

27th Sitting May 1984

THE

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORTS

/Volume 10/

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE THIRD SESSION (1983) OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FOURTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF GUYANA.

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27th Sitting

14:00 hrs

Thursday, 1984-05-03

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MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (70)

Speaker (1)

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

Members of the Government – People’s National Congress (57)

Prime Minister (1)

Cde. Dr. P.A. Reid, O.E., M.P.  
Prime Minister (Absent – on leave)

Other Vice-Presidents (4)

Cde. H.D. Hoyte, S.C., M.P. (Absent – on leave)

Vice-President, Production

Cde. H. Green, M.P., (Absent – on leave)

Vice-President, Social Infrastructure

Cde. B. Ramsaroop, M.P.,

Vice-President, Party and State Matters

\*Cde. Dr. M. Shahabuddeen, O.R., S.C., M.P., (Absent)

Vice-President and Attorney General

Senior Ministers (6)

Cde. R. Chandisingh, M.P.,  
Minister of Education, Social Development and Culture

Cde. R.H.O. Corbin, M.P.,  
Minister of National Mobilisation

Cde. H. Rashid, M.P.,  
Minister of Energy and Mines

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

\*Cde. J.R. Thomas, M.P., (Absent)  
Minister of Home Affairs

\*Cde. C.B. Greenidge, M.P., (Absent)  
Minister of Finance and Economic Planning

\*Non-elected Member

Ministers (7)

Cde. U.E. Johnson, M.P., Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister	(Absent)
Cde. Sallahuddin, M.P., Minister within the Ministry of Agriculture	
Cde. R.C. Fredericks, A.A., M.P., Minister of Youth and Sport within the Ministry of Education, Social Development and Culture	(Absent)
Cde. S. Prashad, M.P., Minister of Transport within the Vice-Presidency of Social Infrastructure	
*Cde. Y.V. Harewood-Benn, M.P., Minister of Information and Public Service	(Absent – on leave)
*Cde. Dr. R.A. Van West-Charles, M.P., Minister of Health and Public Welfare	(Absent)
*Cde. K.W.E. Denny, M.P., Minister of Manpower and Co-operatives	

Ministers of State (2)

Cde. M. Corrica, M.P., Minister of State within the Ministry of Internal Trade and Consumer Protection	
Cde. H.L.B. Singh, M.S., M.P., Minister of State within the Ministry of Regional Development	(Absent – on leave)

Parliamentary Secretaries (3)

Cde. A.W. Bend-Kirton-Holder, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary, Housing, within the Ministry of Health and Public Welfare	
Cde. D.A.N. Ainsworth, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary within the Ministry of Education, Social Development and Culture	
Cde. B. Bhaggan, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary in the Office of the Prime Minister	

\*Non-elected Member

Other Members (23)

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

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 Region Regional Democratic Councils (9)

Cde. K.N. Jones, M.P. (Region No.1-Barima/Waini)  
Cde. K.V. Jairam, M.P. (Region No.2-Pomeroon/ Supenaam) (Absent)  
Cde. C.A. Singh, M.P. (Region No.3-Essequibo Islands/West Demerara)  
Cde. W. Bipat, J.P., 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/Mazurni)  
Cde. D. Abraham, M.P. (Region No. 8- Potaro/Siparuni) (Absent)  
Cde. D. Hinds, M.P. (Region No.10-Upper Demerara/Berbice)

Members of the Opposition (12)

( i ) Peoples' Progressive Party (10)

Minority Leader (1)

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

Deputy Speaker (1)

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

Other Members (8)

Cde. J. Jagan, M.P. (Absent)  
Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud, J.P., M.P.,  
Minority Chief Whip

Cde. N. Persaud, M.P. (Absent)  
Cde. C.C. Collymore, M.P.

Cde. S.F. Mohamed, M.P. (Absent)  
Cde. I. Basir, M.P.  
Cde. C.C. Belgrave, M.P. (Absent)  
Cde. H. Nokta, M.P.

( ii ) United Force (2)

Mr. M.F. Singh, C.C.H., J.P., M.P. (Absent – on leave)

Mr. M.A. Abraham, M.P.

OFFICERS

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

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

PRAYERS

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National Assembly

14:05 – 14: 15 hrs

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The Speaker: Cde. Basir, are you in your right seat? I cannot listen to you from there. You will have to go and take up your seat over there.

