

THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
OFFICIAL REPORTS

[Volume 7]

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE FIRST SESSION OF THE NATIONAL
ASSEMBLY OF THE THIRD PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION
OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA

220th Sitting

2 p.m.

Friday, 15th August, 1980

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (63)

Speaker

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

Members of the Government – People's National Congress (46)

Prime Minister (1)

Cde. L.F.S. Burnham, O.E., S.C., (Absent - on leave)
Prime Minister

Deputy Prime Minister (1)

Cde. P.A. Reid, O.E., (Absent)
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of
National Development

Senior Ministers (11)

Cde. H.D. Hoyte, S.C., (Absent - on leave)
Minister of Economic Development and Co-operatives

Cde. S.S. Naraine, A.A., (Absent)
Minister of Works and Transport

Cde. B. Ramsaroop, (Absent - on leave)
Minister of Parliamentary Affairs
and Leader of the House

Cde. C.V Mingo,
Minister of Home Affairs

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

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

*Cde. F.E. Hope,
Minister of Finance

*Cde. G.B. Kennard, C.C.H.,
Minister of Agriculture

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

*Cde. R.E. Jackson, (Absent)
Minister of Foreign Affairs

*Cde. J.A. Tyndall, A.A., (Absent)
Minister of Trade and Consumer Protection

*Non-elected Ministers

Ministers (2)

- Cde. O.E. Clarke, (Absent – on leave)
Minister – Regional
(East Berbice/Corentyne)
- Cde. C.A. Nascimento,
Minister, Office of the Prime Minister (Absent)

Ministers of State (10)

- Cde. F.U.A Carmichael (Absent)
Minister of State – Regional (Rupununi)
- Cde. P. Duncan, J.P., (Absent - on leave)
Minister of State – Regional (North West)
- Cde. K.B. Bancroft, J.P., (Absent)
Minister of State – Regional
(Mazaruni/Potaro)
- Cde. J.P. Chowritmootoo, J.P., (Absent)
Minister of State – Regional
(Essequibo Coast/West Demerara)
- Cde. J.R. Thomas, (Absent – on leave)
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, (Absent)
Minister of State for Information,
Ministry of National Development
- *Cde. H. Rashid, (Absent)
Minister of State,
Office of the Prime Minister

Parliamentary Secretaries (6)

- Cde. M.M. John, C.C.H., (Absent)
Parliamentary Secretary, Office of the
Prime Minister, and Government Chief Whip
- Cde. E.L. Ambrose,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture
- Cde. M. Corrica, (Absent- on leave)
Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of Education, Social Development and Culture
- Cde. E.M. Bynoe,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Trade and
Consumer Protection.

*Non-elected Ministers

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

Cde. J.G. Ramson,
Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of Works and Transport

Other Members (15)

Cde. W.G. Carrington, C.C.H.
Cde. S.M. Field-Ridley
Cde. E.H.A. Fowler (Absent - on leave)
Cde. J. Gill
Cde. W. Hussain
Cde. K.M.E. Jonas
Cde. P.A. Rayman (Absent – on leave)
Cde. A. Salim, C.C.H.
Cde. E.M. Stoby, J.P.
Cde. S.H. Sukhu, M.S.
Cde. C. Sukul, J.P.
Cde. H.A. Taylor (Absent)
Cde. H.B. Walcott, J.P.
Cde. L.E. Willems
Cde. M. Zaheeruddeen

Members of the Opposition (16)

(i) People’s Progressive Party (14)

Leader of the Opposition (1)

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

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 (Absent)
Cde. C. Collymore (Absent)
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

(ii) Liberator Party (2)

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

(Absent – on leave)

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

15.8.80
2.05 p.m.

2.05-2.15 p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Leave to Members

The Speaker: Leave has been granted to the Cde. Prime Minister, to Comrades Hoyte, Ramsaroop, Clarke, Duncan, Field-Ridley, and Jonas, and to the Hon. Member Mr. Singh for today's sitting; to Cde. Thomas from the 6th to 18th August, 1980; and to Cde. Cheddi Jagan from the 6th August to the 6th September, 1980.

Acting Leader of the Opposition

The Speaker: I have been informed that Cde. Ram Karran will be acting as Leader of the Opposition during the absence of Cde. Cheddi Jagan.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following paper was laid:

Annual Report and Accounts of the Guyana Liquor Corporation for the year 1979 [The Minister of Agriculture.]

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS - FIRST READING

The following Bills were introduced and read the first time:

- (1) Public Health (Amendment) Bill 1980 - Bill No. 13/1980
- (2) Old Age Pensions (Amendment) Bill 1980 - Bill No.14/1980

[The Minister of Health, Housing and Labour.]

PUBLIC BUSINESS
BILLS - SECOND AND THIRD READINGS
CONSUMPTION TAX (AMENDMENT) BILL 1980

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to amend the Consumption Tax Act.” [The Minister of Finance.]

The Minister of Finance (Cde. Hope): Cde. Speaker, in moving the Second Reading of the Bill intituled the Consumption Tax (Amendment) Bill 1980, I wish to explain first of all that the Bill is essentially a tidying- up operation and it is based exclusively on the proposals which were made in the last Budget affecting the consumption taxes applicable to goods.

In the Budget statement by the Minister, it was made clear that the consumption tax was going to apply to certain goods with very few exceptions but one exception that was not made related to goods which previously were free of duty when imported by certain manufacturers. In other words, certain manufacturers - I think the Bill refers to them as “registered manufacturers”- are entitled to import certain raw materials free of duty. The consumption tax which was imposed recently covered those goods. In other words, those goods were not exempted from that consumption tax, that is, the consumption tax of 8 per cent.

Therefore, what the Bill seeks to do in the first instance is to make it clear that chargeable goods, that is, goods which are taxable where previously they were exempted from tax in the hands of a registered manufacturer, from such goods that exemption has been removed and such goods will be taxable as any other goods and it refers to raw materials going into goods manufactured in Guyana.

Beyond that the Bill seeks also to ensure that where the manufacturer pays duty on his raw materials, as the local manufacturers pays duty on his raw materials -- Normally the final product of that manufacturer would also attract the 8 per cent consumption tax. However, what the Bill seeks to do is to say if those completed goods are going into the hands of another registered manufacturer, then if he makes the necessary representation to the supplier, that is, the original manufacturer or to the Comptroller, or both, then the first manufacturer, would be relieved of the 8 per cent tax and it is the second manufacturer, who is acquiring the goods, who will then be required to pay the tax.

