

Ministers (8)

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| Cde. U.E. Johnson, M.P., Minister of Co-operatives | – (Absent – on leave) |
| Cde. J.N. Maitland – Singh, M.P., Minister, Consumer Protection, in the Ministry of Trade and Consumer Protection | – (Absent) |
| Cde. S. Prashad, M.P., Minister in the Ministry of Agriculture | |
| Cde. Sallahuddin, M.P., Minister, Finance, in the Ministry of Economic Planning and Finance | |
| Cde. R.E. Williams, M.P., Minister, Fisheries, in the Ministry of Agriculture | |
| *Cde. Y.V. Harewood – Benn, M.P., Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister | |
| *Cde. H. Rashid, M.P., Minister, Office of the President | – (Absent) |
| *Cde. R.A. Van West – Charles, M.P., Minister, Health, in the Ministry of Public Welfare | |

Ministers of State (3)

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| Cde. M. Corrica, M.P., Minister of State for Culture, in the Ministry of Education, Social Development and Culture | |
| Cde. R.C. Fredericks, A.A., M.P., Minister of State for Youth and Sport, in the Ministry of National Development | |
| *Cde. C.E. Wright, M.P., Minister of State for Construction, in the Ministry of Works and Transport | – (Absent – on leave) |

Parliamentary Secretaries (4)

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| Cde. A.W. Bend – Kirton – Holder, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary, Women’s Affairs and Housing | |
| Cde. P.A. Rayman, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister | |
| Cde. D.A.N. Ainsworth, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary, Education, Social Development and Culture | |
| Cde. B. Bhaggan, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary, Foreign Affairs | |

*Non-elected Member

Other Members (22)

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| Cde. M. Ally, M.P. | – (Absent) |
| Cde. M. Armagon, M.P. | – (Absent) |
| Cde. B. Beniprashad, M.P. | |
| Cde. J.B. Caldeira, M.P. | |
| Cde. A.A. Chin, M.P. | |
| Cde. J.P. Chowritmootoo, J.P., M.P. | |
| Cde. E.B. Davidson, M.P. | |
| Cde. H. Doobay, M.P. | – (Absent) |
| 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. R.N. Primo, M.P. | – (Absent – on leave) |
| 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 – Nacimiento, J.P., M.P., Government Chief Whip | |

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

Cde. R. Bishop, M.S., M.P.
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 – Pomeroon/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

Other Members (8)

Cde. J. Jagan, M.P.,
Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud, J.P., M.P.,
Minority Chief Whip
Cde. N. Persaud, M.P.
Cde. C.C. Collymore, M.P.
Cde. S.F. Mohamed, M.P.
Cde. I. Basir, M.P.
Cde. C.C. Belgrave, M.P.
Cde. Dalchand, J.P., M.P.

- (Absent)

(ii) United Force (2)

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

- (Absent)

OFFICERS

Clerk of the National Assembly – Cde. Frank Narain, A.A.
Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly – Cde. M.B. Henry

PRAYERS

NATIONAL ASSEMBLYANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKERLeave to Members

The Speaker: Leave has been granted for today's sitting to Cdes. Hoyte, Wright and Primo.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following Report was laid:

Annual Report of the Guyana Prison Service for the year 1979. [The Vice – President, Parliamentary Affairs and Party/State Relations on behalf of the Minister of Home Affairs.]

QUESTIONS TO MINISTERS

Cde. Basir: I wish to ask the Minister of Health in the Ministry of Public Welfare, the Question standing on the Order Paper:

Is the Minister, Health, aware that the stand-by electricity plant at the Suddie Hospital, Essequibo, is out of order, with consequential severe inconvenience and loss of efficiency at the Hospital? Will the Minister say what steps he proposes to take or what efforts are being made to have the situation remedied?

The Minister of Health in the Ministry of Public Welfare (Cde. Van- West Charles): Cde. Speaker, in reply to the question raised by my Parliamentary colleagues in relation to the stand-by plant at Suddie Hospital, I wish, first of all to say that the stand-by plant is in working order. It is not out of working order. What is happening is that it has occasioned a few break-downs over the past year. This is due to additional electrical medical equipment which has been supplied to the hospital in an attempt to upgrade the services of the Suddie Hospital. These problems, however, are only occasioned when the electricity supply within the Suddie area is bad. Also I think I should note that the stand-by plant is one which has been at the Suddie hospital prior to the rural electrification programme, and on our budget for next year includes rehabilitation for Suddie Hospital and we should be looking at the additional electrical stand-by facilities to cope with these outages we have been having.

Cde. Basir: I would like to ask the honorable Minister if he is aware that the pure water supply at the said hospital is in a bad state and on several occasions nurses and patients usually fetch water. If the Minister is aware can he say what efforts are being made, or what efforts can be made for the hospital for the new year.

The Speaker: yes, Cde. Basir, when you put that question in you will get an answer.

MOTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OR SITTING OF THE ASSEMBLY AND MOVED BY A MINISTERMotion to suspend Standing Order No. 68(2)

The Vice – President, Parliamentary Affairs and Party/State Relations (Cde. Ramsaroop): Cde. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 83, I am seeking your leave to move the suspension of Standing Order 68(2) to enable the Motion as item 2 on the Order Paper to be taken as the first item of Public Business as for today.

The Speaker: Leave is granted.

Cde. Ramsaroop: Cde. Speaker, with your leave, I now move the suspension of Standing Order 68(2) for the purpose which I described.

Question put and agreed to.

Standing order 68(2) suspended.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

MOTIONS

SYMPATHY ON THE DEATH OF CDE. JOHN FERNANDES

Be it resolved that this National Assembly records its deep regret at the death of Cde. John Fernandes and pays tribute to the distinguished service which he rendered to Guyana and to its Parliament and directs that an expression of its sympathy be conveyed to his sorrowing widow and children. [Vice – President, Works and Transport.]

Vice – President, Works and Transport (Cde. Steve Narine): Cde. Speaker, we meet in this honorable Assembly to pay tribute to a prominent son of Guyana, who has distinguished himself in many ways for over a half century. A man of humble origin, who during his life time rose to become an outstanding personality in his own right. In a number of ways, Cde. Speaker, he gave service with dedication, commitment and honor, with industry and zeal during a life time that was punctuated with achievement and satisfaction both in private life and in his public life. No tribute can really portray a man as he actually was. The best that can be hoped for is an approximation from which all that is false has been expunged and in the course of what is true has been set forth, whether by statement or by implication. If the man of whom I speak is to be made to live again it must be by virtue of the many significant things he had done, and above all by the ideals by which he lived. In his family and among relatives and friends he was seen as a man of outstanding moral and spiritual strength. He was a very good son, husband, father and friend. The man of whom I speak, Cde. Speaker, is John Alvro Fernandes, humanist, businessman, legislator, member of many organizations and a devoted Christian. John Fernandes, Cde. Speaker, was born on 12th June, 1901 at Plaisance, East Coast Demerara. His parents were first generation Portuguese in Guyana. He started to work twelve days before his 12th birthday as a Cashier at William Forgarty's Limited. He worked hard and from a humble beginning he soon began to handle his family's dry goods business. In 1924 he was married to Alva Jardine and the union produced 14 children, 7 boys and 7 girls, all of whom have distinguished themselves in their chosen fields. Soon after his marriage his father died. He therefore, had to sell the family dry goods business in order to pay his debts. In 1925 he left the bright lights and easy life of Georgetown and went to the Wallaba Forest of the Demerara River to start a new life at Waratilla landing in the Kamuni Creek. He worked in the Forest for over 40 years, in the course of which he became one of the most knowledgeable persons in the production of charcoal and wallaba products. In order to sell the things he produced in the forest he went into the export business, selling charcoal into United Kingdom and wallaba products to the countries in the Caribbean. This led him into the Shipping business in the early days when the charcoal trade sustained commercial life countries in the Caribbean. In 1969 he discontinued his forestry operation and concentrated his efforts in shipping. His efforts in this field led to the establishment of the firm John Fernandes Limited, which bears his name to this day. During his life time he was a devoted Christian who served the Roman Catholic Church and his countrymen with his unlimited charity. For this he received the knight of St. Gregory from Pope Paul XXIII.

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(Cde. Naraine continues)

Besides serving his church well he spent most of his time giving sterling service to his country and countrymen. In 1947 he was elected to the Legislative Council as the representative of Georgetown Central. In addition, he served as Chairman of the Rice Marketing Board, the Chamber of Commerce, Kitty Village Council and St. Vincent DePaul Society. He was also founder President of the St. Stanislaus College Association.

Although I had known him for many years, it was not until I had had the privilege of working with him that I was able to experience the strength of his character, the depth of his compassion and the extent of his charity. I refer here, Cde. Speaker, to the time when John and I served on the Committee for the rehabilitation and re-settlement who were displaced as a result of the social disturbance of 1964. It was in our deliberations on matters before the Committee that I was also able to experience the depth of his feeling for human suffering and misery. Ever since that time a deep and abiding friendship was cultivated between us. That friendship was sustained until his death. Therefore, personally I would say, Cde. Speaker, that I have lost a friend whose virtue and Christian values I would forever remember. Our country and nation have also lost a worthy son and servant. He would be remembered throughout Guyana for the words of wisdom and encouragement given by him from time to time in his goodwill programme over Radio Demerara, as it was then. He would be remembered particularly for the thoughts of St. Christopher which he left with his listeners at the end of each of his broadcasts every Sunday morning for twenty-five years. He was, Cde. Speaker, Chairman of the St. Christopher Movement.

For the outstanding service he rendered to his country and countrymen he was made a companion of the British Empire in 1965 by Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. He had the distinguished privilege of receiving the award from the Queen herself when she visited this country immediately prior to the granting of Independence in 1966. He was known to all as “Honest John,” a name befitting him admirably as a good man and a worthy son of Guyana. It is this name that he took with him when he departed his life for higher service in the next.

“Honest John” had a wonderful, happy family life. Among his surviving relatives I would like to mention his son and my good friend Bunny Fernandes, the Chairman of the National Parks Commission, who reminds us in many respects of his illustrious father. On behalf of the People’s National Congress and the Government of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, I would like in bidding John Fernandes his last farewell, to extend to his family our very deep and sincere sympathy. A name as his cannot die. It will live on as being a guiding light for many to follow.

Cde. Speaker, I have greatest pleasure in moving the Motion standing in my name.

Motion proposed.

Cde. Ram Karran: Your Honor, I would like on behalf of my colleagues – and indeed I do not think that on a measure like this that there should be any division in the Assembly – to join in the sentiments by my friend the hon. Vice President, Works and Transport, in expressing sympathy to the relatives of the late hon. Member Mr. John Fernandes, and to say that we are sure that his popularity and his friendship and his kindness to his family will be greatly felt by all of us in this country. I have no doubt that what the hon. Vice President said was accurate, that he was a most popular man.

I knew Mr. Fernandes sometime in the 1940s. I remember when we had the T_____ strike in the Transport and Harbours Department he was of considerable assistance to the employee of the Transport

and Harbours Department who were on strike. In those days it was a very serious thing to go on strike and it was good to get a Water Street Businessman to assist. He assisted, I can assure you, in a very tangible manner, when most of us were not certain of the future. I refer to the period when Colonel T_____, the then General Manager, had banished a number of union leaders into the remote interior. He did come to our aid and sustenance at the time.

I know that he was a dedicated Member of the Legislature in 1947 but I do recall talking to him before that period when he had often said that he had no legislative ambitions. But I remember that he came into the fray with the nomination of Janet Jagan, I remember well that Mr. Fernandes – I dare not call him comrade because he was an _____ enemy of communism. In the Parliament he said he was not opposed to socialism but he was definitely opposed to atheistic communism. It is for that reason that he did enter the Legislature and he did, as far as I can remember, a good job in representing his views which were honest views, which were views no one had any feeling that he did not express. Notwithstanding the difference in views and in opinion, John Fernandes remained a friend of everybody. I have had the experience of serving under him in the Rice Marketing Board and even though we had different views on certain matters, on the Board we found that our views were identical. His conscience and the feeling for the working class people were clearly expressed in the period when he was Chairman and even after he became an ordinary member like myself.

I have known and met many of the people who worked with him in his concern on Water Street and I am certain that what they said and what other people said was that John Fernandes Limited paid higher wages than any other concern in Water Street. I know he was very proud of it because he has often said the experience which he has gained over the years in serving on Boards and Committees will sadly be missed by younger people who serve in these Committees now. In fact, it is a great tragedy for our country, a young country like this, where our very experienced people are passing away.

As my friend said, John Fernandes was dedicated to the church and I think that the church has influenced his actions to a very great degree so that he has come out to be the person and the personality that he was in our society. I do not know of one instance where an issue in this Legislature benefited the people that he was opposed to it. That is why I feel that we have a great debt to pay for his straight-forwardness, for his honesty and for his positive approach to the problem that affect the working people. Even though, as you know, Sir, my views on these matters, I cannot in any instance find John Fernandes in this Chamber or outside of this Chamber speaking against the interest of the working people, although I did not share his view, his very strong criticisms, his _____ against the positive system of communism and socialism.

