

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

[VOLUME 11]

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE FIRST SESSION (1986) OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIFTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA

2nd Sitting

14:00 hrs Tuesday, 1986-02-04

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (73)

Speaker (1)

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

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

Ministers in the Cabinet (10)

Prime Minister (1)

Cde. H. Green, M.P.,
Prime Minister

Other Vice-President and First Deputy Prime Minister (1)

Cde. Dr. M. Shahabuddeen, O.R., S.C., M.P.,
Vice-President, First Deputy Prime Minister
and Attorney General

Other Vice-Presidents and Deputy Prime Ministers (2)

Cde. R. Chandisingh, M.P.,
Vice-President, National Mobilisation,
and Deputy Prime Minister

Cde. Viola V. Burnham, O.R., M.P.,
Vice-President, Education and Social Development,
and Deputy Prime Minister

Other Deputy Prime Ministers (2)

Cde. W.A.L.H. Parris, C.C.H., M.P.,
Deputy Prime Minister, Planning and
Development

Cde. R.H.O. Corbin, M.P.,
Deputy Prime Minister, Agriculture

Senior Ministers (4)

Cde. R.E. Jackson, M.P.,
Minister of Foreign Affairs

*Cde. C.B. Greenidge, M.P.,
Minister of Finance

Cde. S. Prashad, M.P.,
Minister of Transport

*Cde. W.S. Murray, C.C.H., M.P., (Absent - on leave)
Minister of Trade

Other Ministers (11)

Senior Ministers (3)

Cde. J.R. Thomas, M.P.,
Minister of Manpower, Housing and Environment

*Non-elected Member

Cde. Dr. R.A. Van West-Charles, M.P., (Absent - on leave)
Minister of Health

Cde. Yvonne V. Harewood-Benn, M.P.,
Minister of Information and the Public Service

Ministers (4)

Cde. Urmi E.H. Johnson, M.P.,
Minister within the Ministry of National
Mobilisation

*Cde. R.C. Fredericks, A.A., M.P.,
Minister of Youth and Sport within the
Ministry of Education

Cde. C.G. Sharma, A.A., J.P., M.P.,
Minister within the Office of the President

*Cde. D.M.A. Bernard, M.P.,
Minister within the Ministry of Education

Ministers of State (4)

*Cde. D.A. Ainsworth, M.P.,
Minister of State within the Ministry of
Manpower, Housing and Environment

Cde. J.T. Kissoon, M.P.,
Minister of State within the Ministry of
Agriculture

Cde. D. Sawh, M.P.,
Minister of State within the Ministry of
Forestry

*Cde. Dr. Faith A. Harding, M.P.,
Minister of State within the Ministry of
Planning and Development

Parliamentary Secretaries (3)

Cde. A.K. Habibulla, M.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary, Office of the
President

Cde. Stella Odie-Ali, M.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary, Home Affairs

*Cde. Jean M.G. Persico, A.A., M.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary, Education

Government Chief Whip (1)

Cde. Jennifer A. Ferreira, M.P.,
Government Chief Whip

Other Members (24)

Cde. R.E. Williams, M.P.
Cde. Agnes W. Bend-Kirton-Holder, M.P.
Cde. E.H.A. Fowler, M.P.
Cde. Joyce Gill-Mingo, M.P.
Cde. M. Ally, M.P.
Cde. Bissoondai Beniprashad-Rayman, M.P.
Cde. Elaine B. Davidson, M.P.
Cde. Et. Doobay, M.P.
Cde. Joyce M. Munroe, J.P., M.P.
Cde. Edwina Melville, M.P.
Cde. Anna Ally, M.P.
Cde. L. Arthur, M.P.
Cde. J.R.L. Bovell-Dr.
Cde. N. Calistro, M.P.
Cde. G.W. Chin, J.P., M.P.
Cde. F.M. Cumberbatch, M.P.
Cde. M.I. Deen, M.P.

Cde. Cyrilda A. DeJesus, M.P.
Cde. Edith Deygoo, M.P.
Cde. Clarice A. Edwards, M.P.
Cde. C.L. Geddes, M.P.
Cde. G. Marshall, M.P.
Cde. B. Persaud, M.P.
Cde. E.W. Trotman, M.P.

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

Cde. E. Mohamed, M.P.
Cde. Rose I. Semple, M.P.