In effect, what the Bill is doing is to say, "Look, the first manufacturer is producing goods and those goods are chargeable goods," then he has to pay the 8 per cent. However, if those goods are going into the hands of another registered manufacturer as an input into his manufacturing enterprises then the first manufacturer who normally would have been required to pay the 8 per cent would be relieved of paying the 8 per cent. In fact, the 8 per cent will then be paid by the second manufacturer who is acquiring the goods from the first manufacturer.

In effect, that ensures that the 8 per cent is applicable only once to the particular goods as they pass through the productive stream. But, of course, proper representations have to be made to the Comptroller of Customs who has to be informed, otherwise, the goods could be taxed. Once that is done there will be no need to collect the tax.

Basically, Cde. Speaker, that is the intent of the Amendment which is really to tidy up the situation and to ensure that a double taxation of the 8 per cent does not arise in the application of the 8 per cent consumption tax to goods manufactured locally.

With that explanation, Cde. Speaker, I would like formally to move the Second Reading of the Bill.

Question proposed.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Mr. Speaker, I think the Bill is very clear and I must say to the credit of the Minister this afternoon he has spoken in absolutely clear terms. I understand then that the taxation remains double and I will tell you why based on what he has said. When the raw materials comes, you pay the 8 per cent. When you reach finality of the product, if you are not passing it over to another manufacturer, you pay the 8 per cent. It is only if it goes to the second manufacture then he will be required to pay. Hence, if raw material is imported, say for instance, for making shirts, the manufacturer produces the shirts. When the shirts are finished, he pays on the final product and this is double. This is unreasonable, wholly rejectionable, and it will undoubtedly bring a tremendous financial burden on the consumer.

15.8.80

2.15-2.25 p.m.

2.15 p.m.

What the members of the Government seem to miss out on and they need to reflect on very deeply is the fact that when they put on taxation, consumption or otherwise, the manufacturer will not absorb that taxation, but as is the general practice, and we all know it, he will pass it on to the consumer. It is because of that fact within recent times that we have found the price of clothing has gone up so much. I am giving the shirt as an example but there can be so many other examples. Clearly, in that Budget Speech, the intention was, there is no ambiguity of language at all, that the taxation should have been once, that is the consumption taxation; it should have been a single 8 per cent and that was the end.

The Minister will not deny that even the officers in the Customs Department had tremendous problems in interpreting what was the intention of the Government and they found themselves eventually where the taxation had to be paid double. If my information is right, the Government was not big enough to come back and say: we have made an error and, hence, we are going to correct it and ensure that what was the intention remains and not that people will be called upon to pay double taxation. Rarely, Cde. Speaker, it would pass from one manufacturer to another. What seems clear is that manufacturer "A" produce and then he sells to the store. He would have been paying twice in selling that particular product be it shirt or whatever garment, and it is applicable to every conceivable product that comes within the ambit of this amendment.

I want to say that the Opposition is totally opposed to the Bill. We call on the Government to reconsider it; we had a long debate where various examples were given by my colleague, Cde. Narbada Persaud, who referred to an example of an invitation card where the person is called upon even there to pay twice, and there can be many, many, more examples. This has been one of the very unreasonable pieces of legislation that have come within recent times. There are many but this is one that must be singled out for severe criticism. The Minister has not this afternoon made any attempt to justify. Whether it was the decision of the Cabinet or whose decision it was, he says: "This is the Bill and this is the Bill I am presenting, and all I have got to tell this House is that you have to pay two times, whether the one manufacturer pays it or who pays." That seems to be the presentation of the Bill. He has not said what are the reasons, what Government expects to rise from this further imposition on the backs of the small consumer in this country. This is an assault on the consumer and one expects that the Consumers Association will speak out eloquently and swiftly against this measure and will not allow it to go unnoticed. The consumer must know, the public must know, the working people, the working class must become aware that greater burden is being put upon them by the Government at this stage.

15.8.80

2.15-2.25 p.m.

We have found, Cde. Speaker, that when the budget comes, an attempt is made to convey to the nation that there is no severe taxation, but we have learnt sitting in this House that it is not the budget, the Budget Speech, or proposals, but what happens subsequently to that Budget and during the course of the year. There are so many different kinds of impositions by way of various taxes that eventually catch the small man that one will be unable to recount them throughout the years. The legislation is there and we can examine it. We never have had from the P.N.C. Government in the history of its being in office a tax-free budget. I make that statement. They cannot point to a tax-free budget because even if they talk about raising the prices of milk or of flour, those increases come not in the Budget Speech. They come subsequent to the Budget Speech, so that when you are called upon to make a speech on the budget, the increases are not reflected during the presentation of the budget.

May I say this is another very vivid example for us to see. I want the Minister to admit to this House. What was the intention when the speech was presented - not by the Minister of Finance, as would have expected, but by the Minister of Economic Development. The Cde. Minister is a statistician. I am sure when he read that speech he would have interpreted it the way I am interpreting it because there is no other interpretation. There can be no other interpretation. For that reason I say that the people are called upon to pay the same thing two times. The Budget Speech, Cde. Speaker, was a deception and this Bill exposes the deception, hence, the burden is now falling heavily on the backs of the consumer, on the backs of the small man, on the workers undoubtedly are unable to bear this burden. We strongly oppose the Bill and we will vote against it.

The Speaker: Cde. Minister, do you wish to reply?

Cde. Hope (replying): Cde. Speaker, it is not usual in any fiscal administration to have what is commonly called double taxation, when double taxation can be discovered. We have always sought, whenever double taxation can be proved, to deal with that situation as equitably as is possible. If, in these circumstances, double taxation can be proved, I am sure the Government will look at it and we have administrative arrangements to deal with it as it occurs, that would be the situation, Cde. Speaker.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Assembly in Committee.

Bill considered and approved.

Assembly resumed.

Bill reported without Amendment, read the Third time and passed.

15.8.80

2.25-2.35 p.m.

EAST DEMERARA WATER CONSERVENCY (AMENDMENT) BILL 1980

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to amend the East Demerara Water Conservancy Act. [The Minister of Agriculture]

The Speaker: Cde. Minister of Agriculture.

2.25 p.m.