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Cde. Ram Karran (continued): However Sir, I want to join with my friends once again in extending to his family, it is such a large family, and to join with my friends in expressing to them our very deep sympathy and understand that only time can heal the wound that have been created by passing of this great Guyanese.

Cde. Feilden Singh: Mr. Speaker, there can be no doubt that the motion before the Assembly has its unanimous support. I would like to associate myself with the remarks made by the previous two speakers. Guyana indeed has lost one of its most illustrious sons 'honest' John Fernandes Senior. The fact that he was universally known as 'honest' John is in itself a glowing tribute. His death is a personal loss to me. He was in fact my confirmation Godfather, he was my friend, he was my mentor. One consolation perhaps is the fact that he has left children to carry on in his footsteps. Notably among them Bunny Fernandes, Chairman of the National Parks Commission, who is doing free of charge such a wonderful service to Guyana. That is perhaps one consolation. His other children are equally distinguished in their particular fields. Mr. Chairman, I first met Uncle John when I was a small boy traveling from Buxton on the train going to St. Stanislaus College. My brother Richard Benedict Singh now, used to throw me on his bicycle to the college across there, for we could not afford to pay the charge of taking a bicycle up and down. We approached John Fernandes and asked him for permission to keep the bicycle under his house in Lamaha Street and he readily agreed as he so readily agreed to do anything that he could do to help people, in this world, in this country. Mr. Chairman, on the next occasion that I was personally associated with him was when St. Stanislaus College prepared a class for confirmation at Brickdam. I was a little boy from Buxton. I did not know anybody in Georgetown to be my confirmation Godfather. Mr. brother Compton Singh, who recently retired as Government Chief Labour Officer, he asked him to be my confirmation Godfather, and he readily agreed. He took me to Church, he placed his hand on my shoulder and took on the responsibilities of being my confirmation Godfather and after the service in the car he gave me – thirty two years ago – he gave me this prayer book. I still have it today. I still have it. He banded it to me and he said in memory of your confirmation here. Here it is, I have it, and I have always treasured it as I treasure the memory of that great man.

My next association with him was as a member of the Catholic Youth Organisation in Robb Street. It no longer exist. I think it is a restaurant now. But my first exercise in public speaking was under the tutorage of John 'Honest' Fernandes Senior. He coached a team from the Catholic Youth Organisation to take part in the Dargan Shield Debate. John Fernandes did not have a university education, but I was amazed at his ability, his analytical mind and the way in which he coached us you to debate a particular subject. Who were the members of that team? I was a member of that team. Joe Sabola, Appeal Court Judge, he became a lawyer, he was a member of that team. Eddie Fredericks, a lawyer and Head of Shell was a member of that team. Edmon Caleb, Harry Rogers and a few others. He coached them and for four consecutive years, the records will show the C.Y.O. under John Fernandes tutorage won the Dargan Shield Competition, for four consecutive years.

I remember distinctly our team from the C.Y.O. debating against Bishops High School and one of the members of the team was the President's sister, Jessie Burnham, a good debator. But team work on the part of the C.Y.O. team, the way in which John Fernandes coached us caused us to win that debate against Bishops High School.

The beginning of my life, public speaking, John Fernandes was responsible for it. Joe Sabola, the present Appeal Court Judge will tell you the same thing. Eddie Fredericks, head of the Shell Organisation

will tell you the same thing. Their public speaking began under John Fernandes tutorage. A man as I repeat, not with a university education. You do not need a university education to have the ability to analytically approach a subject and be able to deal with it. Mr. Speaker, as a politician, and I was a small boy in those days, but the records are there and the tributes have been made. As a politician John Fernandes character was unblemished, as a businessman, as a entrepreneur in Guyana opening up industries. In my humble opinion he was second to none. As an employer, he was not merely an employee, he was more, he was a father to his employees. You ever heard a strike at John Fernandes Limited, you ever heard of problems? Very, very seldom. I cannot remember. There may have been one or two accidents, but with the frequency with which it occur on other industries, you ever heard of it there? My hon. friend Mr. Ram Karran has attested to the fact that John Fernandes's wages are one of the highest, if not the highest in the country. In his personal life, as a husband and as a father, he was exemplary. By his death Guyana has lost, I have lost. I only wish Guyana could produce more men of his character and sense of values. To his sorrowing wife, children and other relatives, on behalf of the United Force and on my own behalf I extend our deepest and heartfelt sympathy.

The motion before the Assembly has our unqualified support. Thank you.

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2:30 p.m.

/Members stood in silence for one minute./Motion carried.APPROVAL OF FINANCIAL PAPER NO. 5/1981

Be it resolved that this National Assembly approves of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 5/1981 – Supplementary Estimates totalling \$80,121,990 for the period ended 12th December, 1981. /Minister, Finance, for Vice – President, Economic Planning and Finance/

The Speaker: Cde. Sallahuddin.

Minister, finance, in the Ministry of Economic Planning and Finance (Cde. Sallahuddin): Cde. Speaker, in accordance with article 171 (2) of the Constitution I signify that Cabinet has recommended for consideration by the National Assembly the Motion for the approval of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 5/1981 – Supplementary Estimate totalling \$80,121,990 for the period ended 12th December, 1981.

Assembly in Committee of Supply.Motion proposed.

The Chairman: I will deal with items 1, 2, 7, and 8. (Pause) Item 39 to 43. (Pause) On the Capital Estimates, items 6 to 9.

Hon. Member Mr. Singh.

Mr. M.F. Singh: Item 9, Plant Maintenance and Hire Division, Purchase of Equipment. I spoke on this on the last occasion when supplementary provision was being sought for \$660,551 and we were given the explanation that cars were bought and other things were done. On the last occasion it was \$660,551 that was being requested and it was granted. What is now being requested is approximately \$350,000. The legend says “To purchase vehicles, equipment and tools.” I thought that we were told on the last occasion that the vehicles had been purchased. What is the position? Are we purchasing more vehicles and equipment and tools? We have many different workshops and we seem to be setting up something else. I wonder whether we can get some explanation as to these “vehicles, equipment and tools.”

The Chairman: we are also dealing with items 18 and 19. Cde. Vice – President Naraine.

The Vice – President, Works and Transport (Cde. Naraine): Item 9, Capital Estimates. Cde. Chairman, the hon. Member is right in his statement that this sum is required for the purchase of additional vehicles. They comprise cars, Land Rovers, two auto cars and a small quantity of tools and tarpaulins, etc. For the workshop.

In relation to the cars, the reason for this expenditure is that a number of officials who are eligible for cars or car allowances have elected to these Government – owned cars rather than to take the car allowance and so it became necessary to purchase some additional cars.

The two auto cars were used vehicles purchased from Hinterland Road Construction Co. Ltd. They were required to pull two low beds which are owned by Plant Maintenance and Hire Division. That is the explanation which I can give, Cde. Chairman.

The Chairman: Current Estimates, items 70 to 72 on page 10. (Pause) Capital Estimates, items 10 to 16.

Cde. N. Persaud: Item 13 and item 16 on page 3, Capital Estimates. Item 13, Ministry of Finance, subhead 12, Outstanding Liabilities as per 1980-12-31. I have noted here, sir, that the voted provision at the beginning of the year was \$4,107,000. A Supplementary provision of \$1.5 million was

sought. Today, however, the House is being asked to approve the large sum of \$26,800,000. We read in the legend that this sum is “To pay liabilities of Ministries and Departments to Government Corporations and Companies.”

I should like the Cde. Minister to inform us this afternoon, first of all, what are the liabilities and, arising out of that, perhaps I could ask a second question to avoid my having to get up for a supplementary, Whether this type of liability should not have come under the respective Ministries rather than all coming under the Ministry of Finance.

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Cde. Narbada Persaud (continued): And 16, sir, Capital Contribution to the Guyana Electricity Corporation, we have noted at the beginning of the year the sum of \$20,000,000 was already approved and now this afternoon the Assembly is being asked to approve the sum of \$992,406. We are being told that this sum is to provide for further capital contribution to the G.E.C., that this amount has already been advanced from the contingencies fund. Cde. Speaker, I think, once again, the Assembly ought to be told of the true position as far as the G.E.C. is concerned. We have been experiencing once again, starting from about a month ago, very frequent black-outs. Here we are being told to provide for further capital contribution. When will it ever end? Three years ago we had a big debate in this Assembly and we were told that this thing would have already come to an end. Years go by and large sums of money are being requested to be approved by this Assembly as capital contributions to put the G.E.C. in order. Twenty million dollars at the beginning of the year, now again, almost another million. We would like to be told when this thing will come to an end. What plans the Government has, if any at all to relieve the population of this country of the outages and the black-outs we have been experiencing, and, of course, the Cde. Minister of Labour will tell us all in this Assembly that this has been affecting production in this country.

Mr. M.F. Singh: Mr. Chairman, Item 12, Loans to Guyana Transport Services Limited. I do not want to dwell on the inadequacies of the Guyana Transport Services Limited. I think they have been talked about so often in this Assembly that we are all quite fully aware of it. We have changed school hours in order to fit in – to try and alleviate the situation. Has it really worked? Will the honourable Minister say whether it has really worked, whether it has caused any improvement in the system? There are some people who have very serious doubts about that and about the repercussions of it. It is now being requested that we vote another \$800,000 to the Guyana Transport Limited, but the fact of the matter is that we really need to take an indepth look at the whole of the Guyana Transport Services Limited. We know the graveyard of the vehicles which exist all around the place. What is really happening?

I think I saw an article in the Mirror recently – I do read it – asking for, in fact, demanding that the railway be re – introduced. Perhaps the honourable Minister can say whether there are any plans to re-introduce the railway system. It does appear to me unless the honourable Minister can give us some concrete plan as to the future, the present inadequacies in respect of the Guyana Transport Services Limited and the frustration of the people in respect of transportation – somebody came into my office recently and told me that he had to wait three and a half hours approximately to get on a bus to come from Lusignan to Georgetown. That just is not good enough. It really is terrible. That is production hours wasted. That is loss of production. If it happens to one person how many other people do not it happen to. But one wonders – we are talking about production and productivity – and one wonders what is being done to help production and productivity by making Guyana Transport Services Limited really efficient, really a visible organisation instead of just voting money and saying grave yard of buses.

On the other item, I think the question has been asked before. Item 13. The fantastic sum of \$26.8 million is being sought as supplementary provision and the Legend merely says to pay liabilities of Ministries and Departments to Government Corporations and Companies. This is like the Ministry of National Development. Pay for what? I have the note here which I put long before the last Member spoke. Why are these not included in the Ministries and Departments so that we can know exactly what they are being used to pay for? What liabilities? You are not really telling us anything by asking for \$26.8 million and merely saying to pay liabilities. We may as well just vote the money and not put it

down, even here, because what is it for?

The next item is Item 16, \$992,406 to provide for further capital contribution to the Guyana Electricity Corporation. Again I will not repeat what the last speaker has said, for the situation seems to be getting worse rather than improving. We have been having outages with alarming frequency recently. Experts have been coming and going, coming and going all the time. Our local engineers have been resigning. One expert talking to me at the Pegasus recently, says he is suffering from a deep sense of frustration because he comes here to do a job and there are no tools to do the job. No spare parts. He cannot get anything done. He said, “why should I bother to stay? I will go back because I have my personal professional reputation to think about.” So what really is the situation with the Guyana Electricity Corporation? Tell us, let us know so that we can appreciate it and at least give us some hope that the situation will improve.

Cde. Sallahuddin: Cde. Chairman, with respect to Items 12 and 16, these further sums represent the continuing interest, responsibility and concern of the Central Government for two public agencies, Guyana Transport Services Limited and the Guyana Electricity Corporation. We take the view that in spite of the existing problems which these Public Agencies face, the Central Government has an ongoing responsibility, financial and otherwise, to work towards the rehabilitation of the equipment, the machines and the vehicles of both agencies so that those public agencies would be able to discharge a better service. The emphasis here has been on rehabilitation. Cde. Chairman, with respect to item 13, the sum of \$26,800,000 represents outstanding liabilities incurred by the Central Government, and the Public Sector Agencies prior to December 11, 1980. It simply means that the Ministry of Finance has gone through the exercise of quantifying the indebtedness between the Central Government and some Public Corporation, and this represents an attempt to offset what may be described as the state of inter-agency indebtedness. The point I want to emphasize here, Cde. Chairman, is that these are liabilities that were outstanding prior to December, 31, 1980, but only for 1980.

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The Speaker: What they are asking is the details. What agencies are owed, how much and for what years?

Cde. Ram Karran: I want to raise a point of order. The honourable Minister seems to be breaching the financial regulations by dumping all these expenses, liabilities as he calls them, under the Ministry of Finance when according to the Appropriation Bill they ought to be showed under each ministerial head. The Government has done it in respect to other Ministries and this seems to be the flood-gates being opened. These individual expenses must be shown under the Ministerial heads.

