Hon. Members, the sitting of the National Assembly will now be suspended and will be resumed on the arrival of His Excellency the President and Cde. Viola Burnham.

Sitting suspended at 17:05 hrs

17:38 hrs

On resumption –

ENTRY OF THE PRESIDENT AND CDE. VIOLA BURNHAM

Their Excellencies, the President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, Cde. Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham, O.E., S.C., and Cde. Viola Burnham were announced. Their Excellencies entered the Chamber and were received by the Assembly.

WELCOME TO THE PRESIDENT

The Speaker: Your Excellency The Comrade President and Comrade Viola Burnham, on behalf of the Members of the National Assembly and myself, I extend a welcome to you here on the occasion of the commencement of the Third Session of our Fourth Parliament.

I would now wish to take the liberty of stating here, Cde. President, that during his year, you will be marking two important events in your life. Thirteen days from today you will be attaining the age of 60 years and on the 18th of May this year you will have been for half of your life, that is 30 years, a Parliamentarian.

I would like to take this opportunity with your presence here and that of Cde. Viola, as another occasion will not be afforded this Parliament, of extending our congratulations and our best wishes to you not only for these occasions but also for your 16th wedding anniversary, which you and Cde. Viola will shortly be celebrating. /Applause./ May good health and strength continue to be with you as you continue to lead and to guide us. Comrades and members of the National Assembly, His Excellency the President will now address the Assembly.

1983-02-07

17:38 – 18:15 hrs

ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT

His Excellency the President: Cde. Speaker, since this is the first occasion in the year 1983 that I have had the opportunity of meeting the Members of Parliament here assembled, I would like to seize the opportunity for wishing you and all Members of Parliament a successful 1983, a happy 1983, based on your performance and your leadership during the year.

As our Parliament enters its third year the world seems to be in disarray and teetering on the brink of disaster, if not of a holocaust. We read of missiles, costing billions, whose destruction capacity causes the most fertile imagination to boggle – and this is a world where millions of human beings are debilitated as a result of malnutrition and further millions die of starvation.

We learn that even in rich countries people have died from carbon monoxide poisoning because they have nowhere to live but in their cars. We are informed that the G.N.P. of the United States was down 1.8 percent in 1982, as against 1981, while the industrial output of the U.S.S.R. was 40 percent short of target and grain production over 25 percent short. We hear that some countries' due debt repayments in 1983 range from 117-195 percent of the value of their exports; and some of these are oil producers and exporters!

It is now palpable that the international system and financial institutions are incapable of dealing with the present situation. They were made for a different world and a different time. This fact is widely now admitted by opinion leaders even in the rich and industrialised countries.

In what has been described as one of the most critical analyses of the international financial systems made by a United Nations Agency, UNCTAD, last week inveighed against the structure of and the criteria employed by international institutions like the International Monetary Fund.

UNCTAD observed that governments in general, were no longer able to control international movement of capital, which lack of control contributed to chaotic and unpredictable exchange rates, and it further went on to call on the IMF to help rescue developing countries from the present world recession. It specifically recommended that the IMF should sell off substantial quantities of its gold holdings and lend the proceeds therefrom at concessionary rates to poor countries.

One, from previous experience, wonders whether these criticisms will not as in the past fall on deaf ears and the proposals be relegated to dusty shelves or waste paper baskets.

On Wednesday next a report comes out - 'Common Crises' by the Brandt Commission.

There have been attempts to initiate a dialogue between the North and the South - the developed and developing nations. These have been abortive primarily because the North, as represented by its political leaders, refuses to accept the concomitants of interdependence. The Global Round of Negotiations has not yet materialised in the circumstances, and the high hopes of the Cancun Summit have been disappointed.

Our Government posits that while the developing nations should continue to campaign for meaningful North-South dialogue, they must devote their major efforts towards achieving South-South co-operation and unity. It is in this context that we place great store by the Non-Aligned Summit which assembles in New Delhi next month. The Non-Aligned Movement as we all know, is predominantly a forum of the Third or Developing World and though it has before it a number of troubling political questions, its major emphasis, in our opinion, should be on the international economic ones.

But co-operation and thrusts towards unity must be pursued at other and perhaps lower levels. At the Conference of the Foreign Ministers of the Non Aligned Movement convened in Guyana in 1972, it was urged and resolved that regional bodies like Caricom should be encouraged to be agencies of or participants in the international exercise of consolidating and strengthening the Third World economically.

It is apposite, perhaps, to note that after seven years the Caricom Summit was held in November last at Ocho Rios, Jamaica. It was not spectacular, but it was significant and therefore successful. Its decisions indicate the determination of the Heads present or represented to deepen economic co-operation as between their respective states and peoples to the benefit of the latter. There were clearly the desire and will to develop the resources of the Region by the people of the Region for the people of the Region.