The Minister of Agriculture (Cde. Kennard): Cde. Speaker, in moving the Second Reading of this Bill I wish merely to point out that it is conspicuous by its brevity and simplicity. It seeks merely to increase the number of Commissioners on the Board of the East Demerara Water Conservancy by one, namely from nine to ten, the intention being that the additional seat will go to the Government's Chief Hydraulics Officer or his duly nominated representative. It is believed that this will ensure greater co-ordination of the services rendered by the Board and it will result in improving the general efficiency of the Conservancy services, East Demerara including Georgetown. We expect this simple amendment will ensure the desired co-ordination which will result in improved efficiency on the part of the Commissioners in performing their statutory functions.

Questions proposed.

Cde. Ram Karran: Sir, according to the Hon. Minister, this measure is simple and all it seeks to do is to increase the membership of the Board by one. It will bring about greater efficiency. I would have thought that in a matter like this, in an area which provides so many grievances to the farmers and to the people who are served by this Conservancy that the Minister would at least have tried to give us some of the grievances that affect them. These date back to the time when sugar dominated the situation of this country. The early books tell us about the sugar producers flooding out the farmers in the flood season and drying them out in the drought, and, currently, you are aware of it and all members of the public are aware of it, whenever the place is flooded, all the water from the Conservancy is dumped into the Mahaica River, flooding out the people there. Whenever it is drought in the Conservancy area, the water from the Mahaica River is pumped into that basin carrying the salt water further up the Mahaica River.

I say this not to repeat history not to repeat the grievances that people are suffering but merely to draw to the Hon. Minister's attention that Ministers deal very lackadaisically with their work. What are the grievances that will be attended to?

15.08.80

2.25 -2.35 p.m.

What are the deficiencies that will be sorted out by a very busy man, the Chief Hydraulics Officer, who has responsibility for the entire country where drainage and irrigation exist? What about the interest of those people who have been bellyaching all the time that they want water during the drought season to grow their rice? What about the villagers on the East Coast from Mahaica right down to Plaisance, who cannot get water? Surely if the Minister had been studying his work – I am sure he has not read the file – he would have found enough to speak on in this House that would have brought to light some of the grievances and particularly some of the inefficiencies that affect this area.

We are moving ahead, I am told in articles in the newspapers and so on for greater areas to be put under drainage and irrigation. Surely, this is an opportunity, having regard to the fact that this House hardly ever meets, for the Minister to draw to the attention, if he wants to draw to the attention of the public, if not to the attention of the Members of this House, because they pay scant regard to any Member of this House even their own members, what the Government plans to do for drainage and irrigation. I think that we must protest about the lack of respect shown by this Minister, both the Minister who spoke on this Bill and the Minister who speaks particularly on this conservancy and for treating the House in such a short manner. After all, it is the business of the people, the business of the House, and the Minister has treated us with scant courtesy in dealing with these things in such a short time.

Cde. Kennard (replying): It is regrettable that the Hon. Member on the other side has sought to inject a number of irrelevancies into what is specifically a Bill merely to provide for increasing the membership of the Board of Commissioners of the East Demerara Water Conservancy. That is all. The Bill does not deal with drainage and irrigation in the nation of Guyana. If he wants such a Bill, such a Bill already exists but that Bill is not now before this House and I do not know the purpose of trying to prolong our busy schedule here this afternoon by dealing with matters that are simply irrelevant.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Assembly in Committee.

Bill considered and approved.

Assembly resumed.

Bill reported without Amendment, read the Third time and passed.

15.8.80

2.35-2.45 p.m.

2.35 p.m.

MINING (AMENDMENT) BILL 1980

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to amend the Mining Act to empower the Minister to enter into agreements with the United Nation Revolving Fund for Natural Resources Exploration and to charge upon the Consolidated Fund any financial contributions arising under any such agreement for replenishment of such Fund.”[The Minister of Energy and Natural Resources]

The Minister of Energy and Natural Resources (Cde. Jack): Cde.Speaker, as we all know, many developing countries are possessed of considerable natural resources and of those natural resources mineral resources play a very important part in the total economic development of their countries. The development of mineral resources, however, requires a considerable amount of capital outlay. Apart from that, whenever one explores for minerals one is taking a chance, a calculated risk. Sometimes one finds an exploitable resource and sometimes the resource is either not found or is not sufficiently large to warrant economic development.

Most Third World countries – and Guyana is no exception to this rule - find that they do not have sufficient capital to engage in meaningful exploration, exploration of an extent which would be likely to find economic reserve of the various minerals which we believe that we possess.

For some years this matter has been discussed at United Nations, and resulting from a number of meeting and Resolutions, the United Nations established a few years ago a fund which is called the United Nations Revolving Fund for Natural Resources Exploration. This fund seeks to assist developing countries, particularly, to explore for and subsequently develop their natural resources including mineral resources. Guyana seeks to become a participant and beneficiary of this Fund. We have got significant indications of gold, diamonds and phosphates in certain regions of Guyana and, as a result of our preliminary work done by the Commissioner of Geological Surveys and Mines, we were able to present to the United Nations Revolving Fund a study of a sufficiently comprehensive degree as to allow them to assess the desirability and possible benefits of continuing further exploration work.

We have been negotiating with Fund since very early this year and in June this year, to be exact on the 14th June, we published this draft Bill. Exploration for minerals in our country is governed to large extent by the weather and in order to carry out this exploration profitably, we need to start the exploration at certain specific times. With regard to an area which is in the southern part of this country, we need to have this exploration started at a time when the water is high and where, therefore, one would get the benefit of the use of water in our exploration efforts.

For this reason, even before we had actually come to the final conclusion of an Agreement with the Fund, we on our own mobilised a team of geologists to go into the area and start work with the understanding that the Fund would reimburse us for any amount of money we spent.

As I say, having published the Bill in June, we had intended that by the end of June we would have been able to have the Bill passed and everything signed. However, the Fund raised certain ancillary matters which resulted in a number of Telex messages going backward and forward between us and the Fund in the United States. As a result, the mobilisation, which we had carried out, had to be continued so that we would not lose a whole year in an exploration effort.

For this reason, we have sought an amendment to clause one which would bring this Act into operation as from the 1st July, 1980. Normally one looks askance at attempts to create legislation which would have retrospective or retroactive effect but I would urge this honorable House that in this instance it is, and it has been, in our own national interest to have proceeded in the way that we have done, for had we to wait until eventually we were able to pass this Act we would have lost an entire year. The retroactivity in this particular case does not affect adversely any interest in Guyana but in fact redounds to the benefit of us all and I would urge, in those circumstances that this House accept what is a necessary amendment.