Cde. Sallahuddin: Cde. Speaker, with respect to the details I have a list before me which I am prepared to read out and perhaps to pass on to the Members to satisfy their curiosity. For example, Guyana National Engineering Corporation and this is for services and materials and equipment - \$4.9 million; Guyana Stores – \$4 million; Guyana National Newspapers Limited – \$1.6 million; Guyana National Trading Corporation – \$4.2 million; Guyana Pharmaceutical Corporation – \$0.7 million; Guyana Rice Board – \$6.2; Guyana Electricity Corporation – \$4.6; Guyana Telecommunication Corporation – \$3.2. These represent the larger sums but the details are there for public scrutiny.

Cde. Ram Karran: May I ask the honourable Minister to show where Guyana Rice Board comes into this House.

The Speaker: Items 25 to 26.

Mr. Feilden Singh: Item 25 – Labour, Supervision of weighing of canes on Sugar Estates. I merely thought it rather strange that with a voted provision of \$126,000 the sum of \$50,000 is now being requested in respect of increased wages and salaries. It seems a large amount when one looks at, for example, Item 23, Black Bush Polder Land Development Scheme. Now their voted provision was 300,000 but to pay increased wages and salaries all that is being requested is \$6,740. Something seems a little bit strange in that a payroll of \$300,000 for Black Bush Polder all they want is \$6,740 in respect of supervision of weighing of canes and with a payroll of \$126,000 they want \$50,000 more and the legend in both cases says to pay increased wages and salaries. Either the legend is wrong or something else is wrong.

Cde. Ram Karran: on the other hand I would think this amount is inadequate from the point of view in discussion with the Vice – President the sum identified is in the vicinity of \$70,000 and for the benefit of my friend at the back, it is for back-pay and overtime and other charges which have not been paid for a number of years. What I would like to ask the honourable Minister whether he has now come around to the view represented by sugar workers that cane scale supervisors should be elected since the cane scale supervisors, some appointed by the Government and some represented by the farmers, cannot adequately represent the interest of the canecutters and I would venture to say if we are going to have industrial democracy and if we are going to have canecutters, whom my good friend will undoubtedly agree, make a considerable contribution to the economy of the country to have adequate representations to the scales which often break down, whether this sum of \$50,000 which ought to be increased as promised by the Minister and have not been carried out will be carried out?

Vice – President, Health, Housing and Labour (Cde. Hamilton Green): The sum reflected here is an amount and we agree with that part of it. We have not closed the door and negotiations will continue. The other question raised by my good friend, Cde. Ramkarran, he has a measure of sympathy for my Ministry and we are at the amount examining areas so as to settle the question. The question of cane scales supervisors for farmers is part of our history in the sugar estates. What was proposed some years ago by my predecessor was intended to create a situation of amenity and co-operation but we live in a

dynamic situation where unions change, situations change. We do not have a quarrel.

The Speaker: Items 3 and 4.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Item 4. We are not opposed to this sum but as we are members of the Inter-Parliamentary Union I recall that we our members that is on parliamentary level and we were invited by that organisations to attend a meeting when that application would have been approved at a conference held in Cuba. By complaint to you this afternoon, as speaker of the Assembly, is that this contribution that we are paying as membership ought to reflect the membership which is not party affairs. I made this complaint because we were invited at a meeting at 3 o' clock, that is an executive meeting of the Inter – Parliamentary Union, to name delegates to attend the conference and the delegates were expected to leave the next morning at 6 o' clock and what is more, the complaint I wish to raise in this House for the benefit of Members, the whole affair in our view was not democratic and it is high-handed and in fact does great injustice to our new entries to the Inter – Parliamentary Union. I am concerned because the Inter – Parliamentary Union is a little more effective than the Commonwealth Inter – Parliamentary Union because of Inter – Parliamentary Union consensus are usually reached and I want to strongly urge in this House that when we receive invitations from the Inter – Parliamentary Union or when any matter pertaining to the Inter – Parliamentary Union is to be discussed the meeting has to be summoned properly, adequate notice given and any decision taken on a democratic basis but we do not oppose the sum of money but I thought I would be failing in my duties this afternoon if I did not express my ...

The Chairman: Cde. Ramsaroop.

Cde. Ramsaroop: Cde. Chairman, my friend has raised matters of administrative nature outside of the parameters of this time. I have no reply.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: The truth of the matter is that he cannot reply.

The Chairman: The matter is closed. Items 73 to 76. Item 17 under the Capital Estimates. Hon. Member Mr. Singh.

Mr. Singh: Page 11.

The Chairman: I am on page 3.

Mr. Singh: I thought you were taking all together.

The Chairman: Nobody get up. Item 6.

Mr. Singh: I had to find the page.

The Chairman: Page 3, item 17.

Mr. Singh: You have to give us a chance to find the page.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Cde. Chairman, we on this side of the House have never spared the opportunity to strongly express our opposition to expenditure for which there is no adequate information. We have, in the past, called for an enquiry into the general financial affairs of the Ministry of National Development. The legend states: "To provide for payment of increased wages and salaries." We would like to know who will be paid, bearing in mind that we have seen the original Estimates and the categories that have been specified. Who are the workers, what they are going to be paid for and how many are involved?

The Chairman: The Minister of National Development.

The Minister of National Development (Cde. Corbin): Cde. Chairman, the answer is very simple. The workers are those who are employed by the Ministry of National Development. I am not in a position to say the exact number but I can have this information. In terms of the amount, it is to provide for the general increase of wages, as the legend states, which is in the interest of the workers of this country. I am sure that the Opposition supports the worker's interest and agree that all workers should benefit from these increases.

The Chairman: Items 5 and 9 on the Current Estimates. Items 16 to 24 on the Current Estimates.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: I have a short question on item 20, Grant to Guyana School of Agriculture Corporation. The legend states: "To meet expenditure of the Guyana School of Agriculture Corporation for the months of November and December, 1981." I find the calculation, probably for ten months – which I conceded would have been covered by the \$805,000 – was less than the amount now sought for the months of November and December. I think it is in excess of \$35,000 to \$40,000. Probably the Minister would like to give an explanation for that.

The Chairman: Items 1 to 5 on the Capital.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Items 1 to 5 are all of a particular type, dealing with the Tapakuma Project, Contract I, Contract II. We are of the opinion here that work has not been going on very actively in these areas, bearing in mind that the complaint about drainage and irrigation, water control generally, is universal in this country. The areas for which these amounts are required are highly sensitive in the production of agriculture. We understand that there are a number of complaints, they are losing equipment and work is not going on. We would like to know when these projects are going to be completed bearing in mind that certain promises were given by the Minister who spoke then during the discussion on the Estimates. I think the question will apply to items 1 to 5 dealing with Tapakuma

Project, Contract I/Contract II, both phases. What stage the work has reached? When it will be completed? When people are going to benefit from these exercises? Our information is that no benefit is gained currently in any of these areas.

The Minister of Agriculture: (Cde. Tyndall): Cde. Chairman, the work on Contract I has already been completed and Contract II is expected to be completed by the end of 1982. I think the evidence is clear for all to see that the farmers on the Essequibo Coast are already deriving benefits from the project. In fact, when the project was first planned by the World Bank it was anticipated that at the end of the project farmers will enjoy a yield of about 18.5 bags an acre. It is a testimony to the success of the scheme, even though it is not completed, that farmers are already reaping a yield in excess of twenty-four bags an acre. So I think that that satisfactorily answers the two questions.

The Chairman: That is for Contract I and Contract II. What about the others?

Cde. Tyndall: I heard no specific questions in respect of the others.

The Chairman: The question was dealing with all five items: What benefits, when would they be completed and at what stage.

Cde. Tyndall: Item 1 refers to the Abary River Water Control Project and the completion date is scheduled to be around the middle of 1983. With good weather it could be earlier. I have already answered with respect to items 2 and 3. Items 4 and 5, Contract II, the completion date should be the end of 1982.

The Chairman: Current estimates, item 20.

Cde. Tyndall: I think that the arithmetical problem experienced there was a result of the fact that it was not appreciated that the Guyana School of Agriculture is partly financed from the proceeds of its own activities: Farming – both crops and livestock. The requirements in excess of what the school could provide from its own activities have unfortunately exceeded what was budgeted for, hence the necessity for this provision. If one side adds the supplementary resource generated by the school, then I think that the arithmetical problem will vanish.

The Chairman: Items 10 – 15, Current estimates.

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Mr. Feilden Singh: Mr. Chairman, item 12 Maintenance and Operation of Land and water transport. I am not at all questioning the supplementary provisions now being sought. In fact, I cannot because this amount has already been advanced from the Contingencies Fund, so they have got the money already. I am not questioning it. What I am saying now is that so many people have been complaining that when they telephone for the Police, the invariably reason why they cannot arrive is because of lack of vehicles. So there seems to be a problem. How far have we got in respect of remedying this problem, have they got the money? The situation has not been remedied because up to recently a householder reported having telephoned for the Police in respect of what was thought to be an attempted burglary and the Police could not come because there were no vehicles available. So there does seem to be a problem in respect of vehicles.

I notice the legend says to purchase fuel. Presumably no money was there to purchase fuel and spare parts. I need a spare part now for my car and there is none in the country. I do not know if the Police are able to get spare parts or whether they are going to import it specially. Whether the Minister of Trade will give the necessary permit on the Government and the Governor of the Bank of Guyana will give the necessary permission to remit the money outside. But it is fuel, spare parts for the Police Vehicular Fleet. Have they really got a fleet that they can repair or rehabilitate. You can get money to put gasoline inside it but you need a fleet. Do you need more vehicles. I am in sympathy with the Police. I am in sympathy with the Minister because I feel that he has a job but he is not being given the tools to do the job. So I wonder what the position is and whether it would improve because the public is getting frustrated and does not have confidence in the ability of the Police to respond to calls for help. Is there going to be any improvement in this and what are the plans in the long and short term to remedy the situation? That is 12, I think you said we go up to 15 Sir. Registration, Immigration, Births etc. personal emoluments. The legend says to provide increase in wages and salaries. We have no quarrel with that. With the cost of living as it is everybody is entitled to increase in wages and salaries. I notice you said Parliamentarians are not getting anything. Ministers get, but not Parliamentarians. However Sir, the point is that this department I suspect, does not have the staff to handle the job. Pick up any Sunday Chronicle and read readers council. I am afraid on almost every occasion without fail there is some complain about lack of the ability to secure a birth certificate. You need birth certificates for so many things. I spoke about it here, my good friend Reepu Daman Persaud spoke about it. We were promised that action would be taken by the former Minister Mingo. Some action has been taken but the situation apparently has not been remedied, because you read about the long time it takes to get a birth certificate. I see people waiting there, so obviously it appears as though something is wrong somewhere and if it is staff then we need to supply them with more staff. Again I am in sympathy with the Minister because he is getting the blame and he is not being given the tools to do the job. So what are the plans in this respect because it is very frustrating for Guyanese to get birth certificate. People come to my office and ask if I can help them. If I am going to ring the Minister I am going to be ringing him everyday because the people are complaining everyday about it. So these are the two areas in which I wanted to ask.

The Minister of Home Affairs (Cde. Stanley Moore): Cde. Speaker, it is very encouraging to listen to the enlightened awareness of the hon. member of the problems faced by the Police. He is quite right that there is a shortage of vehicles, but he is perhaps unaware of the great ingenuity shown by the Police in making vehicles, in some cases which have been abandoned, serviceable again by use of the spare parts to which reference has been made.

I think the need for fuel is self evident. Cde. Speaker, I would however like to inform the hon. members in this Assembly that if any member of the public calls any Police Station the answer which he must never get is that no Policeman can go because they do not have a vehicle. I am making a public statement now that if that is the response given that is an incorrect response and I would wish to hear this. Perhaps we are not always able to go as readily as we would wish but the response is that assistance will be forthcoming and Cde. Speaker in our present situation, tight as we are for foreign exchange than among other things, we are returning to the horse and the Equine Section of the Police Force has been identified as one of the growth points of the force and we have recruited within the last three months sixteen horses and we are now training those and there has been an order to increase the patrols in various parts of the city and throughout the country because the idea is to put horses all over the country. Cde. Speaker, one of the problems is that now the word has got out that the Police are seeking to acquire horses, horse owners are jacking up the prices. Whereas the prices used to be seven, eight hundred dollars, they are now seeking for two, three thousand, and of course if there are any gifts forthcoming by public spirited citizens and institutions.

There is a certain prominent businessman who has given five thousand dollars and at a convenient time a public acknowledgement will be made. If my friends on the other side of the Assembly would wish to assist the Police by making a gift of a horse that will be very much welcome by the Police Department and the government.

Cde. Speaker, the question of the office of births and deaths. I think the hon. member has been very genuine to admit that there has been some considerable improvement in the performance in that registry over the last year. We have got the system so streamlined that a certain number of extractions have to be done by a member of staff. But if there is any urgently needed certificate and I think the hon. member sitting now performing the duties as the Leader of the Minority Party was a beneficiary of the system which permits for expenditure handling of emergency cases and if there is any problem relate and refer to Mr. Danraj. He has already got instructions to deal with emergency cases expeditiously, and if all that breaks down my number is 57270 call me and I will provide the service.

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The Chairman: Items 44 to 69 on the Current Estimates.