Cde. Basir: Cde. Speaker, you may proceed with the Sitting of the Assembly.

The Speaker: No, I cannot proceed with you in that Chair. You have to take up your seat.

Cde. Basir: Cde. Speaker, since the Hon. Prime Minister is in my Region for two weeks now, I thought I could sit in his Chair for today. You can proceed.

The Speaker: No, I cannot proceed until the Parliament is properly constituted. As a matter of fact I should not even be listening to you.

Cde. Basir: You know when we are over there you do not listen to us, so I thought I can sit in the Prime Minister's chair for a while and you will listen to me from here.

The Speaker: When you make that gigantic leap to come over to this side I will listen to you. At the moment you have to go step by step. Please go back now and let us proceed.

Cde. Basir: I have a presentation to make to you.

The Speaker: Not now.

Cde. Basir: Well, you will have to take it now.

Cde. Basir makes his presentation.

Cde. Basir: I was in the Prime Minister's Chair for only a few minutes and I am able to offer you bread. /Laughter./

#### ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

##### Leave to Members

The Speaker: Leave has been granted to Cdes. Reid, Hoyte, Jackson, Harewood-Benn and Corrica, and to the Hon. Member, Mr. F. Singh for today's sitting.

I have also just received a message that Mr. Singh's mother died this morning in Toronto. On behalf of the members of the Assembly and myself, I would like to extend our deepest sympathy to him.

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PUBLIC BUSINESS

BILLS – SECOND AND THIRD READINGS

MINING (AMENDMENT) BILL 1984

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to amend the Mining Act.” /The Minister of Energy and Mines./

The Minister of Energy and Mines: (Cde. Rashid): Cde. Speaker, I beg to move that the Mining Amendment Bill 1984 now be read a Second time. Cde. Speaker, the Second Session of the Supreme Congress of the People, noting the enormity of the illegal outflows of our gold and diamond resources from our land, approved a resolution calling on Government to take the necessary initiatives to, among other things, increase the penalties including mandatory prison sentences for offences that deprive the nation of its natural resources. In pursuant of this decision and with the approval of the Cabinet, I introduced the Mining Amendment Bill 1984 in Parliament on Thursday, April 26 for its First reading. The fact that the Supreme Congress of the People saw it necessary to advocate more stringent penalties for breaches to the mining laws and regulations, was no doubt due to the recognition that the best efforts of the Ministry of Energy and Mines, the Geological and Mines Commission, and the Guyana Gold Board, to persuade the miners and other dealers in gold and diamond resources to comply with our laws in the national interest, have not yielded the desired results.

This is not to say that there has not been improvement in the sale of gold to the Guyana Gold Board. In fact, in 1982, the Board purchased 2,658 ounces in its first year of operation, and in 1983 sales increased to 5,383 ounces. The target for 1984 is 10,000 ounces and from all indications so far, I think we will be able to reach this figure. Despite these progressive increases in the sale of gold to the Guyana Gold Board, we in the Ministry of Energy and Mines are of the firm conviction based on our concrete analysis of the realities that the declarations of winnings by the Mining Community and the miners, continue to be grossly under-reported, and constitute roughly under 20 percent of actual production.

In dealing with the mining community, Cde. Speaker, the Ministry has tended to rely in the past on exhortation and incentives. We have, as it were, offered the olive branch,

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or in our case you may want to say the coconut branch to the mining community. Regular meetings have been held with the miners and with the representatives of the miners appealing for their sense of duty to the nation and to the people of Guyana. Higher prices have also been offered for the sale of gold to the Board. But the responses from these efforts have been far from satisfactory. If the gold and diamond industry is to make the leading role in the national recovery programme, this approach on its own is no longer tenable, for too long successive Governments have allowed the gold and diamond industry to operate without any control and without any attempt to promote its viability. The consequences for the nation have almost been catastrophic. Millions of dollars, resources that should have been available for the developmental process, resources that should have been available for the solving of some basic problems which our people face have been drained from our economy. The gold and diamond industry is a classic example of the failure of the free market forces to work in the collective interest of our people. The invisible hands of private enterprise have in this instance, failed miserably to promote the economic well-being of our people. In 1981, for instance, when there was an increase in the monitoring activities undertaken by the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission, declared production was 19,000 ounces. However, the inflows of foreign exchange into the National Banking System were limited to the revenue earned from the sale of 460 ounces. The remainder of the gold declared to have been produced in Guyana in 1981 was smuggled out of the country.