Now turning to what is the Agreement that we have made with the Fund, basically, the situation is this. If we had to negotiate an exploration contract with a foreign enterprise, usually that enterprise would require a concession and in years gone by the enterprise would have been satisfied merely to have an exploration concession and to follow up that contract of exploration with a more substantial contract after a mineral deposit had been discovered. Today foreign companies have moved to a different position. What they require is that from the very inception you make a contract with them setting out all the terms of the contract not only at the exploration stage but at the exploitation stage. Since at the time of making such a contract we would not know what resources we actually have, our negotiation position would be rather weak and therefore we would not be in a position to get as good terms as we would like.

The U.N. Revolving Fund helps in this special case because what the Fund does is to expend its own money in bringing a resource up to a stage where it is a quantifiable resource and where a feasibility study has been done. It means thereafter if we were to negotiate with any foreign enterprise we would be in a very strong position since we would know exactly what we are negotiating over.

15.8.80

2.35-245 p.m.

The Fund is so structured that if the money is spent and nothing is found, then there is no liability on our part. If the Fund expends its money and the resources are found but it is not developed again there is no liability on our part. But if the Fund finds a worthwhile deposit and that deposit is developed then we are required to pay 2 per cent of the value of the product over a period of 15 years. That 2 percent goes back into the Fund for further development in other countries, including our own. In this instant case we envisage that the Fund will spend in the first instance something of the order of \$2.6(U.S) million and that the exploration would continue over a period of approximately five years.

I would say that all in all we stand to benefit considerably from this Fund and from the Agreement which we have made. In these circumstances, therefore, I commend this Bill which is intituled:

“ An Act to amend the Mining Act to empower the Minister to enter into agreements with the United Nations Revolving Fund for Natural Resources Exploration and to charge upon the Consolidated Fund any financial contributions arising under any such agreement for replenishment of such Fund”,

and I ask that this Bill be read Second time.

Question proposed.

2.45 p.m.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Mr. Speaker, the members of this Opposition are not unaware of the rich resources of this country. In fact, we feel that we should have been moving ahead long before now. I do not think that the Government has succeeded so far even in having the kind of efficiency and organisation in our districts where we have gold and diamonds. Much more has to be done. I speak almost with first-hand knowledge of this particular area of our country. But dealing with the Bill specifically, Mr. Speaker, I think one of the greatest errors of the People's National Congress is to function with the assumption that this country belongs to it. This concept and this feeling which undoubtedly manifest themselves so very often, undermine motivation, undermine the people's willingness to contribute dynamically for the development of Guyana.

15.8.80

2.45-2.55 p.m.

I do not think there could be any greater example than the one before the House at the moment. What is the position? The Government through the Minister entered into an agreement, completed the deal, and when all of that is finished, then subsequently, he comes to this House and he wants legislation in retrospect. I cannot see and I fail to see how any Parliamentarian he who is worth his salt and understands the concept of parliamentary democracy can sit here without speaking against this callous action on the part of the Government. We do not oppose exploration; we do not oppose feasibility studies. We have always said that the natural resources of this country are to be utilised for the economic development and for the general viability, and in the economic sense of this country, one needs to have feasibility studies.

The Opposition is not opposed also, Mr. Speaker, to the Government if it wishes to utilise the facility of the United Nations Revolving Fund but what it strongly opposes and it must oppose and it must tell the Government here and tell the nation through this forum, is the decision of the Government to continue to function in a manner that is totally unbecoming of the whole parliamentary system without going into all the other details which we complained about from time to time.

The Minister, I must say to his credit, is one who would call you and would say: Do you want any information on the matter? I must give him that credit and I must say, too, that even in this instance he called me after the Agreement. This is the reality. But one would have expected that the agreement would have been shown to the Opposition in advance, that there would have been discussion taking place, and even if the Government did not do that or did not consider it necessary to do that, then surely the Government should have brought the draft agreement to this Parliament, should have got parliamentary sanction, and then move to place its signature on the Agreement. It is like this: you belong to any committee and to any group and to any organisation and there is a big issue.

This is a big one, we are dealing with the riches of our country, with the minerals of our country, we are giving them to people to explore, the exploration will take a period of five years and it has to do with areas that are profoundly sensitive areas. Any Government that is operating in that situation - I would feel that it is commonsense - ought to carry the Opposition with it so that if at any stage anything affects our sovereignty, we would be able to stand up as a united people and defend that sovereignty. But do not wait until something happens, until something goes wrong and then come with crocodile tears and say: let us see your statesmanship; where is your patriotism? How could the Government at that stage reconcile its whole concept that it speaks of from time to time and which it re-echoed in the last Budget Speech, about consultation with the people? Where is the consultation? I challenge the Government to produce a scintilla of

15.8.80

2.45-2.55 p.m.

evidence of any consultation at all with the people of this country. This country cannot make progress, will not develop, will not be able to move forward if the P.N.C Government continues to function in this callous manner, unconcerned about the feeling, the wishes, and the aspirations of the people of this country.

Cde. Speaker, in those circumstances I must very strongly and firmly, with the deepest conviction this afternoon, record our protest. But while we record that protest, may I say, we feel that an attempt and an effort to find what we have to the economic benefit of this country is not a bad thing and ought to be encouraged. I heard a statement emanating from the lips of no less a person than the Prime Minister about oil definitely being there. Will the Minister this afternoon take the Parliament into his confidence and tell us where, when and how early? Oil, I am talking about. We want to know where, when and how early, because one would expect that if anybody speaks, and particularly the Head of the Government, he would be speaking with information available to him -- [Interruption] Oh! You have coconut oil, it was coconut oil he was talking about. One would expect that the Cde. Minister would have been that person supplying that information. Undoubtedly, the Cde. Minister attempted this afternoon to give us some explanation and he was showing me the Agreement not very long ago; it is pretty bulky and it will take some time to study and to become au fait with all its ramifications so that one can know exactly what agreement has been signed.

The Parliament is called upon to literally - because all the actions are intertwined, they cannot be separated - give sanction to an Agreement which we have not seen, an Agreement that we know nothing about. We know the bit that the Minister told us but can we really and truly say that we are fully aware of all the implications. He did speak about what will happen if nothing is found, and what will happen if there is a deposit, and he spoke of the 2 per cent. I wonder if there will be any ceiling, even if this question is far fetched, or does the Minister want from us this afternoon a blank cheque prior to that time being reached. I think it is something we would like to know.