Members from the Regional Democratic Councils (10)

Cde. Nellie R. Charles, M.P. (Region No. 7 - Cuyuni/Mazaruni)
Cde. R. Bishop, M.S., M.P. (Region No. 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)
Cde. Bhagmatee Latchminarayan, M.P. (Region No. 5 - Mahaica/Berbice)
Cde. Y. Khan, M.P. (Region No. 2 - Pomeroon/Supenaam)
Cde. Enid E. Abrahams, M.S., J.P., M.P. (Region No. 3 - Essequibo
Islands/West Demerara)
Cde. I. Ally, M.P. (Region No. 6 - East Berbice/Corentyne)
Cde. Patricia A. Daniel, M.P. (Region No. 10 - Upper Demerara/
Berbice)
Cde. B.L. Domingo, M.P. (Region No. 1 - Barima/Waini)
Cde. S.I. McGarrell, M.P. (Region No. 8 - Potaro/Siparuni)
Cde. M. Stephens, M.P. (Region No. 9 - Upper Takutu/Upper
Essequibo)

Members of the Minority (11)

(i) People's Progressive Party (8)

Minority Leader (1)

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

Deputy Speaker (1)

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud, J.P., M.P., (Absent)
Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly

Other Members (6)

Cde. Janet Jagan, M.P. (Absent)
Cde. C.C. Collymore, M.P. (Absent)
Cde. S.F. Mohamed, M.P., (Absent)
Minority Chief Whip
Cde. H. Nokta, M.P. (Absent)
Cde. I. Basir, M.P. (Absent)
Cde. C.C. Belgrave, M.P. (Absent)

(ii) United Force (2)

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

(iii) Working People's Alliance (1)

Mr. E. Kwayana, M.P.

OFFICERS

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

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

17:00 hrs

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

The Speaker: The sitting of the National Assembly will now be suspended and will be resumed on the arrival of Their Excellencies.

Sitting suspended at 17:03 hrs.

17:35 - 17:40 hrs

17:35 hrs

On resumption - -

ARRIVAL OF THE PRESIDENT AND CDE JOYCE HOYTE

Their Excellencies, the President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, Cde. Hugh Desmond Hoyte, S.C., and Cde. Joyce Hoyte were announced. Their Excellencies entered the Chamber and were received by the Assembly.

The Speaker: Your Excellency the Cde. President, Cde. Joyce Hoyte, Members of Parliament, it is my honour and, indeed, a privilege on this occasion of the opening of the first session of the Fifth Parliament to welcome very warmly the Leader of our nation, the Head of our Parliament, a distinguished son of our soil, the President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana.

On the 3rd of January, 1969, Cde. Hugh Desmond Hoyte first became a parliamentarian. He entered this Chamber, made and subscribed the oath, and took his seat as a back bench member of the National Assembly. Three days later, he was appointed Minister of Home Affairs. In 1971 he became Minister of Finance and in 1972, Minister of Works and Communications. Following his re-election to the National Assembly in 1973, he was made and moved upwards to the position of a Senior Minister. In 1974 he changed portfolio and became responsible for Economic Development. He was, in 1981, appointed a Vice-President and was successively responsible for Economic Planning and Finance, Administration and Production.

With the retirement in 1984 of Cde. Dr. Ptolemy Reid from Parliament, Cde. Hoyte was appointed to be the Prime Minister of this country, occupying the first seat in the Chamber. When Cde. Forbes Burnham, the founder-leader of the P.N.C. and President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana passed away, Cde. Hoyte assumed the Office of President of Guyana, becoming the Head

of State, the supreme executive authority, and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces and at the same time ceasing to be a Member of the National Assembly. For sixteen and a half years, Cde. Hoyte served continuously in and as a Member of the National Assembly. With his ceasing to be a Member of the Assembly, we have missed him from among us and we have missed his contribution in the National Assembly.