Cde. Mohamed: Cde. Chairman, item 51, Primary and Secondary Schools, subhead 8, Recruitment of Educators on Contract from overseas. May I ask the hon. Minister to say how many overseas educators will benefit from the increase in salaries. Secondly, will he say whether the overseas educators will receive the same increase in salaries as that given to the similarly qualified Guyanese. Thirdly, will he say whether this increase, at any stage, will involve the payment of foreign currency.

The Chairman: Cde. Thomas.

The Minister of Education (Cde. Thomas): I am Cde. Chairman. I just could not say at this point in time how many overseas educators will benefit as a result of these increases. I can, however, answer the second part of the question and say that the increase which they will get will be similar to that paid to local teachers. There is no foreign currency involved.

The Chairman: Items 27 to 38. (Pause) Comrades and hon. Member, this completes consideration of all the items. I shall now put the Motion which is:

That the Committee of Supply approves of the Proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 5/1981 – Supplementary Estimates totalling \$80,121,990 for the period ended 12th December, 1981.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

Assembly resumed.

The Speaker: Cde. Minister of Finance.

Cde. Sallahuddin: I beg to report that the Committee of Supply has approved of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 5/1981 and I now move that the Assembly doth agree with the Committee in the said Resolution.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

The Speaker: Comrades and hon. Member, I understand there is an agreement that we will do item 6 on the agenda.

BILL – SECOND READINGGUYANA TIMBER EXPORT BOARD (TRANSFER OF FUNCTIONS) BILL 1981

A Bill intituled an Act –

“To provide for the dissolution of the Guyana Timber Export Board, the transfer of its functions to the Guyana Forestry Commission and for related matters.”

The Speaker: Cde. Minister of National Development.

The Minister of National Development (Cde. Corbin): Cde. Speaker, the Bill before this Assembly this afternoon, the Guyana Timber Export Board (Transfer of Functions) Bill 1981, is a very simple Bill.

Quite briefly, this Bill seeks, as the explanatory memorandum says, to abolish the Guyana Timber Export Board and transfer the functions that are presently being exercised by it under the Guyana Timber Export Board Act, Chapter 67:03, to the Guyana Forestry Commission.

Power is also to be conferred on the Minister at a latter date to transfer all the functions of the

marketing arm of the Guyana Forestry Commission – which is what it will be when the G.T.E.B. is transferred to the Forestry Commission – to any other corporation, including Demerara Woods Limited.

The Guyana Timber Export Board was established in September 1973 to be the exclusive exporter of timber products of this country. Prior to the establishment of this Board, the timber export trade was plagued with many problems. There was frequentation and competition of a nature which was detrimental to the development of the industry and, more particularly, which was detrimental to the expansion of the export market for Guyana's timber.

At that time, the overseas market was serviced by some of the larger producers in the country, a group of four of them, calling themselves a consortium, and they, to a large extent, controlled the export trade of lumber in Guyana. Of course, there were a few smaller producers who managed to get their lumber sold overseas as well, but this was mainly done in the Caribbean area.

The main functions of the Board, therefore, when it was established were to regulate export of timber and, more specifically, to register persons and producers under the Act and to recommend to producers programmes for maintaining, controlling and regulating supplies of timber for export. It was also hoped that by establishment of the Timber Export Board and the regularization of timber export marketing we would have been able to achieve better prices for Guyana timber overseas. Obviously, for these services, the G.T.E.B. charged a very small commission to facilitate the carrying out of its functions.

The G.T.E.B. also attempted to ensure that lumber which was exported from this country was of a high quality so that the good name of Guyana could be protected and the future of the timber industry could be guaranteed. There were, of course, some weaknesses in the functioning of the G.T.E.B. Some of these weaknesses occurred as a result of some of its limitations in relation to its ability to hold producers to their obligations when markets were secured. In some cases its limitations were inhibited by its lack of authority to institute a performance bond on some producers when quotes were given for production to satisfy certain overseas markets.

Some other problems related to the absence of a very clear marketing strategy and, in some cases, agents were appointed overseas to sell timber products in certain specified areas but, because of limitation of personnel, there was, in some cases, a lack of promotional programmes which could help to generate the level of marketing expectations which the industry desired and, again because of the absence of facilities and personnel, there were some problems in relation to having the sort of market intelligence to promote the marketing of our lumber.

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Minister of National Development (Cde. Corbin): It is hoped in this new arrangement, that by transferring the functions of the Guyana Timber Export Board to the Forestry Commission, a number of benefits will accrue. For example, because of the shortage of personnel, and skilled personnel in the area of forestry, maximum utilisation would be made of those officers who are at the moment divided between the G.T.E.B. and the present Forestry Commission. Persons who can deal with quality control, for example, were split up between the Forestry Commission and the G.T.E.B. and because of the limitation in numbers there was some inadequacy in really doing this job effectively. It is felt that by placing the functions of the G.T.E.B. within the Forestry Commission these problems will be eliminated. It is the intention to establish within the Forestry Commission a Marketing Unit which we hope will carry out an aggressive marketing policy of Guyana's lumber overseas.

I think it is common knowledge to all Guyana that the Timber Industry has great potential for development and it is felt that with the new forestry policy, with an effective functioning Commission and the integration of the functions of marketing within the Commission, there will be a more co-ordinated approach to forestry development and the utilisation of our forestry resources in Guyana. It is hoped, therefore, that in this new functionary role, the Marketing Unit of Guyana Forestry Commission will undertake the export of timber and timber products on its own behalf and on behalf of producers on such terms and conditions as the marketing unit may decide. It is also hoped that the marketing unit will continue to grant permission to producers to export timber and timber products under certain special conditions which are mutually agreeable between the timber producers and the marketing unit of the Forestry Commission.

I wish to make it very clear however, since there has been some misunderstanding in the minds of some producers of lumber that it is not Government's intention to relinquish its duty to monitoring and co-ordinating the marketing of Guyana's timber overseas. In fact, it is hoped that this marketing unit will be in a position to carry out this function more effectively and more efficiently. It is the intention that with the aggressive marketing policy of the marketing unit will be able to expand at the overseas market. And this legislation makes provision for us to transfer certain functions. For example, the marketing of lumber to any other corporation or agency which the marketing unit feels will be able to assist in this exercise. It is already contemplated, for example, that certain facilities will be given to Demerara Woods Limited to facilitate them in marketing the lumber overseas. This is because the extent of production of this company will be so large that it is felt with the limited persons available, expertise can be utilized in marketing the persons of other producers, while the Demerara Woods Limited concentrate on markets wider afield with the permission of the marketing unit of the Forestry Commission.

Similarly, it is not the intention of the legislation to harness private producers who are interested in ensuring that they expand their marketing capabilities overseas. On the contrary, it is the intention to encourage private producers as well, with certain guidelines, to assist in this marketing function. And if they are able to secure markets in specified areas which are not protected areas, so to speak, or areas which have been given specified facilities by the former G.T.E.B. then those private producers will be allowed to secure those markets providing that the arrangements for the marketing of that lumber will be properly monitored and co-ordinated by the marketing unit of the Forestry Commission. The whole intention, therefore Cde. Speaker, is to maximize, therefore, on the available personnel, to make better uses of the available skills, and to call on all those who are involved in this industry to assist in this exercise.

Permit me also to mention, Cde. Speaker, that it is hoped in this reorganized marketing unit to establish a special unit to promote the marketing of charcoal, and in this connection to ensure the increased production of charcoal in Guyana. A great deal of effort has been put in over the past years and more particularly over the past few weeks in examining the possibility of this Charcoal Industry in this country. It is hoped that this special unit which will be put into the Guyana Forestry Commission will encourage and promote expansion of the Charcoal Industry in a very scientific way so that we will be able to produce charcoal of a certain standardized condition. In this connection it is hoped that we will introduce and expand the use of kilns which could guarantee certain standardization in the coals which we produce – a requirement which will be necessary if we are to expand our capabilities of marketing charcoal overseas.

I therefore, feel Cde. Speaker, that this piece of legislation which is in the interest of the Timber Industry, should meet the general approval and support of all in this Assembly. I wish to assure Members in this Assembly, Cde. Speaker, that the legislation is very clear and all obligations which the Guyana Timber Export Board had will be honoured properly by the Guyana Forestry Commission. Similarly, if there are any other liabilities or any other assets which are outstanding, the Guyana Forestry Commission will seek to ensure that this is properly placed within the confines of the Guyana Forestry Commission.

To avoid any difficulty in evaluating whether this marketing unit will be making progress it is proposed that there will be separate accounting arrangements so that we would be in a position to evaluate the marketing functions of the Guyana Forestry Commission independently and separately. It is also intended that with the co-ordination of activities between the former Guyana Timber Board now the Marketing Unit of the Forestry Commission, and the other functions of the Forestry Commission, this will ensure a better system for the collection of Government revenue particularly in areas of royalty so that we would be in a position to ensure that those funds due to the Government are properly collected and are collectable.

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(Cde. Corbin continues)

It is hoped too that the enriched marketing unit will ensure that better financial arrangements are made with respect to the sale of our timber overseas which can guarantee that foreign exchange earned in the marketing of our lumber will rightly and correctly be transmitted to the Co-operative Republic of Guyana. With these few words, Cde. Speaker, I have great pleasure in moving the second reading of this Bill. Thank you.

The Speaker: The motion is proposed. Cde. Ram Karran.

Cde. Ram Karran: The comments my friend had in reading the Bill does not seem to be real. Your honour, I was listening very keenly to what he said and I think it sounded very much like the apology made by the Prime Minister the other day when he said that we made a mistake when we scrapped the railway. My friend hopes and hopes and hopes, and Frank Hope is not here today. He hopes everything will be all right. What will be all right? He is transferring a department, a whole Minister has been sent to the forest. I do not know if he is looking for a job or he is looking for wood. F.A. Carmichael. The whole department has been scrapped. We came to this House and Government told us it was necessary for us to set up a Ministry of Forestry, Timber Board and all with it, and now we are told here, my friend is very happy that this organisation, this Ministry has been scrapped and its functions are going to be handed to another white elephant. He hopes. What are the assurances? Where is it in the legislation that we are not taken for a ride. My friend tells us that better accounts will be kept. I have no doubt that he has succeeded in the Ministry of National Development from the honourable Minister. I do not remember who he was, the honourable Prime Minister. Accounts are not properly kept in the Ministry of National Development. Are you going to keep proper accounts in the Ministry where you have non-producers, middle-men cheating the people all over the country. A number of cases are in the court.

The Speaker: Cde. Ram Karran, please do not get too excited. I do not want anything to happen to you today. I am very concerned about your welfare and health.

Cde. Ram Karran: I cannot understand, they will _____ a collection of revenue. What assurance we have? The honourable Member cannot account for the revenue that is squandered in the Ministry of National Development. Are we going to wait until 1992 when the Public Accounts Committee finds out the rascality that has been going on? Comrades, we cannot take the word of the honourable Minister. I am sorry to say that in this forum. He tells us that special consideration, I heard him use the word, consideration, on several occasions, will be granted to Demerara Woods Limited. Who are they? Who are the Directors? Who comprise the directorates? Who are the members? Is this another case of their friends being put in positions where they can fleece the country's finances? I hope not. I hope that this will not be done. The honourable Member talks of Consortium Control Export Trade. If you go to the Caribbean you will see that Guyana's woods are not there. They cannot be there because the Americans and the Canadians have taken up the market. They are doing all they can and Guyana is only fishing around the bush. We cannot have a situation like that. As in the last case when this monstrosity was created in this House because of the lack of certainty on the part of the Government. Here they come back with another. I am not going to vote for it nor am I going to ask my colleagues to vote for it, but I am sure that the Government is going to come back in a short while and tell us that this did not work because they did not put enough thought into it and they are not allowing any dis-interested persons to give some advice. People who know. Another thing that we can see that is passing through my mind, Sir, is that the Government is under attack of the I.M.F because they want to dismantle all the

institutions that can lead to socialism in this country. That is why. They have their friends in the 'Woods.' What they call it, the Demerara Woods Limited. They have their friends, their private friends masquerading in all these institutions and who continue to cheat the revenue of this country all around. In fact, the honourable Minister, before he left was telling me of the difficulties in carrying out his functions because of party hacks, some of them drawn from the Ministry of National Development interfering with the functions. I have no doubt that that is one of the main reasons why the poor Minister had to go. My friend talks about, prior to the establishment of that, that the industry was plagued with that and plagued with the other. He has gone on to, John Fernandes is now dead, put the emphasis on charcoal. One individual John Fernandes. We used to know him long before his enterprise in Georgetown. Jo Fa charcoal was established throughout the world. He used to export. You want a whole Board, you want a whole Ministry to sell charcoal. I cannot understand my friend. Anyway let us see. I hope I do not have to come back to this House and see another monstrosity has been created. My friend expresses the hope that it will meet our approval. It does not. The amount of time we spend in this Chamber dismantling monuments created by Government, the amount of money lost in changing over, printing stationery, changing personnel is a waste of time. The time spent in Parliament for the dissolution of laws and the creation of laws can well be spent in discussing some of the creative measures put up by my good friend on this side of the House. Thank you.