We would like to say Cde.Speaker, that when he haserred, he obviously will not be able to defend the charge. I hope that the Cde. Minister will not this afternoon, using the words of the Cde. Minister of Agriculture, who spoke of the heavy schedule attempt to defend the charges that have been made because he would be engaging himself in an exercise in futility; there is no answer. How could there be an answer to retrospective legislation? There is none and what is more is that this Parliament did not meet since April. We had one Sitting since then. April, May, June, July, August. The Minister quite honestly drew attention to the fact that the Bill was published on the 14th June, 1980 which qualified the Bill within a week for presentation, debate

15.8.80

2.35-3.05 p.m.

and all of that. Why was the Bill not brought? Why was the House not convened? We were here, we were willing to meet and I take it, sir, you were available to the Government.

The Speaker: No. The Speaker is not available to the Government. He is available to the House.

2.55 p.m.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: I am sure you will agree that Government constitutes a significant part of the House, so, sir, you are available as you said to the House obviously by invitation of the Government. Why did they not use the availability of the Speaker to convene the House to bring the Bill at a proper time? They could have gone there and said this is one matter which has complete backing of both the Government and Opposition, they have got parliamentary sanction. The Minister would have been able to speak with greater dignity.

The Speaker: Cde. Persaud, did the Minister not attempt to explain the reason why the Bill did not come before the House? I think he was at pains to point out that certain things went wrong and they had several telex messages to and fro.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Cde. Speaker, all I would wish to say is that the members of the Opposition do not think that the explanation is satisfactory or even reasonable and stemming from that fact I proceed to say that the Government had time, the Minister had time and it should have come before. If I do not say so, Cde. Speaker, you will agree we might have the same thing recurring: Let the Government understand the feeling of the Opposition, this is not only our feeling, this is the feeling of the country. The Government goes about the affairs of the country, of the nation, of the people as if everything is its personal belongings, its personal property.

The Speaker: Cde. Persaud, you will have another chance later on in this same House to make that remark.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Cde. Speaker, may I say that if this Bill had come at the proper time, probably my contribution would have been much shorter and it would have been a positive reaction.

Move ahead, find our resources, develop our country and remove this hunger, the poverty, the hardship and misery which this country faces. We say the Government had failed,

has failed for fifteen years and so we say we oppose and protest strongly at the way and manner in which the Government goes about important matters. We have a Parliament, it must be convened, it must be called, it must be made to function effectively because ultimately and finally it is the parliamentary sanction that is required in many, many respects and particularly in relation to the matter before the House.

Cde. Jack (replying): We have become very accustomed on this side of this House to have charges hurled against us with the intention and hope, as the Hon. Member on the opposite side just mentioned, that we would not attempt to defend those charges. It is a peculiar form of a legal system that they would like to have imposed in this country where they would make charges and ask the person charged not to attempt to defend but I would in fact not only attempt to defend, but defend most vociferously.

First of all, I think that there is a misconception about the coming into effect of the Agreement. The Agreement requires that a Bill be passed charging the Consolidated Fund with the compensation money that we would pay to the replenishment fund and until this Bill is passed in this House, then the Agreement is not in effect. That is the first point. The second point, why is it that we had the Bill published and did not come to this House. Well, I did mention that they were a lot of telex messages that went back and forth.

I will give some more details. In a certain area of the Mazaruni where we intent to have exploration done, there are a number of claim holders. Because of the difficulty of delineating these claims with exact precision, the representatives of the revolving fund wanted us to take away the claims and to hand over the entire area for exploration. The Government's position was that those people had claims and that we were not prepared to do so. A number of formulas were looked at which would have satisfied both ourselves and the representatives, of the revolving fund. Eventually, it was decided that we would give them a list of the claims and that we would give them in general the total aggregate area, and that within twelve months from the signing of the document, we would give them with greater particularity the boundaries of the claims. It was in the interest of preserving certain proprietary rights of the Guyanese who were in the mining field that this further delay was occasioned.

With regard, however, to the question of consultation, I have been on record and I will reiterate it, I think it is not meet that the Hon. Member of the Opposition should seek to complain about consultation because I have made it quite clear that my Ministry and I myself personally are available to members of the Opposition not only at a formal level but also at an informal level to discuss with them any matter pertaining to my Ministry in which I know members of the

15.8.80

2.55-3.05 p.m.

Opposition, who represent certain interests in this country would also have an interest. I have issued this invitation both outside and inside this House and have given this invitation on several occasions to the Hon. Member who just spoke. Not only that, I would not like to go into all the details, he knows that over a week ago he had an opportunity of getting from me any further details and I wish to say this quiet positively that if I give members of the Opposition details, it is not in an attempt to prevent them from carrying out the functions which they feel and which they do have to carry out of scrutinising Bills in this House, irrespective of whatever information I may give them.

I do not have any objection to any criticism that may be made of the Bill itself. What I do resent most strongly however is an attempt which would charge me with failure to consult because I have been ready, I am ready and will continue to be ready. It seems to me, however, that certain members of the Opposition prefer to avail themselves of the protection of ignorance since it would, for those who are reasonable people, inhabit the latitude with which they spread their criticism and confine them to matters more germane to the question under consideration. But if they could summon up courage to accept the necessary limitations upon that latitude which would be imposed upon any reasonable person who found out the facts, I am still prepared to continue to offer them the hospitality and the invitation to visit my Ministry and discuss with me matters which they rightly claim are of concern not only to the P.N.C. Government but to members of the Opposition. I would ask that on this occasion it be recorded in this House so that when on the next occasion they want to avail themselves of this outworn criticism, we will have the Hansard there before them. That is all I wish to say, Cde. Speaker.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Assembly in Committee.

Clause 1.

Cde. Jack: Cde. Chairman, I beg to move the amendment standing in my name.

Amendment-

That after the words, "Act 1980", the following be inserted: ", and shall be deemed to have come into operation on 1st July, 1980",

Put, and agreed to.

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

Clause 2 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Assembly resumed.

Bill reported with an amendment to clause 1; as amended, considered, read the Third time and passed.

15.8.80

3.05-3.15 p.m.

3.05 p.m.

REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS AND DEATHS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1980

A Bill instituted:

“An Act to amend the Registration of Births and Deaths Act.” [The Minister of Home Affairs.]