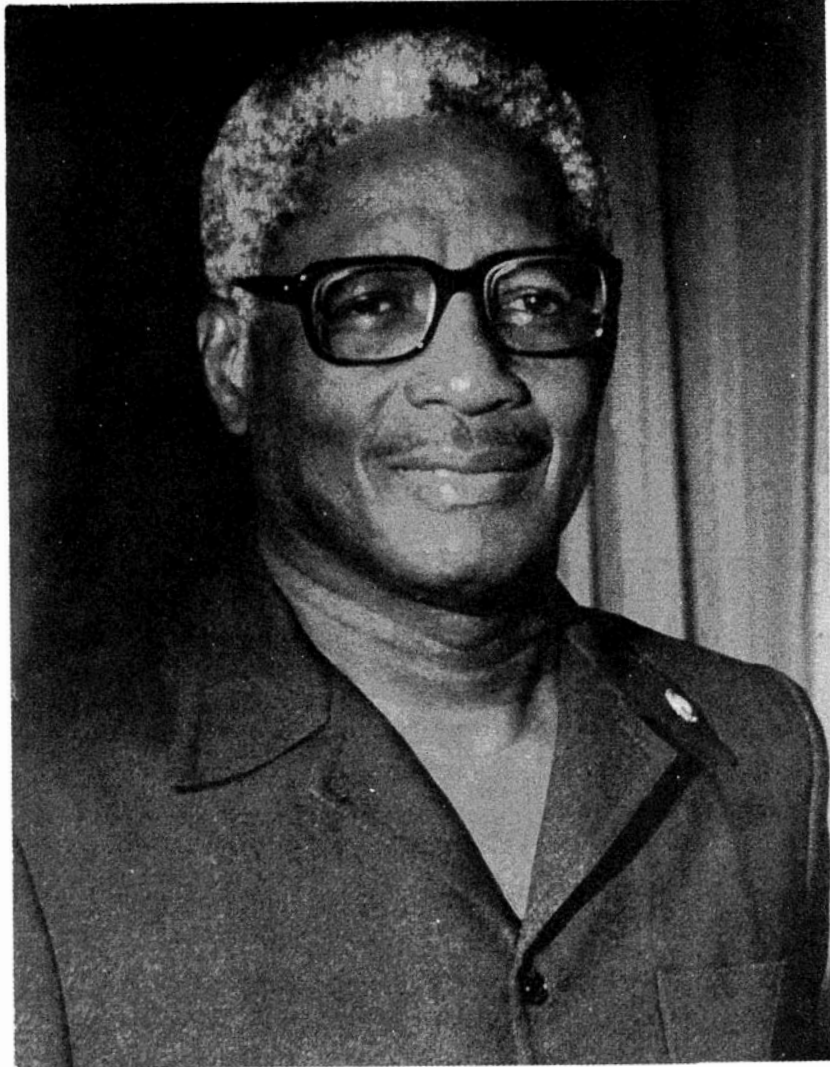
Last December, Cde. Hoyte became our Leader because of his resounding victory at the recent elections.

We offer, Cde. Leader, not only our congratulations but our loyalty to you as Head of State and an assurance of our support in your efforts to guide our country through the parliamentary and constitutional processes into an era of total well-being for the people of our dear land.

May I express the sincere hope that you will always enjoy good health to enable you to shoulder the heavy responsibility of your high office; and that you and your wife, whom we are pleased to see here with us today, will enjoy much happiness in the future.

Members of Parliament, His Excellency the President, Cde. Hugh Desmond Hoyte will now address us.

ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT



**His Excellency Cde. Hugh Desmond Hoyte, S.C.,
President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana**

Comrade Speaker, Comrades and Honourable Members,

May I at the outset discharge a most pleasant duty of congratulating all of you who have had the honour and privilege of becoming members of this Fifth Parliament of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana. You enter upon your office amid widespread public expectations that, in the spirit of the oath which you took yesterday, your deliberations will be mature, wise and constructive, and that you will dedicate your energies to promoting the best interests of Guyana and all the people of this country.

I wish you a most rewarding tenure of office, great personal satisfaction and outstanding successes in the work you will be undertaking as members of the National Assembly.

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It has been noted, Comrade Speaker, that there is no provision in the Standing Orders for the National Assembly to go into recess during year. Technically, it is in session throughout the year without a break. It does appear to me, therefore, that it might be useful for members to consider the desirability of having the National Assembly to go into recess during the year for a specified period. If this were done, then members may be able to plan their annual calendar of activities, including leave arrangements for themselves and their families, with greater certainty.

World Economic Situation

Comrade Speaker, the world economic situation continues to be unsettled, and the consequences for most non-oil developing countries like Guyana are still very severe. The prices of their commodity exports remain depressed, the terms of trade continue to flow against them, and their ability to service their external debt shows no sign of improving.