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(Cde. Rashid continues)

Cde. Speaker, it was reported in last Monday's edition of our National Newspaper, the Guyana Chronicle that the Mining Association was stunned by the proposed legislation and concluded, I think rather prematurely, that the legislation was an unwarranted attack on the mining community. I want to give the assurance to the mining community that this is not the case. Our approach to the mining community is to encourage and not to intimidate, to promote and not to demote. However, we have declared war on the smugglers. We have declared war on the plunderers of our economy and the bandits who are robbing the nation, the people of Guyana, of millions of dollars each year, money which accrue from the activities in the gold and diamond mining industry. We have declared war on those subversive elements who, contrary and in contradiction to their professed concern for the difficulties our people are experiencing, are at the same time indulging in a widespread rape of the nation's resources. The police, customs and the inspectorate of the Geological and Mines Commission and indeed of the people of Guyana who are concerned with the extent of the smuggling of our resources out of our country will unite to reduce and to arrest this massive drainage of resources and to bring to the courts the unpatriotic elements.

I have no comfort this afternoon to offer to those who protest against the searches. These will be intensified but will be conducted with politeness and decorum. To those wolves in sheep's clothing who are vociferous about their concern for individual rights, I would like to say this, that the rights of masses of our people are a million times more important than those of the bandits. Taken together, the Mining (Amendment) Bill 1984 seeks to increase the monetary fines for breaches to the mining laws and at the same time it makes it compulsory for the courts to imprison persons found guilty of offences which breach the mining laws and regulations. For instance, Section 10 of the proposed amendment will amend the Principal Act to increase the penalty from \$1,500 or imprisonment for six months to a fine of \$25,000 plus an imprisonment of five years. Similarly, section 40 of the main Act also amended to increase the fine from \$300 to



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\$10,000 together with an imprisonment of two years plus an additional fine of \$1,000. Sections 80 and 84 are also proposed for amendment, to make the penalties realistic and to act as a deterrent to potential offenders of the mining laws. Finally, Section 79 of the Principal Act will be amended by a repeal of Subsection 2 and to allow the Minister to prescribe fines not exceeding \$25,000 together with an imprisonment for five years for breaches of any regulation which may be enacted by the Commission.

Cde. Speaker, these penalties may appear to be heavy but the Government would be failing in its responsibility to the people if it does not move to curb the plunder of the nation's resources. These resources are becoming more and more attractive to other nations. Indeed, one Caribbean nation has recently introduced measures to make it easier for people to import into that country gold and diamond. We have no quarrel with that country since it would appear that the country concerned is pursuing its own interest and needs as much resources to ensure that its people are able to be cushioned from the adverse international economic situation. However, we in the People's National Congress have got a duty to our people and will not stand idly by and allow the wealth of our nation to be transferred illegally to other nations. Those who are caught aiding and abetting this robbery will be dealt with firmly, expeditiously and condinely.

It is my confidence, in recommending this Bill, to say that I anticipate the support of my colleagues in the Minority benches for these amendments which I am proposing this afternoon.

Question proposed.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud (Minority Chief Whip): Cde. Speaker, we on this side of the Assembly firmly believe that the resources of our country should be advantageously used for the benefit of the nation, the people of Guyana. We will not impede any effort to protect our resources as we will be very concerned that whatever resources we have got are really used to develop the country and to bring about the welfare and wellbeing of Guyana. There could be no doubt that the fines and penalties generally are severe. The Minister himself pointed out to what the fines were and what they are going to be now. For example, from \$1,500 to \$25,000 together with five years mandatory prison terms and he said that he

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hopes that these penalties will serve as a deterrent to those who are likely to commit breaches of the Mining Act.

I would like to ask the Minister if he ever addressed his mind to what may have led to the increase in smuggling of our resources, and to ask him whether simply increasing the fines and penalties would not be only but one step. Would we not need to give consideration to efforts and actions that can influence confidence in the minds of those who are directly concerned, those who may be involved and, indeed, in the country as a whole.