There can be no hiding of the fact that forces and agencies external to the Region did their best to influence attitudes and decisions. There can be no hiding of the fact that they will continue their efforts, and are continuing their efforts at this very moment. There can be no hiding of the fact that they are not motivated by an interest in the interests of the Caribbean people and that if they were to succeed, the Region will disintegrate and most of its components then resume, in all but name, their former colonial status.

Though a Regional or International organisation may by the very nature of things, be more than the sum of its individual members, yet, it is the duty of each member for its own sake, and for that of the larger body to seek to develop its own resources, and to make a contribution to the progress of mankind by the removal of poverty and economic subservience - the most painful legacy of colonialism and imperialism.

The essentials in our case are nutritious as distinct from exotic food, clothing, reasonable housing, medical care, potable water, power, relevant training, reliable public transport and opportunities for recreation and entertainment. There may be other details to add but the criteria to be adopted are readily and easily recognised.

Many, if not most or all of these essentials require inputs which we cannot yet produce and which therefore have to be imported. The procurement of these inputs depends upon our ability to export and our willingness to give top priority, in the allocation of foreign exchange resources, to such procurement. To pursue such a programme successfully, requires understanding and determination nationally. Two things must constantly be borne in mind. "We cannot consume more than what we produce directly or indirectly", unless we want to be mendicants, and "We cannot eat our cake and have it too".

The major thrust in 1983 and even after will therefore be in agriculture. It is the basis of food self-sufficiency, and of our clothing ourselves as a nation. With sensible diversification, efficiency, and keen marketing it can be a major export earner. There can and must be backward and forward integration, as well as the use of what now passes for waste, for example, sugar cane bagasse and a large percentage of the edible oil in rice bran. There can and must be, the introduction in accordance with a plan, of agro-based industries.

If agriculture is to represent the area of concentration and priority, all government ministries, agencies, and corporations as well as the Local Government Organs like the Regions and Sub-Regions must be intimately involved.

I have on other occasions and in other places referred to the fact that a relatively small economy like Guyana's, quickly experiences, and that traumatically, the effects of economic crises such as those which have racked the world since the mid-seventies. Larger economies with greater absorptive capacities take longer to feel those effects.

At the same time, however, the smallness of our economy offers a greater opportunity, given imagination and firmness, to adjust in a relatively short time and survive, than that offered the larger and richer but more cumbersome and ramified economies. But Will and clear perceptions and perspectives are essential.

Sometime ago, our Government announced that it proposed to put the economy on a war footing, for ours indeed, is a war of survival. Though there have been niggling complaints about certain difficulties suffered in common with other countries, developed and developing, there has been no reasoned or philosophical opposition to the proposal -because there can be none that is based on rationality.

Putting our economy on a war footing implies providing the population with the essentials, as distinct from the luxuries and fripperies, while pursuing singlemindedly the achievement of a single important objective. Many countries did this between 1939 and 1945 when the objective was winning a war and saving their people from the horrors of Nazi domination. Many countries have done this after, and even before the 1939-45 War when the objective was defending their revolution against hostile external forces while building a new internal, social and economic order.

It is not for me to anticipate the debate in this House or the details and clarification to be dealt with by my Ministers and colleagues. Suffice it to say that all Ministries, I repeat, all Ministries, Agencies, Corporations and Regions have been charged with making in their annual budgetary presentation and estimates, provisions which take into account their active participation in the national agricultural programme. Most of the infrastructure is there. It must and will be utilised in the national interest.

As will be amplified in the course of discussion in this House, within the next few days and in the Budget debate, an area close to Agriculture on which emphasis will be placed, in fact, is already placed, is that of fishing and shrimping. As a result of a loan from the Inter-American Bank, government direct investment, and agreements and joint enterprises with other Caribbean governments and private investors, our national fishing and shrimping fleet will be considerably increased this year.

The object here is twofold. First, to make available to our people a great abundance of fish protein, and second, to take advantage of a yawning external market.

The exploitation of our forestry resources is also included in the programme for 1983. This will provide not only an important input for housing our citizens, but will also be the source of commodities and products for which there are ready markets in the Caribbean and beyond.

Gold is very much in the news today. The fall in oil prices and the uncertainty and unreliability of the international currencies have, by a process which only the experts can explain, contributed to the appreciation in the

price of this metal. We are not one of the major world gold producers yet, but we can as a country benefit from the bonanza. To that end, as I said about forty days ago "the gold industry will be reorganised and restructured", radically so.

I have sought merely in outline to describe the main features of the programme of the year ahead. Perhaps you will have noted that I have placed emphasis primarily on what we Guyanese can do and will be doing. From the beginning of my term of office as Head of Government, and based on my understanding of the essential Guyanese character, I have declared our subscription to the philosophy of self-reliance. Assistance and aid have been available and may be still forthcoming, but the primary effort must be ours. We cannot rely on outside help as the mainspring.