But we Guyanese have never been a people to sit down and wring our hands in despair. We have been coping with the

* May I also take this opportunity to extend special congratulations to you, Comrade Speaker, and to Comrade Reepu Daman Persaud, on your unanimous election to the high offices of Speaker and Deputy Speaker respectively of this honourable House.

very difficult economic circumstances with courage and imagination. We have survived.

Era of Economic Dynamism

At this time, in Guyana, there is a pervasive mood of optimism — a confident belief that we have a favourable climate to enable us to escape from the economic doldrums and move forward steadily to more comfortable conditions. It will therefore be the single-minded objective of the Government to infuse dynamism into the economy by doing everything requisite and necessary to reinvigorate the public, private and co-operative sectors, and to give positive encouragement also to individual initiative.

Government has been undertaking wide-ranging consultations and will be creating a climate to bolster the confidence of our business community and to expand economic activity. Various measures will be designed, among other things, to simplify licensing procedures and other bureaucratic hindrances to efficiency and facilitate joint ventures with regional and extra-regional partners.

A review of the impact of the existing tax regime on the profitability of businesses will be undertaken and, procedures for the granting of fiscal and other incentives will be streamlined. Government, in collaboration with the business community, will be establishing this year a system of national awards for business entities which achieve a high level of performance in accordance with set criteria.

All Government ministries, financial institutions and other public agencies would be — and, indeed, have already been — directed to treat the objective of revivifying the economy as an absolute priority and to give sustained support to the effort.

The achievement of this objective is, of necessity, a task for all Guyanese working together in a spirit of goodwill and

mutual respect. The Government, therefore, will seek to involve the Guyanese people by creating ever-expanding opportunities for them to make their contribution through their various socio-economic organisations – and individually.

Among the most important of these organisations is the Trades Union Congress. Government has been in frequent consultation with the TUC in recent months and will continue to deepen the TUC's role and that of its affiliates in planning and managing the economic life of the country; and the role of professional, service and other organisations in our society will be enhanced.

Government accepts that there are many activities impinging on national development that voluntary and other non-Governmental organisations are better equipped to manage. These organisations will be encouraged to assume greater responsibilities for such activities and play a fuller role in national life.

The Involvement of the People

For one thing, it is important that citizens develop a greater awareness of the fact that they are the ultimate owners of public corporations. Government will increase its efforts to encourage citizens to evince greater interest in the way these corporations operate and in the quality of goods and services they supply. It is the Government's publicly declared position that, due regard being had to accepted principles of business confidentiality, public corporations should function under public scrutiny. Consequently, the Government will be giving practical effect to this concept of public scrutiny and will be taking the necessary action to establish mechanisms to involve citizens in the task of monitoring the operations of public corporations.

Agriculture, Fishery, Forestry, Mining, Petroleum, Targeted

As Government intensifies its efforts to stimulate the economy, it will be targeting for special emphasis and attention

the agriculture, fishery, forestry, manufacturing, mining and petroleum sectors. The process of consultations has already begun and appropriate policy measures to generate new or renewed activity will be implemented. These will include fiscal incentives, improved marketing arrangements and more efficient supportive facilities, among others.

One area where the prospects appear to be very promising is the petroleum sector. We have been doing much systematic technical work within recent years and, as a result of the attractive possibilities disclosed by the seismic and other data, a Government delegation will be leaving Guyana at the end of this week to hold discussions with leading international oil companies with a view to interesting them in helping to develop our hydro-carbon resources.

A matter that is fundamental to the nature of our society and crucial to the underpinning of diversified, sustained growth in the agricultural sector is the question of land availability and land tenure. For some months now, Government has been studying this question intensely with expert assistance from the Food and Agriculture Organisation, and is now finalising a policy paper to give effect to Article 18 of the Constitution which requires that land should go to the tiller. This policy paper will be laid in the National Assembly for its consideration in due course, as will be the Government's Agricultural Development Plan, 1986 – 1989, which has recently been completed.

A substantial segment of our national wealth is represented offshore by the marine resources in our Exclusive Economic Zone. If we are to derive the best possible returns from them, we will have to manage them efficiently. Consequently, Government is preparing a policy paper on the management of our Exclusive Economic Zone and this also will be laid in this honourable House for its attention.