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National Assembly

14:25 hrs

(Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud continues)

The Government has got a serious charge – a serious duty to make efforts and serious efforts to win back the confidence of the people which seems to be the root of activities of the kind which the Minister complained.

May I make it abundantly clear and ensure that there is absolutely no ambiguity in what I say – we do not support smuggling of our resources by any. We stand against those who want to destroy our resources but at the same time we would have been failing in our duties if we do not say that a conglomeration of things that has happened and that are happening, that are causing these kinds of activities to increase. I thought that that is an area that ought to be considered. The Minister spoke of the increase price, he spoke of incentives and I think he mentioned that there have been meetings with the miners. I think those are necessary steps, but what does appear clear is that despite these efforts by the Minister and the Government they have not succeeded in stopping or reducing incidents of smuggling.

It is very serious if the monitoring result is true that 80% of gold etc. are being smuggled out and only 20% is retained in the country. A pertinent question would be, when the Minister or the Government became aware of that percentage and statistics because he spoke of successive Governments not taking action to stop what is going on? I am sure he has not erased from his own mind the fact that his Government has been in power for twenty years and so even from a debating point there must have been a date when the smuggling went beyond expectation and probably the Minister may be inclined to tell us when.

We are deeply concerned Cde. Speaker, with the state of the economy. We are seriously concerned about the conditions of the people of this country and the tremendous hardships which people face every conceivable day of their life in Guyana and we feel that the whole question of restoring the economy, bringing it back to a reasonably viable state is something which has to be tackled in a global way and the causes for all the ills in our society, be it smuggling, crime, illegal trading by the hucksters – all these things must be

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examined in a global and comprehensive way so that a comprehensive programme will emerge, not only to produce legislation in terms of penalty, fines and jail but to give assurance and reassurance to the people of this country that they can live in Guyana reasonably well and without any fear and severe hardships.

There are certain other questions which I would like to pose and hope that the Cde. Minister will answer. Apart from having penalties to deter smuggling, what other efforts are being made to effectively monitor our six mining areas – for the inspection of these areas have been inadequate and some years ago I went into a thorough study of the development of the Gold Industry, giving figures way back to the early 50's with a view that the Government will not only legislate and set up a Board, but ensure that all the areas where mining is done, that the system changes, where those who have won, those who have gotten gold will have to go on their own volition and voluntarily declare what they have gotten out of their mining, so that there is a lot of weaknesses in the system of mining and the Government inspects or monitor.

I recall as a result of my constant persuasion of the Minister's predecessor that there were announcements that houses were being put in these mining areas so that inspectors could be stationed there. We have not since heard what has happened and whether there is one inspector or more than one so that there can be better management of our resources. There could be no doubt that in this area the Government was found wanting and probably has until this moment that I am speaking is ineffective to give the kind of supervision to ensure that more of the gold come to the institution set up by the government. There have also been reports Cde. Speaker, of dishonesty within the very Gold Board which the Government has set up not so long ago. There were all kinds of evidence – charges and what you. The Minister may be inclined to tell us whether in his attempt to ensure that the public does not do the injury they have been doing in smuggling, that great dishonesty does not still take place in the very institution which the Government has set up. Probably a pertinent question would be – is there a proper inventory or record of all gold seized? How many ounces for instance within the last five years? Where they are kept and where ultimately they are reflected for examination by this Parliament? I think the Minister owes

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us a duty. We say we support measures as we do this afternoon – we do not oppose the Bill but we must be assured that in moving to protect our natural resources, in moving to protect our wealth that we do not only take one step to bring to justice those who have committed the offences and thereafter we do not take the necessary steps which are consequential in parliamentary consideration to ensure the wealth that we have protected and even the wealth that we have seized at that stage are utilised advantageously and honestly for the development of the country.

We get all kinds of reports – that there might have been one amount of gold seized but when the person is brought to justice that amount that was seized is not declared then – it reduces considerably.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud continues

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I say this from what I have been hearing. There is no positive evidence. If this is so, then there is grave dishonesty that requires examination in the very agencies which the Government is saying will --

The Speaker: That will require a substantive Motion.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Yes, sir. I thought of raising it. I am talking about the agencies which will operate. The agencies will have to be purified.