The Minister of Home Affairs (Cde, Mingo): Cde, Speaker, I wish to move the Second Reading of the Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Bill 1980.

The Bill before this House this afternoon seeks to amend the Registration of Births and Deaths Act in such a manner as to decentralise the issuance of certified extracts of certificates of births and deaths. The Principal Act, as it now stands, provides for the keeping of registered books by the various Registrars in the Registration Divisions throughout the country. At quarterly intervals each year the Divisional Registrars are required to deliver these books to the Superintendent Registrars in charge of Registration Divisions who will then submit them to the Registrar General for preservation in the records of the Registrar General's Office in Georgetown. The indices of all certified copies and original registers are kept in this office and certified extracts are made only at the Registrar General's Office in Georgetown.

The amendment which is now sought would empower Superintendent Registrars to retain the register books in their districts. They will make indices and issue certified extracts of births and deaths right on the spot in the various registration districts throughout Guyana. The Superintendent Registrars would also have the authority to make corrections and entries. The Bill also sets out the procedures for searches and prescribes the fees to be paid in respect of these searches.

The object of this measure is to give some amount of relief to those Guyanese who live in the outlying areas and wish to obtain certified copies of certificates of births and deaths. Already we have attempted to do this but there is a requirement of an amendment of the Act and that is the reason why we have to come to this honourable House.

It would also ease the congestion at the Registrar General's Office in Georgetown. The conferment of such power on the Superintendent of Registrars makes it no longer necessary for persons from areas outside of Georgetown to flock to the Registrar General's office in Georgetown for copies as they would be in a position to obtain them in their own districts from the Superintendent of Registrars.

Question proposed.

Cde. Ram Karran: Sir, I wish to complement the Minister on being able to bring speedily before this House a matter which had some exposure during the debate on the Estimates. While I wish to compliment him I also wish to draw his attention to the fact that the Bill does not seem to satisfy all the needs. He said that it would remove the congestion at the Registrar General's Office. That is true but that does not say that a person born in Berbice and registered in Berbice and now resident in Georgetown will have a clear easy way in obtaining his or her certificate. Even if he can get it in Georgetown, the Hon. Minister ought to have pointed out those assurances.

But that is not what I wish to speak about more fully. I had to draw the Hon. Minister's attention to the fact that people who die in accidents, for instance, and who are entitled to certain benefits once they satisfy certain criteria, are seriously obstructed by officers who come under the Registrar General in being able to get certificates of death in order to invoke the rules relating to the N.I.S. I can imagine that in cases where inquests have to be held and where some time will elapse before the cause of death is established that some provision ought to be made, either in the N.I.S. legislation or in this legislation, so that people will not be hamstrung and have to wait months and months because of some subordinate in this department. Even though in this instance that I am talking about the Police brought to the officer the cause of delay and it was not until an approach was made to the Hon. Minister himself that something was done. One can imagine that this type of legislation was good for 50 or 100 years ago but with the large number of school children seeking certificates to get into schools and with the large number of Guyanese voting with their feet and departing from the shores of Guyana to evade the oppression that is in our society and needing to get certificates, one can understand the Government's attitude in the past of making the lines longer, but I think the thing has been drawn to the attention of the whole world and people want to know whether this Amendment here is going to change the situation.

I came across a ridiculous case where a man applying for a certificate, that is, the official certificate issued by the Registrar General in order to get a passport was told, "Look, all the records have been destroyed. We have not been able to make copies of them; they have been

15.8.80

3.15-3.25 p.m.

(Cde. Ram Karran continues)

destroyed and therefore we will have to wait until the Law Officers advice whether we can issue a certificate on the basis of the Immigration Agent General's certificate or whether -- the man was stopped. He cannot leave the country because he cannot get a passport because he cannot get a certificate because the records in the Registrar General's Office have been destroyed. I am talking about the period 1895 to 1897. I mean that might look long to us but surely in a Government that is not a long time and there is no excuse whatever except for carelessness that these records have been destroyed.

3.15 p.m.

I hope, sir that the Hon. Minister will ensure that the law, as has been brought before us, will bring about some real relief to the people who seek services in these places. I think that the fee for searching and the fee generally for a certificate are both high having regard to the fact that in addition to the fees, people have to travel long distances. I am wondering why the people cannot write the relevant section of the registry and have their certificates mailed to them, instead of having to come and spend such a long time at offices, and having to pay such heavy travelling costs to get to the offices in order to get the certificates.

Cde.Reepu Daman Persaud: A very short contribution, Cde.Speaker. You will recall that I have advocated very strongly for improvement in this department and I have been speaking on it for some time. It took quite a long time before we could get some action. Nevertheless, this Bill is welcome and it is an excellent idea to decentralise and to ensure that we have an office not only in New Amsterdam, but in as many areas as possible so that people can get their birth certificates easily. But may I also in the same breath, Mr. Speaker, draw to the attention of the Minister that congestion still exists at the Registrar General's Office. There is still delay. We have not reached the point where one can pick up one's birth certificate easily. When I am talking about easily, I mean you might not get it in a week, two weeks, three weeks; it could be three months too. My colleague was advocating that the information could be sent by way of post. You send your sixty cents and probably postage stamps for it to be sent to you, if you were to do that, you would never get any birth certificate.

The position still is that they may have paid a long time before but they still cannot get their birth certificates. I hope the Minister will not feel that I am repeating the same thing. I think you need to look at, first, space and accommodation. Do not close your eyes to these facts. I go there regularly, I have to go.

Secondly, there is staffing because you talk about correction. Sometime ago I drew the Minister's attention to the section which gives him the right to empower the Registrar General to make certain minor corrections. I am sure the Minister will concede that nothing is being done in that particular area. People still have to follow the erroneous entry system by going to the court to get the Magistrate to make an order and even if you were to examine the work in that respect, it is still not as efficient as anyone would like it to be. Things like incorrect spelling, in the case of male, where female is stated, and all these minor things, could be corrected by the Registrar General's Office. Such an exercise from my own experience requires an officer to deal with it constantly. We can have a draft affidavit "ronsloed" and all you have to do is fill up that form and go before a Commissioner of Oaths, return it to the office and the correction is effective. You would have taken away a lot of burden from the magistrate; he would have had to sit down and be involved in that kind of exercise.