Drug Abuse

Comrade Speaker, the Government has been greatly perturbed by the recent emergence in our country of a high

incidence of drug abuse. This is a dangerous development that the Government will do everything in its power to combat. A bill will shortly be introduced to deal with certain aspects of the matter. The legislation will be severe. It will propose mandatory terms of imprisonment and heavy fines and, in keeping with recent trends in other parts of the world, it will empower the courts to confiscate property of convicted persons who have been deemed to have enriched themselves by this nefarious activity.

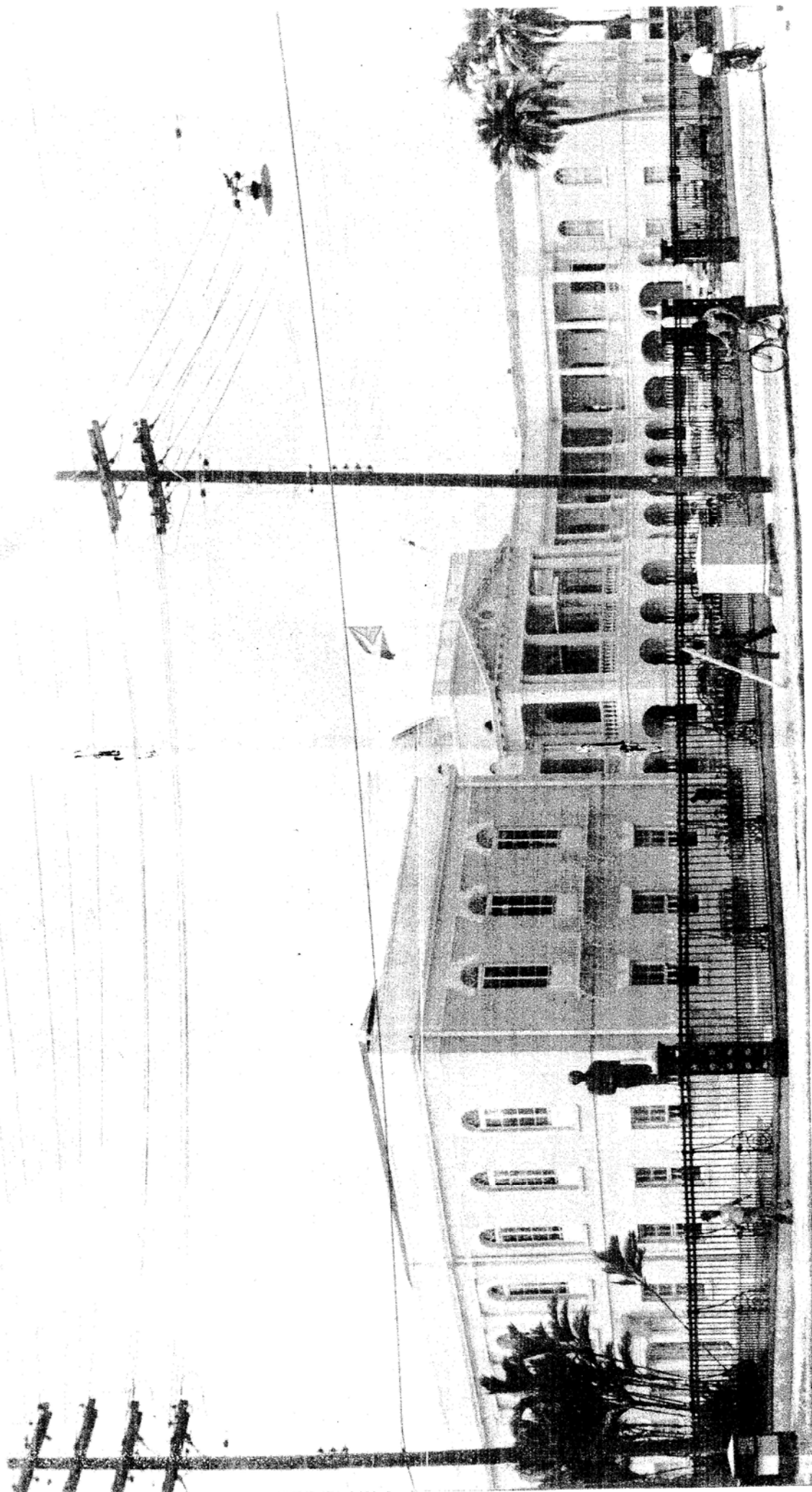
Apart from the enforcement side of drug abuse, the Government is much concerned about preventive and curative aspects of the question. Consequently, there has been established a National Co-ordinating Council for Drug Education chaired by the Comrade Minister of Health to examine the nature and incidence of drug abuse in Guyana, to recommend educational and preventive measures, and to advise on appropriate procedures for helping those persons who have become addicted to the use of drugs. We have to deal with this evil in a prompt, vigorous and even ruthless way. Our children and young people are our most precious assets. We cannot invest millions of dollars in educating and training them only to have their bodies and minds destroyed by callous, vicious criminals who entrap them into the use of drugs.