The Speaker: That is what I am saying. That will need a substantive Motion to discuss the whole aspect of that.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Very well, sir. I thought that the Minister might be inclined to tell the Assembly what is being done.

The Speaker: You yourself said that there is no evidence; there are only allegations.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: With the greatest respect, we will probably get a chance this afternoon for the Minister to tell us. He is in a better position than I am or than you are to say that these are not only allegations but it has been found that there is merit and truth in these rumours. He can say what action is being taken to ensure that such breaches as have taken place in the past will be curtailed or will not be permitted in the future.

May I conclude by saying, as is clearly implied in my contribution, that legislation and penalties can never be the only answer for offences of this kind.

On the question of searches, I would be the last to oppose searches if there is reason, if there are grounds or, to use the well accepted and defined phraseology, if there is reasonable ground for searches. I have read Crane's "Law of Possession" and he dealt in extenso with what must influence searches. May I say, in all honesty and with all frankness that searches willy-nilly are not in the best interest of the nation. They cannot be. The agencies, institutions and personnel which the Government expects to monitor, or to give effect to, these pieces of legislation must be trained. It is not only a question of doing it courteously. It is not a question of courtesy and discourtesy.

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If a person is an honest citizen, if he has never committed any breaches of the law and if he is thrown to the mercy of these so-called 'searchers' to be embarrassed, for it is not simply the searching of pockets, suitcases and personal belongings, it is searching of the person, then there must be more than courtesy. There must be care; there must be caution. There have been complaints in all quarters from decent citizens. The Government must give consideration to the necessary mechanism, not simply in the physical sense, but even in the scientific sense, so that when searches are made there must be some reasonableness and some ground before people are put to that kind of embarrassment.

The Minister, may I say in fairness to him, has always demonstrated reasonableness in this Assembly. I say this openly in his favour. He seems to be one of the Ministers who are prepared to listen to contributions and to be reasonable in his response. As a citizen he would not like, whenever he goes to Timehri Airport prior to leaving this country, to entertain the fear that he will not only be searched but he will be stripped. That fear is entertained at the highest level.

The Minister has spoken and that is why I have raised this question. I had no intention of raising it, but the Minister has spoken. He said he makes no apology for the searches. I can understand when a Minister wants to guard zealously what are the country's resources, he must come out in very precise and strong language so that not only the penal but the very contributions he makes in this Assembly will act as a deterrent. At the same time he cannot be so exuberant as to ignore the other rights which citizens are entitled to. I am sure that the Minister is not suggesting in his contribution that all and sundry, whether there are grounds or no grounds, suspicion or no suspicion, are going to be searched and searched to the end to their utter embarrassment. I would not like to know that that is the Government's policy. I would ask for some clarification.

We support action against the smugglers and we make no apology for our support for such action but, on behalf of all the people of this country, we also call for caution. We call for reasonableness and we call for the protection of the rights and liberties of the citizens of this country. I think a statement on this matter will be very timely. If the Government wants decent citizens to be a help and aid in its campaign to protect what is ours it should take every care to ensure that we do not make a criminal out of every citizen, because it will not be true to say --

The Speaker: I am not speaking for the Minister but decent citizens, or apparently decent citizens, are the biggest rascals in this game.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Sir, I will take issue with you. If the citizen is decent he will not indulge--

The Speaker: I said 'apparently decent'.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: I am not talking about decency and circumscribing it to the form, to the looks or the status quo of the individual. I use the word in its truest meaning. I was urging, sir, and I am sure that you will agree, that searches must be premised on grounds, on suspicion, on information, and not be willy-nilly and recklessly done, thus exposing every citizen who leaves this country not simply to the ransacking of all his personal belongings but to a search of his person to his great embarrassment. There have been searches of that kind.

Having made my contribution, the position of the People's Progressive Party is clear. We call for our resources to be protected, we call for our resources to be used in the interest of the nation, we call for whatever resources we have to be utilised to remove the hardships which the citizens currently face in so many areas in Guyana.

The Speaker: Cde. Rashid.