Mr. Feilden Singh: Mr. Speaker, I was in the House when the Guyana Timber Export Board was set up by an Act of Parliament. I did know something about it because I knew the Consortium had something to do with it. So I know a bit of the history, the background and the rationale behind that Bill when it was introduced and passed in Parliament in 1973. I am pragmatic enough to realise and appreciate there are sometimes you need to experiment in order to be able to come up with the right solution. So, therefore, the Bill had our support at that time. However, I think the impression which has been given by the local press should be corrected in all fairness and in all fair play. The local press reported that the Guyana Timber Export Board was to be scrapped and the impression was given that this was being done. I think the headline actually read 'Guyana Timber Export Board to be scrapped.' I was looking for the newspaper but could not find it and the impression given was that it was inefficient and therefore had to be done away with.

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(Mr. M.F. Singh continues)

If that impression is given it necessarily means that those who were responsible and in charge of the Guyana Timber Export Board, some of that inefficiency would rub off on them. I think we need to correct this erroneous impression. I was looking at it and I disagree with my hon. friend Mr. Ram Karran. The Timber Export Board Reports were tabled in Parliament and we received them. I went back to look to see what the financial position was and this is what I found. The Board was set up in September, 1973 but it did not actually start to function until about a few months later. For three months in 1973 to December 1974 the Board made a loss, after the set up, of \$125,277.67. However, it was stated that no money was supplied by the Government to set up this Board, it was set up on credit. They had to get a building, renovate it, they had to do everything on their own without any financial assistance from the Central Government. So there was a loss of three months in 1973 and 1974. What happened in 1975? They made a profit of \$267,766. What happened in 1976? They made a profit, according to the Report which was tabled in Parliament, of \$650,700, and they paid tax of \$464,443 giving a net balance profit of \$186,257. What happened in 1977? They also made a profit of \$310,09 and they paid to the Government coffers tax to the extent of \$208,227. In 1978 it was a bad year for them. They made a loss of \$50,004 but they paid to the Government coffers tax to the extent of \$52,107, because you know as a Company they have to pay Property Tax and the rest of it. So they actually paid to the Government \$52,107 in tax. In 1979 they made a profit of \$389,871 and they paid tax to the Government of \$228,000. I do not know what the position is in 1980 but these are what the figures show at the present moment. Over the years, since its establishment, they have, in fact, paid over a million dollars in revenue to the Government. So I merely want to be fair. As all the Members of this House know, since I have been in this House in 1966 I have attempted to be fair on every matter in respect of which I speak, and I speak from my heart and with my conscience. It is not fair to say that the Board is being scrapped because it was losing money and because of inefficiency because it made profits and it paid revenue to the Government in excess of \$1 million over the years. Okay!

We now have before us a Bill which says that the functions are going to be transferred to the Forestry Commission. I am willing to give the Government the benefit of the doubt if this is another experiment of maximum efficiency, so we will not object to the Bill. If it is an experiment then I hope that they will succeed. But I again say that the management of the Timber Export Board, as it was up to the time that announcement was made in the newspaper, that is some time earlier this year, should not be indicted and make it appear that there was inefficiency in the management. In fact, I happen to know that the General Manager of the Timber Export Board was transferred to Guyana Timbers to clear up the mess there and to straighten out and try to get the forestry industry on a better footing. Therefore, he or his officers should not be indicted.

Having said that, we go on to this Bill before the House. First of all, on page 4 it is stated that the Board, immediately before the appointed day, may employ those who are in its opinion qualified and other wise suitable for such employment on such terms and conditions as may be agreed. Normally, in this type of legislation you have “on terms and conditions no less favourable than they enjoy at the present moment.” I am not sure why this was changed and why the terminology has differed from that which obtained on all the previous occasions. Perhaps the Minister would tell us. Maybe this is another way of streamlining. Maybe you want to get rid of some people. Maybe you want to hire some other people in order to get the expertise. Perhaps you might tell us, because there are human beings employed at the present moment with the Guyana Timber Export Board and they would like to know what the

position is in respect of their terms and conditions of employment.

I had the benefit of listening a few weeks ago to a Government official from the Demerara Woods Limited who gave a talk to the Rotary Club, and I got the impression from that talk that institutions which are financing Demerara Woods Limited have been given assurances that they will, in fact, handle marketing when they get into production. So I wonder about the wording again of Clause 4(1) which states:

“The Minister may, after consultation with the Commission and by Order, transfer all or any of the functions of the Board conferred on the Commission by this Act to the Demerara Woods Limited or to any other corporation.....”

Should it be “or” or should it be “and or.” If assurances have been given to Demerara Woods Limited and you want to give other corporation rights to market, then it does appear to me that you should leave yourself with leeway to be able to allow not Demerara Woods alone or a Corporation alone but Demerara Woods or any other Corporation or, indeed, whoever you think suitable to be able to do the job. You want to really make it an efficient thing. But here if you give it to Demerara Woods Limited, then it does appear to me that you cannot give it to any other Corporation because of the use of the word “or.” I have been told that the people who are financially backing Demerara Woods Limited have been given assurances of marketing. So perhaps that is one area which you may like to reply on.

I am glad to hear that the private producers will be allowed to secure markets, but I take it that they will have to go through either Demerara Woods Limited or the Commission, so that the marketing can be done through a centralised Government agency.

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Mr. Feilden Singh: Those are the few points I would like to make on the bill. I understand the Minister is not well, I am sorry to hear that.

The Speaker: Well Comrades, it is now four o'clock. I do not know if it is desirable for the members to continue until the bill is finished, or should we take the adjournment. Is it agreed that we continue until the business of the Assembly is completed?

Before I proceed I wonder if I have brought to the attention of the Assembly some corrections. I do not know if they have been drawn to your attention. In the bill long title, entitle should be changed to 'intituled'. Section 2, definition of Principal Act, insert in the margin 'chapter 67:03'. There is nothing germane, nothing to change the subject. Under 2b definition of Register producer under section 3, sub section 2, proviso A line 3 and proviso B line 1 capital P to be used in ('Principal Act'. In sub section 4, section 3:6 line 1, commas to be inserted after 'contract' and 'bond', as well as in sub section 2, any order made 'under' is left out, sub section 1 should be subject to 'the' should be struck out. Section 5,3,9, proviso line 8 permits for section 6,3,10, all these deal with section 2. Section 3:10 line 2 and 7 'capital P' to be used in Principal Act. 7 section 4:1 line 70 to be changed to 'the'. A section 5, line 4 'full stop' after board should be changed to comma and a full stop to be put after the quotation closes. Insert in the margin 'Act No 2 of 1979'. In section 4, sub section 2 'under' should be put in between made and sub section and the word 'the' should be struck out.

Cde. Corbin: Cde. Speaker, in the past we have always benefited from the Deputy Leader's contribution. But it is quite evident from his contribution on this subject that he has not done his homework and is fully unaware of what the P.P.P. was intended to do and how it would function and I thank very much Cde. Feilden Singh for enlightening him though he was not here himself to hear.

The fact is Cde. Speaker, as I said in my initial presentation the intention is to maximise efficiency and make full use of scarce personnel which are available at the moment. Therefore I do not see the need for the point which he has made. I would like to also assure Cde. Ram Karran that in this new arrangement it is intended that there will be a Marketing Advisory Board which will be in a position to advise the marketing unit on marketing strategies and in years of concentration. This advisory board will not comprise persons only in the public sector but will have the full involvement of members of the private sector and those who are involved in the production of lumber. Indeed Cde. Speaker, in the past the Forest Products Association and a number of other producers of lumber have benefited from representations on the board of the G.T.E.B. Therefore they had a direct say throughout the years of the existence of the G.T.E.B., and its functions and how it performs, and therefore it is quite untrue or inaccurate to say that there was no attempt to satisfy the interest of the producers over this period of time. What we would like to do is to expand what presently exists, since it is the expectations of the Government that the Forestry Industry should become a major sector in our national economy and therefore attempts are being made to putting the necessary machinery to ensure that this is achieved. I would therefore like to assure Cde. Ram Karran that if he has any advise to give us on this matter he is free to do so to the relevant personnel who may be involved in marketing and I wish to assure all timber producers that the Ministry of Forestry and the Forestry Commission will be willing to accept any advise on this matter if they have any to give. In fact Cde. Speaker, we have had meetings already that is the Ministry of Forestry with the various Forest Products Association, with the Upper Corentyne Logs Association, the Upper Corentyne Consortium as well as a number of private producers over the past few weeks and this matter was fully discussed. In fact the Forest Products Association were invited to make

recommendations as to how they feel this new marketing unit should be structured. These recommendations have been received and the Forestry Commission will take them into consideration as this marketing unit is being re-structured. So there is no attempt to leave out the producers in this exercise.

Cde. Ram Karran was a bit confused. We are not scrapping the Forestry Ministry, we are only transferring the functions of the G.T.E.B. to the Forestry Commission. It has absolutely nothing to do with the establishment of the Ministry of Forestry. We wish to assure Cde. Feilden Singh as well Cde. Speaker, that in my presentation I never used the word 'scraped.' I pointed out very clearly that we were transferring the functions. He was referring to the newspaper and I wish to assure him that my opinion does not coincide with what was printed in the newspaper. With respect to this identification of the profits which the G.T.E.B has made over the years, I would say that that is commendable, but certainly profits is not the only yard stick one can use for judging or assessing the effectiveness of any organisation. What we are looking at is the expansion of the marketing capabilities of lumber which is produced in Guyana, so that we will be able to sell not only the traditional species but also the other species which are not so well known in this country and to do that we need an aggressive marketing policy properly co-ordinated with the agencies that are involved with forestry itself, so that they can encourage producers to produce the type of lumber that we propose to market.

There was some concern expressed about charcoal production. But again Cde. Ram Karran is very much uninformed in this matter it seems because we are thinking of producing charcoal in large enough quantities to meet an overseas market and to do so one will have to ensure that a unit is set up to monitor the production of charcoal on certain specified standards to ensure that the name of Guyana is properly respected and to guarantee the future markets which we will have in charcoal.

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4.10 p.m.

There was some concern expressed about the situation of the workers. I think the legislation is very clear. It is the intention that workers who can be in the best service of the Marketing Unit will be retained by the Marketing Unit of the Guyana Forestry Commission. We have already had discussion with the workers of the G.T.E.B. at a brief meeting to explain to them what will take place in the very near future and I would like to assure this House that steps will be taken to ensure that the workers are fully informed on all matters relating to their future so that there will be no surprise in relation to the transfer of their functions and their continued employment.

It is, however, certain that the establishment of the present G.T.E.B. will be reduced, that some of the posts – not necessarily the personnel – which are listed in the establishment of G.T.E.B. will no longer exist within the Marketing Unit. For example, there will be no Deputy General Manager. The Chief of the Marketing Unit will carry on and, in his absence, it is proposed that the Chief Accountant, who will co-ordinate the activities of the Commission and the Marketing Unit, will carry on in his place as the case may be. So there will be some slight adjustment in the posts which presently exist in the G.T.E.B. and proper discussions will be held with the workers in this regard.

With respect to the marketing of lumber, I wish to assure the hon. Member that the intention of this legislation, in relation to the transfer of the functions of the Board, is to facilitate the Minister to transfer the functions to the Demerara Woods Ltd. or to any other corporation. This is as I understand it. I should be corrected by the legal officers if I am wrong, but it is the intention that either the Demerara Woods Limited and/or any other corporation can carry out this function because the intention is ensure that as many people as possible assist in this marketing function.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Assembly in Committee.

Bill considered, without amendment, read a Third time and passed as corrected.

NATIONAL CANE FARMING COMMITTEE (AMENDMENT) BILL 1981

The Speaker: Cde. Minister of Agriculture.

The Minister of Agriculture (Cde. Tyndall): Cde. Speaker, I beg to move that the Bill intituled –
“An Act to amend the National Cane Farming Committee Act.”

Be now read a Second time.

This is a very simple Bill aimed at achieving a very simple but most desirable objective. The aim of the Bill is to increase the representation of the membership of the National Cane Farming Committee from 15 to 17 members. One of the two additional places will be filled by a representative of the cane farmers.

Under the Act, as it now exists, the cane farmers have seven representatives on this Committee. Each of the representatives has been appointed by one of the Cane Farming Liaison Committee which have been established on the estates that grind farmers' cane. There are eight such estates and there are eight Liaison Committees. The present situation, however, is that only seven of the Liaison Committees can be represented on the National Cane Farming Committee. This is a situation which is clearly an anomaly and which should be corrected. This Bill seeks to make that correction.

The second place will be filled by an official of the Ministry of Agriculture, the aim being to strengthen the knowledge and the expertise which will be brought to bear on cane farmers' problem.

These are simple amendments, which have been approved by the Cabinet. I do not see that they can present any difficulty to this Assembly and it is therefore with great pleasure that I move the second reading.

Motion proposed.

Cde. Dalchand: Cde. Speaker, I wish this afternoon to support this Bill but at the same time I must severely criticise the Government for the manner in which the members of the Committee are appointed. The Minister just said it. There are 17 members on the Committee, eight being farmers, nine being representatives of Government. The first thing is that there are less farmers than Government representatives on this Committee. Let this be an example: you know this is very well. During the time of the P.P.P. out of 15 members on the Rice Marketing Board, 11 were rice farmers and they were elected by the different committees in the districts.