In the first place, what will a people have achieved if they were to rely exclusively on others for the major inputs and programmes? They would have disqualified themselves to be described as an independent nation.

In the second place, the aid donors have become rather parsimonious, especially since the world economic crises. They perceive that they cannot afford to give. There have been three Development Decades starting in 1960. At the beginning of each Decade, aid donor nations undertook to give in each case one per cent of their national income to developing countries. In no year, I repeat, no year, has any of these donors except Sweden, reached the target, or anywhere near the target! There have been rationalisers who advance the thesis that private investment by a would be donor country, is in fact aid. There is need for a new lexicon!

In the third place most aid donors tie the greater part of their aid to the purchases of their own goods. This practice has been commented on and criticised by a former President of the World Bank, Mr. Black, who noted that in some cases the cost of such aid to the recipient is increased by over twenty per cent.

In the fourth place many aid donors feel that it is their right to dictate to aid recipients, the political, social and economic course the latter should take and also to interfere in the latter's internal affairs. Further, such donors expect their "beneficiaries" to accept instructions on voting in international forums like the United Nations General Assembly.

In the fifth place, a number of aid donors prefer to restrict aid to countries upon whom the former can rely as military allies in pursuit of their own perception of their strategic and defence interests.

There you have it. Let us not wax emotional. Ours is the choice. Shall it be independence? Or shall it be thinly veiled dependence on some patron or patrons? We are not without resources. Are we lacking in resilience and Will?

In our circumstances we must make the fullest and most imaginative use of our resources - human and material.

Already Guysuco has completed the first stage of an exercise which will convert some of its bagasse into fuel for increasing our electricity supply in East Berbice, and Guynec has developed the expertise for manufacturing agricultural tools.

This manufacture will be further expanded during the course of this year when certain equipment is put in place. This month, in fact within little over a fortnight, what with the commissioning of a new mill, our national production of edible oil will increase by over fifty per cent at least, and self-sufficiency by the end of the year is in sight.

Many of the managers of the Government owned Corporations are rising to the occasion. To those who rise to the occasion, I pay a special tribute. At the same time I would express the highest commendation to the non-management workers who often work with dedication, and commitment to their tasks and to Guyana.

But while some perform, there are others who are engaged in sabotage and parasitic rascality. There are the idlers, the traders, the thieves, the smugglers, and the illegal dealers in foreign exchange. My Government has already introduced certain administrative measures calculated to deal with some of these. In the course of this Session, other administrative and legislative measures will be put in place and enacted, respectively. Firmness, I understand, will be the criterion in so far as economic offences are concerned. In many instances the presumption of innocence, once certain facts are established, will no longer obtain, and in other cases monetary penalties will be abolished.

This is a war as between us who will have Guyana survive, and those who will have it go under. This is a struggle between the patriots and the subversives, the paid hirelings. No quarter is asked, and none will be given.

As we review the year 1982, we cannot fail to note the tremendous difficulties and inconveniences that we, as a people, have experienced. At the same time, we cannot fail to note and admire the understanding, and strength and calm, which the overwhelming majority of the population has displayed. Ours has been outstanding resilience combined with stoicism, adaptability and courage never to submit or yield. We have refused as a people to hand over our economy to the vultures; we have defended the gains of our Revolution against the onslaughts from without and the Trojan horses within. We have survived.

I do not promise Elysium in 1983. This must be a year of supreme effort and higher production. I see it as the year at the end of which we shall move unto the sunlit plains of progress in 1984. All this, only if we have the Will to survive. That Will we have. That Will we shall display. With that Will we shall confound our critics and scatter our foes.

We must survive. We shall survive and tell the tale of Success.

His Excellency presented a copy of the Address to the Speaker.

THANKS BY THE SPEAKER

The Speaker: Cde. President, as I have remarked on similar previous occasions, we have missed your presence here as a Member of the National Assembly particularly your contributions and your oratory and debating skills.

Nevertheless, it appears as if our hope is coming to pass for we note that your Excellency is coming here at least once a year to address us. We look forward to these occasions for it is at such times that we receive from you as Head of State and Head of Government on-the-spot guidance in the course we should pursue.

Today, in this time of economic problems, not only in Guyana but throughout the world, your presence here and the pronouncements you have made will certainly be of benefit to us in our tasks. We will be studying and will consider your address and will shortly be debating it in the National Assembly.

Cde. President, we thank you for coming and addressing us today and we also thank Cde. Viola Burnham for accompanying you and being with us.

WITHDRAWAL OF THE PRESIDENT AND CDE. VIOLA BURNHAM

Their Excellences withdrew from the Chamber.

The Speaker: Comrades and Hon. Members of the Assembly, after the adjournment of the Assembly, you are all invited guests to joint me for a drink.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, "That this Assembly do now adjourn until Thursday 1983-02-10 at 14:00 hrs

/The Vice-President, Party and State Matters./

Adjourned accordingly at 18:15 hrs