Cde. Rashid: Cde. Speaker, the honourable comrade of the Minority Party has raised some really valid and interesting points and I would like to respond briefly to some of those points. As I had indicated, we in the Ministry of Energy and Mines and in the Government are not relying solely on the stick to ensure that there is compliance with the law. We recognise that passing laws and having severe penalties in themselves will not bring about the results that we are expecting. I have indicated in my contribution that during the initial period we have been talking regularly to the miners and to the mining community in an attempt to raise their level of consciousness and to get them to understand that their first commitment must be to the people of Guyana and to Guyana, that the resources belong to Guyanese people and the Guyanese people must have the first call on those resources. We have been talking to them and trying to encourage them to help us to overcome the problems we are experiencing by ensuring that the resources which they produce are made available to the nation and put to the use of the nation. In addition to this, as Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud admitted, we have increased the price to the miners, a price that requires the entire community to subsidise the gold producers.



(Cde. Rashid continues)

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In addition, we have been making available to the mining community supplies of basic items which before now was only obtainable on the parallel market at very high prices and which contributed to the increase in cost of production for the miners. We have also instituted another measure that is beneficial to the mining community, and that is making available to the mining community foreign exchange that is used for the purchase of spares. We know that the mining community has to be serviced if they are going to make the contribution to our national effort. So we are not relying mainly on penalties or the punitive aspects of the law to enforce compliance or to gain compliance.

With regards to what the Commissioner is doing to improve the monitoring capability, I would like to state quite clearly and to repeat again that right now we have several mining officers and assistant mining officers in each of the mining areas but as you know because of the terrain in which they operate, they are placed at a disadvantage and are unable to carry out the functions effectively. The very nature of the mining work that is in progress now – that is the river work – makes it impossible for the mining officers to monitor effectively and to ensure that production is recorded correctly from the production process. But there are Mines Officers in the interior now in each mining area.

In relation to the question "What happens to the gold that we seize?" The gold we seize, Cde. Speaker, as you know and as I should inform the Parliament, is not retained and kept in any stockpile in Guyana but is sold almost immediately to earn foreign exchange to bring in items that are required by the nation. We are not at that stage or in that league where we can stockpile gold. As fast as we get the gold from the production or from seizures, the gold is sold on the foreign exchange market to earn immediately, foreign exchange for essential imports.

The Speaker: Cde. Persaud was asking a question whether proper records are kept.

Cde. Rashid: Cde. Speaker, I was moving to that point. I want to assure Cde. Persaud that as far as I am aware that there are proper records kept of all gold seized by the monitoring agencies and those Officers who are empowered with the right to seize gold

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and diamond. As far as I am aware I do not think there have been any irregularities in the safe-keeping of gold. Whether there is a discrepancy between the seizure and the actual declaration of the seizure, I am not in a state to say. I have heard rumours but I am not the person to give credence to rumours.

The question of searching people – our citizens and other visitors who come for short periods in Guyana – I know has been a source of some concern and comments. But I think, and Cde. Persaud did admit that this is an important means of ensuring that this resource is obtained by the nation. Cde. Persaud did caution on the manner in which the searched are conducted. It is not our intention to harass decent citizens – decent and law abiding citizens. But as my colleague at the back whispered while Cde. Persaud was speaking, that we are decent until we are caught. And you know that is so. The police receive information and will carry out the search. If we were to search each and every individual who is going to leave the country, well, the departure of the plane would be very late. So not every individual is searched. The search will depend on the information and tip offs the police receive on possible smugglers of gold. It is not really our intention to embarrass any one or the other. When we speak of searching, I would like to inform Parliament that some years ago on my way back from Yugoslavia I was detained at Heathrow Airport by the British Officials. I was detained for two hours and they searched my suit case and my documents and there was nothing I could do to object to that search. I took it in good faith. If they felt that I was involved, if they had reasons to believe that I was involved in some illicit activity, it is their right to carry out that search. I did not feel bitter about the British Officers doing their job. /Cde. Persaud: Were you stripped?/No, but others have been stripped. In the same way when we are searched we should not feel that it is an act of harassment, but it is really an effort by our Law enforcement agency to reduce the level and incident of smuggling.

Question put. and agreed to

Bill read a Second time.

Assembly in Committee.

Bill considered and approved.

Assembly resumed.

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

The Speaker: Cde. Leader of the House.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, "That this Assembly do now adjourn to a date to be fixed. /The Vice-

President, Party and State Matters/

Adjourned accordingly at 14:55 hrs