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Cde. Dalchand: You have seventeen members on this Committee, eight being rice farmers. My first criticism. The second thing about it is, they said that these people were being elected through a liaison Committee. Which liaison Committee is being properly selected? They are all being selected. People are being told what to do. Form this Committee here this committee there, and those people are being asked to make representations for the person to represent them in the National Cane Farming Committee. The National Cane Farming Committee is supposed to be an important body. Its main function in the act is to devise programmes and schemes for the promotion and expansion of cane farming. That is one.

Cde. Speaker, let us look at Guysuco's Report for last year alone, and you will see how backward is the committee. On the West Demerara alone, nearly 1,000 acres of land were abandoned by present cane farmers. This year that is going to be doubled because farmers are not getting true representation on the Committee. The Committee is put there, they are being given a lot of money to spend, the accounts of that Committee is not being audited. Members are complaining – the few members that are there are complaining that the accounts cannot be audited. They do not know what they have. They are receiving money from the treasury. They received half a million money to help farmers to rehabilitate cultivation, and this went to spend – to do infrastructural work. Hardly has any farmer received money from that Committee, but they cannot speak. The Committee is supposed to advise the Minister on pricing of cane farmers cane, but what happens? Guysuco sets the price and the Committee has to rubber stamp it, has to agree with it. They cannot oppose it. This is where the Committee is faulted. This is what we want to criticise.

Cde. Speaker, not very long ago in this same Parliament, the Minister, the previous Minister asked that the Chairman of the Committee – he passed a Bill asking that the Chairman of the Committee be a cane farmer. We had a cane farmer for a few months, he resigned and what we have now? An executive of Guysuco is now the Chairman again. Cane farmers are not being given any privilege on this Committee. They hardly know what to do, and this is going to cause the continuous fall in production. The Minister is saying, for example, that the one member of each estate would be representative they have the man – the estate they wanted to give a representative to is Rose Hall. We had him on the Committee but he had no voting right. They Rose Hall. We had him on the Committee, he is still on the Committee but he has no voting right. They are going to give him a voting right but still with all the voting right they will not be able to do anything to steer the Minority.

Cde. Speaker, there are plenty of problems in the present Cane farming industry. I wish to draw to your attention, only recently, 3 weeks ago, at Wales on the West Bank Demerara, the estate took 23 tonnes of cane to make one tonne of sugar. They paid the farmers \$15 per ton for the cane and the farmers had to pay \$25 to reap and transport, to cut and transport. The farmers had to leave the cheque at the estate. They refused to receive it but they cannot make representation anywhere. The committee is appointed by the Government and the farmers have no right. I want to ask the Minister this afternoon to look into these particular aspects of that committee and all other committee dealing with agriculture and other things, to see that farmers and producers get true representation where they can help to increase production without causing a fall in production. Production is falling every year as I told you. From Guysuco's Report, once again, clearly, nearly 1,000 acres of land went out abandoned last year and this year it is going to be much greater. And from the rice milling plant, we have seen that they cannot get loans. We made applications to the committee without success. Nothing is being done to help the cane

farmers. I want to ask the Minister this afternoon to look into these aspects and to see what can be done to allow farmers in each estate to elect representatives on the National Cane Farming Committee and to give that Committee a greater number of say – not number of members – say, in that Committee.

Cde. Tyndall: Cde. Speaker, I am very glad to know that my good friend on the Minority benches is supporting this article. I have noted the many observations which he has made, but I think that they reflect certain misunderstanding relating to the operation of this Committee. In the first place, the Committee is a co-operative arrangement. It is a co-operative arrangement that brings together various sectors which can assist in improving the economics of the cultivation of Cane Farmer's cane. The Cane Farmers Committee comprises representatives of the cane farmers. It also comprises representatives of the Guyana Sugar Corporation. It comprises representatives of the relevant ministries – representatives of Drainage and Irrigation, representatives of Ministry of Agriculture. It also comprises representatives of the Guyana Agricultural Co-operative Bank, and I think one would agree that it is desirable to have the bank involved in the activities of the committee. As far as decision making is concerned, decisions are not rail-roaded, they are taken after discussions, and with consensus. The decisions are influenced by technical considerations which are brought to bear on the discussions by officials of the Ministry of Agriculture, and we have an arrangement which can ensure that farmers' interest are best served.

We are aware that the cane farmers need rehabilitation. They experience – the cane farmers have experienced a number of problems. One problem has been the problem of disease, primarily smut, and I am happy to say that through the efforts of Guysuco, smut has virtually been eliminated. They have also experienced low yields. One cannot be satisfied with the yield of two tons sugar per acre or 26.5 tons cane per acre. These are problems the Cane Farming Committee is expected to address, and in fact, there is a programme to address these problems in order to rehabilitate cane farming.

Cde. Speaker, you are aware that there are sometimes, disputes with respect to the conversion ratios. Sometimes the conversion is disappointing because canes have remained too long in the field. It is part of the programme to improve yields to the cane farmer to so arrange burning and grinding schedules as to optimize yields from production. One will have also to consider such measures as block burning which will require co-operation of all the farmers concerned so that one can have a proper programme of harvesting; and can properly plan the harvesting and processing of farmers' canes.

Money has been given indeed for rehabilitation. The money has not always brought the expected results. Infra-structure has proved a priority and, therefore, it has received priority attention in so far as allocation of resources is concerned. We think it most desirable and we wish it was possible for us to undertake all the works that were necessary to improve, as quickly as we would like to improve, the conditions not only on the fields of the private cane farmers, but even on the Government estates.

Cde. Chairman, I must say I welcome comments – constructive comments – not only comments but also proposals as to what should be done to improve the activities of cane farmers and I do hope that my good friends opposite – the minority group – do not consider that the only place where they can make their comments and make their proposals is in this Assembly. They can channel their proposals to the Cane Farming Committee. They can channel their proposals to me, and I myself, I can give them all assurance that I am prepared to give all the representations every consideration in the interest of the cane farmers and the sugar industry.

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Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Assembly in Committee.

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

Assembly resumed.

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

GUYANA GOLD BOARD BILL 1981

A Bill Intituled:

“An Act to provide for the establishment
Constitution, and functions of the
Guyana Gold Board and for matters
connected therewith.” /The Minister of
Energy and Mines/.

The Minister of Energy and Mines (Cde. Jack): gold is one of our most important mineral resources and it is one in which Guyanese people have been engaged since the 19th century. As a matter of fact the estimation is that since the 1880's to the present time there has been extracted from Guyana in excess of three and a half million ounces of gold. In recent times with the escalation of oil prices the price of gold on the world market has risen considerably. But the Government of the state of this country has not been receiving returns to commensurate with the activities which has been taking place in the gold mining areas. As far back as 1977 the Government, apprised of the situation, sought means of bringing under better control monitoring of gold production in this country. In 1978 a Bill was tabled in this House intituled the Guyana Gold Board Bill No. 18 of 1978, which was published on September 2, 1978. That Bill, Cde. Speaker, was laid in the House on September 7, 1978 and because of the importance which I attached to that measure I indicated at the time of the first reading that I would be available for any consultation or comment from Members of this House. Since the laying of that Bill in 1978 the Bill remained on the Order Paper and was deferred from time to time until it lapsed at the dissolution of the last Parliament. So that persons both in the House and in the country at large had adequate and more than adequate notice of Government's intention to introduce a measure such as the one before this House today. Particularly as it may seem during these three years only one small group essayed comment and this was in effect in support of the measure, but suggesting some minor amendments. But Gold and diamonds are difficult things to monitor and conscious of the delicacy of the industry in this country I decided to proceed with the greatest of caution and so around the middle of this year I caused, as a result of approaches to Cabinet, a committee to be set up. The terms of reference which were to investigate all aspects of the proposed Guyana Gold Board especially the financial, economic and social aspects, and the anticipated consequential effect of the proposed Gold Board, of the modernisation and expansion of the gold industry in Guyana, and to make recommendations thereon. In an effort to get as wide a cross-examination of views as possible the committee was composed of two licenced traders, two bona-fide miners, one representing land operations and one representing river dredging operations, a representative of the Bank of Canada, a representative of gold-smiths or jewellers, a representative of the Chamber of Commerce, a representative of the Ministry of Regional Development, a member of the Mines Commission, a representative of Customs and Excise Department, a representative from Guyana Stores and a representative from Guyana Airways, as well as a representative of the Bank of Guyana. Now this

Committee deliberated and produced a report which essentially endorsed the idea of the establishment of a Gold Board and some of the reasons are to be found in the report which was issued. It is significant, for instance, that only 463 ounces and 143 ounces were reported for 1979 and 1980 respectively as being traceable after royalties had been paid. Now, last year over 11,000 ounces of gold were reported to be produced and I use those words carefully. Generally speaking, it is felt that we have been receiving royalty on approximately one-third or half of the gold which is actually being produced in this country so that out of approximately \$10 million worth of gold we have been able to trace less than one million. Peculiarly enough during the course of this year there has been imported into this country equipment for gold mining operations in excess of \$3 million. The figure I have and for a figure to the end of November is \$3,069,036.10 and all of this coming in under licences for which no foreign exchange has been required. That means that kind friends abroad have given to Guyanese producers in this country over \$3,000,000.

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(Cde. Jack continues)

That means that kind friends abroad have given to Guyanese producers in this country over \$3 million. That would be a charitable interpretation. Another interpretation, however, would be that of the gold that has been smuggled out of the country some, perhaps one-tenth, has come back to continue what has become a very lucrative operation but from which the state has benefited little, if anything at all.

At this time, it is no secret that this country is in dire need of foreign exchange. Furthermore, the natural resources of this country is the general patrimony of all of us. And those people who have the good fortune to be able to win from the oil of Guyana its metal, precious and otherwise, should recognise that they owe a duty, not to the Government as such but to the people of this country, to put back something when they have got so much. Unhappily, this has not been the case. During those three years no time had been made by persons who have been winning gold to give a true return on the gold that they have been getting. It is within these circumstances that the Guyana Gold Board becomes a necessity.

What does the Board seek to do? The Guyana Gold Board would be the sole buyer of gold. That means that when a producer of gold declares that gold for royalty purposes the Board will be able to buy that gold at the same time. What has been happening is that producers have declared gold for royalty purposes and then, having paid the royalty, the gold has disappeared. It is estimated that this Board should bring into the coffers of the state, in terms of foreign exchange, something in the region of US\$6 million during 1982. I wish to stress that the establishment of this Board is not intended primarily as a profit-making exercise. It is intended primarily to ensure that the foreign exchange which is the result of the selling of gold comes to the state, for it is no use having foreign exchange restrictions with regard to general foreign exchange and having a massive loophole with respect to gold.

We have thought in this measure to confine the activities to gold because we believe that there are special difficulties surrounding the sale and disposition of diamond. We do not wish to burden ourselves at this time with buying diamonds. I wish to say in passing that we shall also be looking at the production and disposition of diamonds. During 1982 registers of producers and claim holders and dredge owners will be updated and persons who spend the whole year producing or working for gold and diamond and who are unfortunate enough as not to be able to produce anything as evidenced by their lack of reporting any success, may be relieved of the burden of continuing that exercise in the following year by not having their claims renewed. I say “may” be relieved.

As I said Cde. Speaker, we have given long and serious thought to this measure. We are conscious of the value of gold production in this country and the necessity to ensure that nothing is done to hamper its further development. For this reason, among the things that we propose is that we will buy the gold for cash. This has been my proposal to Cabinet and it has been accepted. That means, there will not be the occasion for a man, having handed up his gold, to be waiting two months or three months to be paid. This is not what we envisage. We envisage that we will pay cash for the gold. The price of gold, up to now, for the purposes of royalty – and I will mention that when I come to my next Bill – has been fixed at \$900. We fixed that price at \$900 merely to ensure that at no time would we be taking royalty from a producer upon the basis of a value higher than what the world market price would be. However, when we are buying gold we will have to buy gold at a different price. We expect that having regard to the expenses of the Board and the necessity of clearing those expenses, that the price will be fixed from time to time to ensure that the Board is not a drain on the Central Government. But, as I said before, we are not intending to depress, artificially, the price for the purposes of making some huge profits. So that persons can be assured that we will take that into account at the time of fixing the price and that the price when

fixed would be subject to regular review.

There are two observations which I would like to make before I take my seat. At paragraph 8 I would be asking for amendment which has been circulated to add after the word “Board” the words “or any agent authorised in writing by the Board”. With respect to 4(2), at the appropriate time I should be asking for the deletion –

The Speaker: 4(2)?

Cde. Jack: It states:

“The Board shall not have power to buy or sell gold

Upon more careful examination having regard to the present state of the fluctuation of the gold market and the fact that the original restrictions which were intended to be in consonance with the time when gold was at a fixed price no longer obtain, this in our opinion is no longer necessary.

The Speaker: The deletion of the whole of paragraph 2?

Cde. Jack: Of 4, sub-paragraph 2. It states:

“The Board shall not have power to buy or sell gold in contravention of the provisions of section 2 of Article IV of the Articles of Agreement of the International Monetary Fund set out in the First Schedule to the International Financial Organisation Act.”