I suggest, also, the Registrar General could be made a Justice of the Peace or a Commissioner of Oaths so that the oath could be administered right there. Free, so that the public would not have to pay. Let the people fill the form, let the oath be administered so that if the information is false, the person can be prosecuted.

Now, there is the other point, Cde.Speaker, which I had advocated before, the birth certificate is too long, too much information, you must get mistakes. If a person's name is registered, that is, the first name, and the surname goes into that same column and it is repeated in the father's name column, that person gets "Singh Singh" or "Persaud Persaud" or "Jones Jones". This is a terrible thing. There, again the magistrate has to remove one. I think we need action. I wonder if the Minister on this occasion can stand up and say "I will see that something is done particularly in this area, this month, if possible, Monday, where an officer will be made available from the department. A junior one can go in, do work that is not so important and someone who is experienced can take over this function so that people can have corrections effected.

There are many, many people who are still applying for passports, applying to be married, names with wrong spelling, with wrong names. The time factor is involved, so the act is completed with the wrong names.

15.8.80

3.15-3.25 p.m.

I do call for more action in this area and, of course, if you do it, the touts that are around, you will remove them from that area. I hope that the many, many self-appointed registrars throughout the country will soon go into oblivion, they will cease to exist. We need to protect the people who are virtual criminals and who have been robbing them for years, taking \$25 and \$30 for a single birth certificate.

Cde. Mingo (replying): Cde. Speaker, may I deal first of all with the point made by Cde. Ram Karran with respect to accidents. Now, he did say later that it was the responsibility of the Commissioner of Police to be able to give the information but what I have been told further is that the information really has to be obtained from the registrars in the districts and this does cause some amount of difficulty, but we are going to look at it to see if we can improve the situation.

Now, he mentioned the question of school children and passports. May I say this and I have checked this out myself. With respect to school children, it is not necessary for a school child who is taking an examination to produce what you may call a certified copy of a birth certificate. Nor, I was told this up this morning, I checked on this, is it necessary applying for a passport to produce a certified copy. I checked Senior Immigration Officer this morning and he told me that is not necessary so it means, perhaps, the only reason why people have to flock to the Registrar's Office to get birth certificates, is that they want to travel to certain countries overseas. Even then, I was told, only a few countries demand the certified copy. The point is, I think there is need for some promotional work, some P.R. work because what one finds is that several persons had not in the past sought to obtain the certificates from the registrars in the districts. We have already started to do some promotional work to get people in the districts to get the certificates as soon as possible because the difficulty comes if the people do not bother with certificates and then when the time comes for them to do certain things to go to an examination, then they have to run. You can help in this area too. If you can get people to get in the habit of collecting the certificate at an early stage, certainly the difficulties which we have would not be present.

3.25 p.m.

Cde. Ram Karran also referred to price. Sixty cents is a bit ridiculous. For instance, the Cde. Registrar General was telling me that one form alone costs \$2.75. The people have to pay 60 cents, so you see what the subsidy is?

15.8.80

3.25-3.35 p.m.

May I now turn to the remarks of Cde. Persaud. He said that congestion still exists. We know that people still storm the Registrar General's Office and we have attempted several measures to help. You know we have tried staff changes. We have tried all sorts of things even the police. You know the police visited. The police have also charged people for certain offences. It is not that we are not trying. There is the question of space. We appreciate the fact that perhaps we need some more accommodation, but the question is that there are certain items of built-in equipment and construction which are there and it is difficult to get them out unless we are getting the necessary equipment. We will not be able to go into any type of building. A lot of money would have to be spent. Certainly, we do not have that now. It means, therefore, what we have, we will have to do with for the time being. But, we are making every effort to have things re-organised so that things can work more smoothly.

We will look at the question of making the Registrar General a Commissioner of Oaths because this is useful. Thanks for drawing that to my attention. The question of short certificates, Cde. Speaker, before we thought of decentralisation, we had already approached the law officers to have legislation framed to produce these short certificates. But, Cde. Speaker, it takes a little time, we thought this measure was very urgent so we set about to bring it right away.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Assembly in Committee.

Bill considered and approved.

Assembly resumed.

Bill reported without Amendment read the Third time and passed.

GUYANA PANDITS' COUNCIL (INCORPORATION) (AMENDMENT)

BILL 1980

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to amend the Guyana Pandit's Council (Incorporation) Act 1967.”

[Cde.Sukhu]

Cde.Sukhu: Cde. Speaker, I beg to move the Second Reading of the Guyana Pandit's Council (Incorporation) (Amendment) Bill 1980. The Bill before the House is a very simple one. The Bill seeks to amend the Guyana Pandit's Council (Incorporation) Act 1967 to make provision for the election of the executive committee of the Council every five years instead of annually. The organisation would like to have a five-year period because the one-year is too short for its

15.8.80

3.25-3.35 p.m.

planned programme. We propose to erect a temple in Georgetown and operate on the East Coast Demerara. There are also other religious, social and cultural activities planned for the period. As a matter of fact, this organisation for the past three years has been involved in several activities. Cde. Speaker, these are some of the planned programmes of the Guyana Pandit's Council and that is the reason why it seeks the amendment.

Question proposed.

Cde. Ram Karran: Your Honour, when this Bill was introduced sometime ago to incorporate this body, members on this side of the House took very strong exception. They took exception because members felt that this Bill was unconstitutional, and it still is. It seeks to put above in the secular society, a group of men no better than anybody else. One must go back to the dim and distant past, in very early history of the development of the Indian Society when the society was divided, perhaps scientifically, where workers' chores or work or their activities were identified with what we know as caste. I think it was Changla Khannate in his Dharpan, who referred to this, the poor caste. The poor caste and the Brahmin caste:

What it says is that Brahmins, those who belong to the Brahmin caste performed actions: they gave gifts, they took gifts, but more particularly, that they studied gharam, that is, knowledge, education, and big gharam, which is science. But today, you know, sir, in the secular world, that if we were to isolate a group of people--

3.35 p.m.

The Speaker: Cde. Ram Karran, is not religion one of the freedoms we are entitled to practice in this country and if the Hindus, those who subscribe to the Sanatanist faith, agree that this is part of the requirement of their religion, what is the complaint?

Cde. Ram Karran: On the other hand, if religion or if any sect or any group is bigoted enough as to contravene the rules of modern secular society, then that –

The Speaker: This Bill is not dealing with that. This Bill is simply seeking to permit people who practice a particular faith to subscribe to it. Of course, I am not saying that the Constitution does not say that we must have a secular state, but it also provides for religion, doesn't it?