The Speaker: I just enquired because only one amendment was served and that was in relation to Clause 8.

Cde. Jack: Yes.

The Speaker: So you are adding another one, for the deletion of that sub-paragraph?

Cde. Jack: Yes. Having regard to the concern which the hon. Member on the other side of the Assembly mentioned a little while ago, to see that the Government takes steps to ensure that the people of this country are not cheated, I hope that he will find it convenient to support this measure.

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Cde. H. Jack: With these observations Cde. Chairman, I ask that the Guyana Gold Board Bill 1981 be read a second time. Thank you.

The Speaker: Comrades and Honourable members, there a few errors or corrections which I should bring to your attention with respect to this Bill. Renumber clause 4 as clause 4:1. Insert open brackets in paragraph 18 of clause 4:1. Clause 6, in the proviso for authorise substitute authorised. Clause 10:3 delete the words, matter, such interest shall be deemed to be the interest of that. Clause 11 sub section 1 for General Secretary substitute “General Manager”. Clause 15 sub section 4 for Public Officer as a member substitute “Public Officer or a member”. In the first schedule paragraph 4 sub section 6 for the board at dealing, substitute “the board is dealing”. In the same first schedule paragraph 5 sub section 3, delete the word allowances when it occurs for the second time, and the second schedule in the first amendment to section 79:1, substitute the following paragraphs therein. Substitute the following paragraphs for paragraphs therein. I do not know if you understand what I am saying. The question is proposed.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Cde. Speaker, I recall in the early 70's, I made a contribution on our resources with special emphasis to the mining areas. On that occasion too Sir, I gave the figures of a number of years and I showed then the drop in production. I do concede that since then there has been even on the available figures some increase in production. The fundamental point I made in the early 70's is still one that deserves the greatest consideration of this occasion, when we have reached the point where the Assembly is being told in clear terms that the Government has not been receiving a true report of the production, and to use the words of the Minister in one of our most important resources, namely gold.

My contribution of 1970, was based on that fact. Because I refer in detail to the estimates to show the kind of royalty that were being reflected in the estimates in those years. We on this side of the Assembly are on record of saying that with sincere consistency that we must control our natural resources and our natural resources must go to the general benefit of the nation. I have pointed out then, and I want to repeat now that even the producers who, may know that their claims have been suspended or taken away have not been the greatest beneficiaries, if I may use that term. It was the few middlemen who provide the kind of equipment which the Minister referred to earlier in his contribution. Many of those men, I am talking about porkknockers, about the gold diggers who have to live under very adverse conditions. Many of them are not seeing the city and in fact many of them remain until they become unaware of the value of gold and it is those few shops who have invested the forest for a long time buying the gold at very cheap prices from those men and bringing them somewhere. The Minister has not this afternoon identified where the gold has gone. What is said is what has been reflected in terms of royalties and production do not reflect this most important resource, what we have and what in fact we have produced. That is the summary of his contribution. I listened to when he spoke about the Advisory Board that has been looking at the whole gold ‘fiasco’ if I may put it that way. There was someone from the Guyana Airways. I was tempted to ask what he was doing there and what kind of advice he can give. It is not that I do not know the answer. But I would wish to ask this question if it is not true Cde. Speaker, that on the statute there is law restricting the taking out and/or exporting of gold from this country? Because I want to pose this very fundamental question. Do the Minister honestly believe that he can monitor? I pose it as a genuine and a sincere Guyanese speaking from this side of the Assembly because I have alluded the Minister earlier to question the Mining Officers of being able to observe them

in the areas, because what is clear and what must be confessed in all is that the Government has not succeeded over the years in monitoring the collection of royalties. The Minister is convinced that this is the position. We are here because we have people paying royalty. Our people pay royalty. People pay royalty after they would have gotten their gold and they go to some point where that person is and earlier, we do not have many points where they could go to. They say this is the gold we have got and based on what they have declared royalty is paid. The Minister said that, all that would be done is that when that gold is declared and royalty is paid the gold by virtue of this legislation will be bought by the Gold Board.

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

5 p.m.

From purely a debating standpoint, would it be reasonably to conclude that what has been the production, that is the real production which showed a low royalty, would be the same in subsequent years, based on the contribution of the Cde. Minister?

Legislation is one thing and being able to make the legislation operative is another thing. Probably the delay in ultimately presenting this Bill to the Assembly is due to all those factors. In 1978, a Committee was set up and there was wide consultation. I am not impressed by the wide consultation aspect. It is no big point. The fundamental point at issue this afternoon is whether this piece of paper will succeed in realising the desirable result which was clearly implied in the Minister's contribution, both in improving our economy and in increasing foreign exchange.

I want also to say this afternoon that, from the Minister's contribution, it does appear that this Bill came into being – he said words to this effect – as a result of the disclosure of the kind of production and kind of royalties received over the years and particularly in 1979 and 1980, so that, after all these years, the Assembly is being told that the country has been robbed, the nation has been robbed. Would it not be reasonable to conclude – and I hope the Minister considers this objectively – that this is clear evidence of incompetence, and I would add inefficiency, somewhere? There is clear evidence of incompetence and inefficiency and, probably, a lack of vision at the proper time to ensure collection. Now, when the country's economy is in this depressing situation, suddenly we hear of how many millions we have lost over the years. If it is true that we have lost those millions, somebody should be fired. It was not for lack of information. It could not have been and cannot be for lack of knowledge of the kind of resources this country possesses and specifically with respect to gold.

Let me concede that there is a desire all around for the country to benefit from what we have got and what we can acquire. The people as a whole must share the benefits. No one will object. At least, those of us on this side of the Assembly will not object to any legislation or to any measure founded on the premise of controlling what we own, using what we own for the benefit of the country and the people.

There are other aspects of the Bill which need to be looked at very carefully. Apart from the establishment of the Board, apart from the Government becoming the sole agent for buying gold and for selling gold both locally and in the export market, there is an exemption provision in clause 9 of the Bill. I was trying to advise myself as to what was the purpose of the exemption and I think in my own opinion I can find the answers because this Bill has a section which, in my humble opinion, borders on retroactivity. I will tell you why I have come to that conclusion because while you have people who have robbed the country, there are many people who probably genuinely bought gold for themselves, for the welfare of their children and, possibly, as the most suitable gift, ever cognisant of the fact that they cannot wear jewellery in Guyana. Those people who have raw gold, bought it earlier last week or several years before or accumulated over a number of years in whatever quantity, will be expected within a given time – I think 28 days or a month – to resell the gold to the Board. I would like to believe that the intention of the Bill is to operate in a wider area, to ensure that what we produce now, that the production is efficiently and effectively monitored and, to use the Minister's words, to ensure that there is no loophole, to ensure that whatever is produced is sold to the Gold Board.

I think the clause to which I refer has far-reaching effects and it can interfere to a great extent with the simple and ordinary citizen who can be harassed by some people who are unscrupulous, who are just wild and who will be called upon to administer the provisions of this Bill when finally it is assented

to.

Clause 20 of the Bill allows an officer, whether a policeman or anyone authorised by the Board, to hold a warrant for one month and to execute it within that month. I want to ask: why that kind of law? What influenced clause 20? What influenced the framer of this legislation to make that kind of provision where someone can speculate with a warrant? It is a dangerous weapon for anyone to hold a warrant in his hands for a substantial period. “..... at any hour of the day or night, to enter the said premises or other place at any time within one month after the date of the warrant and to search the said premises or other place.” I am just reading the relevant portion of the law. It means that a Magistrate or a Justice of Peace signs a warrant, gives it to this officer and he keeps it. We know what this country is. It is time we call a spade a spade. He holds the warrant to search the home of ‘X’. He communicates to ‘X’ that a search is likely and he collects his piece or he forewarns the person that his home is going to be searched. This is stupid legislation. This provision needs re-examination I am totally opposed to it. I feel that the whole concept of the issue of warrants is based on certain legal principles. Although a layman, I know a number of people who have been appointed Justice of the Peace and who are incapable of administering the law. Before someone signs a warrant, he must be satisfied that the person who comes to ask for it has some prima facie evidence, some kind of evidence.

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Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud continued: He said that this is not going to be used in a vindictive way to harass anyone, but there is some measure of suspicious evidence because we are acting not probably on suspicion based on some circumstantial evidence and that kind of thing, and X and Y has gold illegally and, therefore, the warrant will finally be executed expeditiously and not be held by anybody for one month.

Why I have drawn attention to clause 50, sir, is to ensure that while we support very strongly and sincerely the concept of controlling our resources, we are totally opposed to any measure and or any legislation that can be used to harass the innocent citizens of this country. And I also want to warn in this Parliament this afternoon, that this does not happen and also at the same time, sir, say again, Cde. Minister has been proposing amendments without notice, and we are not opposed if he is prepared to look at that clause which I drew your attention to. Rhetorically, I think it is wrong and I am sure, sir, your legal mind will tell you that it does not look right. I am sure if you have not reached that conclusion, you would have been searching your mind to see whether this is right, it is judicious, or whether if this is done, it can be injudiciously executed or applied. This is my submission to you this afternoon as I contribute on this gold Bill.

But then, sir, that is not all. The person can search any hour. I think every member in this Assembly – the nation knows – and I would like to say that every member is aware that people have been wearing police uniforms – impostors – G.D.F. uniforms, posing as law enforcing men, gunning people, murdering people and robbing people. Do we want to put in the statute of this country's legislation anything that can permit that kind of element: to go at any time in the house of the citizen to execute search warrants under the disguise that they are searching for gold and that they are acting under the direction of the Gold Board. That is another area that I want to call upon the Minister with the greatest sincerity to look at because that can be abused. Today it can be abused and unscrupulously executed and applied even by those who are authorised and legitimate, and undoubtedly it can be used by the con-men and by the criminal elements. I would like to say I think the general feeling – and I speak with no authority – that a warrant is generally executed in daylight. As I said I speak with no authority. It looks like six to six, or something like that. I think it would be a very dangerous thing to allow people to go in at any hour, but let me suppose the Minister is tempted, Cde. Speaker, being a lawyer, to make the point that if someone has gold illegally in his possession or premises, and if you allow him to sleep through the night that something may happen during the night. I will regret to say no, because I do not have a right to seek rebuttal, he enjoys that right. I will argue here and now that surely the law-enforcing Departments could monitor the Assembly to start with what is more easy to do. It is much easier to monitor the six mining districts extending in various parts of the country. It is much easier to monitor a single house and to even watch movements, and when the time arrives even to ensure if there is any movements within or out of the premises at the proper time to take the necessary action. I do strongly urge from this side of the Assembly that this clause to which I referred is too wide. I do not think we need to really exercise that kind of control which the Minister has in mind.

Then, Cde. Speaker, not dealing with all of them, but if I take clause 20 sub-clause 3 of the Bill....

The Speaker: You have five minutes more.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Any package under the control, and if any gold is found upon him or any such vehicle which conveys the package may seize and detain the same. That is the person in

whose possession the gold is found, and arrest and detain the person until he can be brought before a magistrate and dealt with according to the law. Unless there is some other legislation that can be lead in conjunction with this which will clearly state the period a person can be held before he is brought before a magistrate, I must strongly record the opposition of those of us on this side of the Assembly because if a man commits an offence he must not have legislation that he must be arrested and kept until he can be brought before the court at the whims and fancy of anybody. He must be arrested.

The Speaker: Let me save you some time. I do not think that is correct. When he is taken to the police station, he has 24 hours. You have to charge him or loose him or something.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Well, that is why I added to that contribution that unless there is some other institution I had in mind, where he can be held for 24 hours or 48 hours as the case may be. I hope that will be applied here. I hope that this legislation will not in any way supersede that provision of the law because that is not written as far as I know, Cde. Speaker, in the Constitution. I think the interpretation is chapter of the statute. I am saying just for the record so that the intention of the legislature can be clear this afternoon when this Bill is passed, that nobody can be held for a period longer than the general law intends.

Cde. Speaker, there is a provision on which I want to make a point before time prevents me from doing so. The Government has to its discredit of not being able to efficiently manage many, many things. Rice production for one, just for the records and in so many other areas. Cde. Speaker, I make this point that there are private traders who are legitimate, and I looked at the Bill and the Bill does say that those who are there trading – I take it that the gold-smiths and so on will be permitted to keep raw gold in their possession for trading, for it is clear from the legislation that they will have to buy the gold from the Gold Board. I want to ask the Minister now to give the Assembly the assurance that there will be no discrimination in the sale of gold to people who have been operating for years in this area, who will continue to operate, and if new ones were to be brought in the gold trade, because we do express the fear that there can be discrimination even, sir, in the sale of gold. I notice from the Bill, sir, that people operating within the mining district, after looking at it for a second time, that they will be permitted to take gold and probably give goods to the miners, those who are probably without currency and so on. But the Bill does made eight provisions for such person or persons to resell – for the record – resell whatever gold they buy to the Board. Since you said my time is more or less up.

The Speaker: I did not say it, the rules say so.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Cde. Speaker, I want to urge very strongly this afternoon in this Parliament, that if such a legislation is coming into being based on what the Minister has said, that the legislation must be used only for that purpose, and must be used for nothing else; must not be used to harass simple citizens.