15.8.80

3.25-3.35 p.m.

Cde. Ram Karran: This Bill particularly deals with the extension and undemocratic move on the part of this group, but I am only trying--

The Speaker: This is another aspect.

Cde. Ram Karran: What I am trying to say, sir, is that the Bill itself is reprehensible, the Bill itself which seeks to take from among our society a group or men, called Brahmins, and put them on a higher pedestal to be able to be educated and to be able to absorb and teach- not teach- but to be able to know science at the expense of the other people is itself unconstitutional.

However, having made that point - I do not subscribe to the view and I do not think that any reasonable follower of the Sanatan Dharma would subscribe to the view that this irreligious activity should be perpetuated in a society such as ours. Even in India, as you know, there are many people, reformists, who have broken away from the reactionary..... thesis and some, even more reactionary. That is how you have so much in the early days of Hinduism the breakaway by Buddhism, by the Arya Sanatists and all that sort of thing. In this country today in the Christian Churches, efforts are being made to remove the monopoly of men in preaching the word of God - it is now being extended to women - but while we are going into a very revolutionary direction in the case of the Christian Churches, there is this sect which does not, in my opinion, by its rules tend to bring about changes in this society. However, I must attribute that to the P.N.C., the Government which seeks to use reactionary, ancient and archaic forms to bolster its position.

That is why this Bill was brought in the first case, but let me address my mind now to the explanation given by my Hon. Friend as to the reason for this particular Bill to extend the life of this Pandits Council from one year to five years. You know, sir that in a democratic institution - and this applies to the Government as to every organisation - frequent elections are healthier. They give the people an opportunity to examine - if my friend Mr.Sukhu says that they have to erect a temple in Georgetown and they have several activities planned, programmes all over the country, if the planned programmes are going all right then naturally they will be elected year after year. If, however, there is rascality, stealing of money for the building of the churches - I am not saying that they are doing that; I am not prepared to say that they are doing that - but if the people find them doing that, then naturally they will reject them after the first election.

This five year period really is to insulate them and when you examine the organisation itself you will find that this Parliament is insulating a father and son perpetuity which is against the interest even of those people who are in the Bill. He is introducing the Bill because he has got instructions. Why did they not ask my friend the cde. Sitting to the right of Mr. Sukhu. He is a practicing Pandit. I hear him on the air night after night, day after day. Why did he not accept? Because he does not agree with this Bill because they want to supplant him in this House and the time is going to come. This House, this Government and this Parliament ought to work along with people who have ideas, who have intentions of a deceptive nature.

My friend who moved the Bill is not a Brahmin. I am not going to ask him if he is a Chamar, but he is not a Brahmin.

The Speaker: Cde. Ram Karran, what relevance that has, whether he is a Brahmin or a Chamar or what? He is a Member of Parliament and he is entitled to move the Bill.

Cde. Ram Karran: He told me privately that he “ent deh behin de t’ing”. That is the thing that matters. My friend who is there with the thing--

The Speaker: Cde. Ram Karran, I am sure that is not part of the contribution. You have been talking to Cde.Reepu Daman Persaud.

Cde. Ram Karran: I am telling you that the Bill does not have the support of the people and it cannot have. What are the Aryan Samajs going to say about this sort of thing? How Parliament is being used.

The Speaker: The Samaj has nothing to do with this. That is a different sect; that has nothing to do with the Sanatanists. No absolutely not.

Cde. Ram Karran: Intelligent people in this country are bound to examine secular as well as religious-- I am convincing my family who is sitting opposite me here. I am sure that he is convinced that we ought not to proceed with this sort of rascality which this House embraces at this moment.

The Speaker: I thought you had so many other things you could have spoken instead of wasting the time of the House. Cde.Sukhu.

Cde.Sukhu (replying): Cde. Chairman, as far as I am aware the Bill before this honorable House is not unconstitutional or undemocratic. As far as I am aware, it is a Bill- [Cde. Ram Karran: “Were they consulted?”] All Hindus were consulted and they have the necessary mandate. The amendment is simple and the statements made were rather erroneous.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Assembly in Committee.

Clauses 1 and 2 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 3.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: I wonder if I can ask a question on clause 3. It is an enquiry: is the mover of the Bill in possession of information that the majority of Pandits have given their approval and sanction for this measure to be introduced in this House? If so, could he give the House the number of Pandits who have indicated that they are in favour of this measure, the date when they gave that approval and, further, if it is true that when the last meeting of the Pandits Council was held, that meeting was published in the classified sanction of the Chronicle, hardly visible? Further, what was the attendance at that meeting, who moved the Resolution, who seconded it and how many voted in favour? Because we are going to be called upon to vote for the measure and we want to be satisfied as Members of this House. The petition was signed by two people and if you look at those two names they are from the same blood stream.

The Speaker: I thought that all Pandits were related in some way or the other.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: One would have thought, further, that a Bill of this nature involving a country with about 300 Pandits or more would have seen a substantial number, that we would have seen five or five times that number. They do not have that number. I wonder what percentage of the whole Council took the decision, Cde. Chairman. I am sure that the Comrade will be able to answer those questions.

Clause 3 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Assembly resumed.

Bill reported without amendment; read the Third time and passed.

MORAVIAN MISSION COUNCIL INCORPORATION (AMENDMENT)

BILL 1980

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to amend the Moravian Mission Council Incorporation Ordinance.”

[Cde. Fowler.]

Cde. Fowler: Cde. Speaker, I beg to move the Second Reading of this Bill which seeks to amend the Moravian Mission Council Incorporation Ordinance Chapter 218 of the 1953 Edition for the purpose of establishing and the Provisional Board of Trustees of the Moravian Church in Guyana, as a replacement for the existing Moravian Council and to provide for incidental matters.

15.8.80

3.35-3.45 p.m.

Cde. Speaker, from 1971, no foreigners have been involved in the Board of the Moravian Church. What this Bill seeks to do is to ask this House to allow the Mission to have full control by a local board. This Bill is seeking to have the legal authority for the running by the local board of the Moravian Mission Council.

Question proposed

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Assembly in Committee.

Bill considered and approved.

Assembly resumed.

Bill reported without Amendment, read the Third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, "That this Assembly do now adjourn until Monday, 18th August, 1980, at 2 .p.m. [The Minister of Home Affairs.]

Adjourned accordingly at 3.53 p.m.