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

(Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud continues)

I want to urge this on the exemption clause. What I want to ask the Minister is that the exemption clause should be used to grant to those people who have probably acquired small quantities of gold for their family's use for the benefit of their children for them to be permitted legally to keep it in their possession until such time that they can probably pay to have them designed, bearing in mind that even if jewellery are made at the moment it cannot be worn in Guyana. Many females who would like to bedeck themselves in jewellery are denied that opportunity. That is the contribution I would like to make, Cde. Speaker.

Cde. Ram Karran: We crave interference, Sir. First of all I wish to observe that the honourable Minister has not spoken for some time in this Assembly and I do wish to take the opportunity of congratulating him. He was silent for nearly a year. But as he was speaking my mind ran across the picture of the Parliamentarian, Sir Walther Raleigh, who came to these parts in search of gold. I particularly asked what was the price of gold. We have dealt with a number of commodities in this Assembly today. My friend the honourable Prime Minister said something _____ Well, I hope you are not going to tell the producers of gold that and withhold the price until you can produce more and more. That sort of argument has caused in this country a considerable reduction in the production. In the case of milk, what do you pay? Why do you not pay the same prices, not prices near to what the private people are paying? In the case of charcoal, why do you pay less than the private dealers are paying? You cannot sell sugar to anybody also, but why are your prices so depressed, prices that are lower than GUYSUCO obtains for their sugar. The same thing with rice. You collect the profits from the Caribbean and you cheat the farmers in this country. That is why you have such poor production in all the commodities. You cannot find gold, like trees growing in the forest. You have to look for it and I am in full agreement with my friend who said that the natural resources of this country is the general patrimony of all of us. I agree with him 100 percent and that it should be brought to the books. But we also have other things that are the general patrimony of all of the Guyanese people. It is reflected here. The _____ say it is used by the G.D.F. and it is used by legislators. It is honourable legislation to minaturize the majority in this Assembly. You cannot only talk about natural resources, you have to talk about decency all around and I hope that when the time comes you are not going to take away the people's licences because a lot of people are running into the fields, running in the gold fields like in the 1920's, the 1930's when jobs were not available on the coast. You know that with today's situation, I understand civil servants from the security they enjoyed in the past are trekking into the gold fields. I hope you are not going to do them like you did to the farmers and the workers. It was my friend, the Prime Minister who said you must produce more gold in order to get your licences renewed. That would be cheating and I assure you that if you do not give the people and have a fair system, even the little gold that you get, you anticipate more gold will be produced, even the little you get will be dropped.

Cde. Hubert Jack: First of all, Cde. Speaker, with regard to the price of gold I will reiterate what I told this Assembly at the time when the price of gold was US\$43., which is \$1,320. and when therefore, the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources could have fixed that as the price of something near to that. As the price is ensuring the payment of royalty, we deliberately fixed it as low as \$900 to make sure that there was no case of the producer find that he was paying too much. He paid considerably less than we could have made him pay. I am instructed that Dredge owners at this moment pay between \$900 and \$1,000. Now the price of gold, as you know it oscillates. It goes up and it comes down. Right now it is

about US\$40 which would be \$1,200.

The Speaker: Cde. Ram Karran's famous word for going up and down is yo-yo.

Cde. Hubert Jack: The point, however, Cde. Speaker, is that this year we are talking about raw gold and not refined gold. One loses about 10 per cent on the refining of gold. People who are knowledgeable about gold know this. Now, one other thing, moving from Cde. Ram Karran to come to the question of people having small quantities of gold. We are proposing to bring later to this Assembly a Hallmarking Act which will ensure that when people buy gold in this country they will get gold and not as they have gotten in the past sometimes brass, and any of the people that the honourable Member on the other side mentioned, may be having a small bit of gold keeping for a rainy day, they will be surprised to find that when they go to a responsible jeweller, as had happened to so many people who have left here and take their little gold with them surreptitiously to Canada, that they have had some brass encased in a gold covering. We will come to that. Cde. Speaker, as you know I have always thought and as I did on this occasion for three years seek to have constructive dialogue and if my learned friend had been careful in looking at legislation he will see that contrary to his fears, Section 20 is a limitation upon the present power of the state. The Mining Act 65:01 says as follows: If an Officer has reasonable cause to suspect that raw gold or silver or valuable mineral or precious stones is or are in the unlawful possession of anyone in any store, shop, building or any enclosed place whatsoever in Guyana, then upon oath made by the Officer before a Justice of Peace of the fact of suspicion by justice may by warrant-order authorise the Officer with all the necessary assistance and force, if required at any hour of the day or night to enter the house, store, shop, building or any enclosed place, etc., Now the difference between this legislation

I think you should pass it to Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud first.....

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: How long do you have?

Cde. Hubert Jack: That is the point I want to acquaint you with. We are giving a limitation of one month where as it was open before. I hope that I am being understood.

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

(Cde. Jack continues)

I hope I am being understood. We have set a limitation upon the powers in existence when, in fact, there was no limitation before. So that if this was going to be the bone that was going to prevent my hon. friend from voting wholeheartedly to this Bill, I am sure that now that it is removed we will hear him vociferously saying his “aye”. With regards to section 9 that he has mentioned, I will explain that there are two instances in which the state can exercise this power. First of all, where, for good reasons, as Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud has said, representations are made to keep some small bit of gold. We are not setting out like pharaoh of old to go into every house the day after the Bill is passed knocking on every door looking for gold. There is another instance in which we have negotiations going on with a number of companies in which we have the controlling interest. Where we have a state Corporation with a minority partner, since the gold goes into that Corporation we do not need to have the Board buy that gold because the whole purpose of it is to get one’s hand on the gold. So that is the other instance in which we can exercise. But he needs to have no fear whatever.

With regard to the question of discrimination and with regard to the sale of gold, let me assure this House that what we are interested in is in keeping people like jewelers in business. But we will also be requiring that persons who need gold to carry on legitimate business to keep legitimate books. Anyone who can come and show us that he has had a legitimate business, that he has been keeping books exporting gold or selling gold and he has his books, is entitled to have gold supplied to him through the We are not setting out to close down a section of the productive arm of this country.

There were some other matters raised which I would like to deal with very quickly. One of them concerns the question of Guyana Airways. The fact is that this Committee – as I read out the terms of reference – seeks not merely to buy gold but to ensure that there is a proper servicing of the miners. In the Commission of Geological Surveys and Mines we have created a post and filled it with an officer whose special duty is to go into the mining areas, find out what are the problems of the miners, whether they have problems with regard to supplies and so forth, to monitor that and to _____ it so to speak. This has been in operation since the beginning of this year.

I notice that there is a hope that this piece of paper, as it is put, will succeed. Let me explain very clearly what we see as happening. At this moment we can receive royalty on, say, 11,000 ounces of gold but thereafter that 11,000 ounces of gold disappears. If we buy the gold at the time when the royalty is declared then the gold cannot disappear in that way. Therefore, at least we will get the amount of gold that has been declared for royalty purposes. I am not saying this measure is going immediately to allow us to get 100 per cent of the gold produced. But I would like to bring to the attention of this House the fact that we have started a campaign this year and when one considers that for the whole of last year only 11,000 ounces was declared, since we started about the middle of September in 1981, 1245 ounces was declared against 1,335 in September 1980. But in October 2,386 ounces was declared against 1,660. And in November 3,468 ounces was declared as against 1,295. So in November we have got almost three times, 300 per cent, the return we got in 1980. This shows that the campaign which has been waged by the Commissioner of Geological Surveys and Mines is having an effect and we expect this to continue.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Assembly in Committee.

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

Clause 4.

Cde. Jack: Cde. Chairman, I ask that Section 2 of Clause 4 be deleted.

Amendment that –

Section 2 of Clause 4 be deleted.

put, and agreed to.

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

Clauses 5 to 7 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 8.

Cde. Jack: Cde. Chairman, I beg to move the amendment which was circulated to with: after the word “Board” that the words “or any agent authorised in writing by the Board” be inserted.

Amendment that –

After the word “Board” the words “or any agent authorised in writing by the Board” be inserted.

put, and agreed to.

Clause 8, as amended, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 9 to 23 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

1st and 2nd Schedule agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Assembly resumed.

Bill reported with Amendment: as amended, considered; read the Third time and passed.

MINING (AMENDMENT) BILL 1981

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to amend the Mining Act. [The Minister of Energy and Mines].

Cde. Jack: Cde. Speaker, the Mining Amendment Bill 1981 seeks to empower the Minister to make regulations so as to allow for the payment of royalty in gold or in kind. It has been found that in many of the far flung areas of the country it is inconvenient for persons to pay in cash, because at the time when they have declared the gold they do not in fact have cash. What has been done in many instances is that they go to merchants who pay them a depressed amount and in some cases they have to wait considerable time for their money. If we are going to monitor more closely, both the production and the disposal of gold, it is necessary for us to be able to collect the royalty as soon as possible. This would allow us to make provision to collect the gold either in cash or in kind.

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.

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES BILL 1981

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to provide for the implementation of the International System of Units (SI); and for purposes connected therewith. [The Minister, Finance, in the Ministry of Economic Planning and Finance on behalf of the Vice – President, Economic Planning and Finance.]

Cde. Sallahuddin: Cde. Speaker, I beg to move the Weights and Measures Bill 1981 and ask that it be read a second time. In this country measures have been taken to implement the metric system. After several months of activity, we see coming before the National Assembly this afternoon the Weights and Measures Bill 1981. On the passage and enactment of regulations therefrom, over a period of time, we too in this country would have taken our systems of weight into the 21st century.

Essentially, Cde. Speaker, the bill seeks to replace the existing system of imperial standard of weights and measures by the international system of units commonly known as metric and measures, but even before the introduction of the bill we all know in this country for various purposes, particularly for education and examinations that young Guyanese have already been using the international systems. Part two of the bill emphasises that during the transition period both the system of imperial standard of weights and measures and the international systems of units shall be valid and during the transition period all those agencies which have been involved so far in the exercise to take them one hundred per cent metric will continue their activity to ensure that every Guyanese man, woman and child is properly and effectively educated and equipped for the conversion. The conversion is going to be a planned, orderly and systematic exercise. Where new instruments need to be imported, arrangements will be made for

them to be imported. Where parts of instruments need to be substituted, effort will be made to obtain those parts. Officers with the necessary authority shall be designed to have them substituted. It means therefore, Cde. Speaker, that while the exercise will continue at one level and another, out there in the market place Officers and workers of the respective agencies shall be meeting out vendors, farmers, from the factories to the mines to ensure that over a period of time in an orderly and systematic manner the metric system will be used.

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

5.50 p.m.

I want to emphasize, at this point, that even upon the passage of this Bill into law the Imperial System of Weights and Measures will exist alongside the Metric System but that one, by weights of law and necessity, shall superimpose itself on the other until the other shall pass out of existence.

Part III of the Bill provides for the appointment of the Chief Inspector of Weights and Measures and other officers whose responsibility it shall be to ensure that the law is kept and observed and that all the routine procedures are gone into from time to time so that there shall arise no confusion as to who has responsibility for what functions and in what areas.

Part IV seeks to make certain general provisions and describes the nature of the materials which shall go into the production of weights.

Part V seeks to provide for offences and penalties and for the repeal of the Weights and Measures Act, Chapter 90:14. It means, therefore, that consequent upon the passage of this Bill into law it will become necessary for the relevant Minister from time to time to have regulations promulgated so that over a period of time, after a very careful assessment has been made of our capabilities in one phase after the other, that phase shall proceed.

I want to say that my initial presentation is going to be very brief because this is not a controversial measure but I wish to mention that at a later time I shall be seeking your permission to move two amendments which have been drawn to your attention and which have been duly circulated.

Question proposed.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Cde. Speaker, just for the record I wish to say that the Motion for this country to go metric was initiated by a member on this side of the House, meaning the People's Progressive Party.

I wish to say that I shall be very brief. We support the measure but I want to read what that Member said when he was introducing the Bill. He said these words, which are of interest at this stage since this Bill is not controversial.

The Speaker: This is reported in Hansard?

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Yes, sir.

The Speaker: If you could kindly give the date and page the reporters will be able to copy it for their records.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: He said:

“Mr. Speaker, it augurs well for the future of Guyana that a Motion coming from the Opposition Benches is placed on the Order Paper. Coming on the heels of the appointment of a new leader of the House, I ask myself: Who is responsible for this innovation?”

I would crave your indulgence, sir, to say there are many other very important Motions submitted by the Opposition since 1969. I would ask you to see fit that they be put on the Order Paper in future.”

The mover of the Motion at that time was the late Vincent Teekah who was taken by surprise when the Motion found itself on the Order Paper.

I want, sir, to support the measure.

The Speaker: Cde. Minister, I don't think you want to reply to that.

Cde. Sallahuddin: No, Cde. Speaker.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Assembly in Committee.

The Chairman: Comrades, there are several corrections. I don't propose to read them out because they are 'ors' and 'ands' that have been transposed and wrong spellings. The Clerk will make the necessary corrections. However, when the time for the amendments arrives the relevant Minister will do those amendments.

Clause 1 to 29 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

**MISSING
ADJOURNMENT**