Social Justice

There are some areas of law reform in which we have lagged behind in Guyana. Government now proposes that we should begin to address our attention to some of these matters. Consequently, after appropriate consultations and advice, Government will be taking certain action on this matter. It is Government's view that the victims of violent and other crimes which involve them in loss should be compensated by the perpetrators.

The Government will, therefore, be examining the feasibility of enacting legislation for such victims to be compensated

"... I urge you to **STAND UP FOR GUYANA** by the quality of the service you give to the Guyanese people, inside and outside of this honourable House",



accordingly, and for appropriate procedures to be put in place for such compensation to be recovered from the property of the perpetrators.

Similarly, too, simplified procedures will be proposed to enable the State to recover its losses from persons who have been found guilty of stealing public property or who have damnified the State in other ways. Government will also be introducing hire purchase legislation as part of a comprehensive set of laws to protect the consumer.

Most important, too, is the need to modernise our laws and procedures relating to matrimonial causes and matters involving family and domestic relations. Government will be proposing reforms in these areas.

Concern for the Workers

Because of its abiding concern for the welfare of the Guyanese workers, the Government has been monitoring closely the impact of the prevailing economic situation on their standard of living and quality of life. Such monitoring has always enabled the Government to respond with a ready understanding to their representations and to act promptly to ameliorate their conditions within the limits of available resources.

In this context, the Government has been particularly concerned about the unnecessarily high cost of local agricultural produce and other local foods and certain basic items that are important to the wellbeing of our citizens. Undoubtedly, there has been much distortion of prices in the market place. This is the result of many complex factors; but an important one is the willingness of many citizens to pay high prices for certain contraband goods that are easily available in the streets. This induces an upward pressure on the prices of local produce. Indeed, it is a well-established fact that many vendors of local agricultural produce habitually dump their produce rather than reduce the price.

The Government has been studying this phenomenon and is at present working on certain measures designed to exert a downward pressure on the prices of agricultural produce without affecting the returns to the farmers. The price benefit of the massive increase in agricultural production is being lost to the consumer because the ready availability of, and high prices commanded by, contraband goods in the system have enabled middlemen to manipulate the prices of local produce and maintain them at unjustifiably high levels.

Measures to Increase Real Income

These matters to which I have referred are only part of a comprehensive package of measures that the Government will be putting in place to increase the real income of the workers, improve their morale, and create easier and better conditions of life for them. In the course of this year, in consultation with the Trades Union Congress, the Government will be undertaking a review of the incidence of income taxation on the take-home pay of workers, particularly those in the lower income brackets.

Additionally, in response to representations from many quarters, the Government will be amending the income tax laws to permit the income of a working wife to be taxed separately from that of her husband. Government believes that this will provide an incentive for wives who are highly trained and skilled to take up employment and assume a more substantial role in the process of national development.

In the course of this year, too, as a result of a recently concluded survey, workers will be receiving greatly increased benefits from the National Insurance Scheme.

In the measures being proposed to ameliorate conditions, Government has not forgotten the just claims of some of our most worthy citizens. I refer to Government pensioners. I am

happy to be able to report that Government will also be bringing a substantial measure of relief to them, in accordance with discussions held with, and representations made by, their Association.

It is perhaps appropriate, at this stage, to say something about emoluments of Members of Parliament. It cannot be seriously disputed that their emoluments are unrealistically low. They have not been adjusted over the years in sympathy with improvements made to salaries and wages in the public sector and nationally within recent years. In the circumstances, the Government will take action to ensure that the stipends and allowances paid to members of this honourable House are enhanced, as the justice of the case clearly requires.

Active Role in Caricom Affairs

Comrade Speaker, no country can today isolate itself from the region in which it is geographically situated or, indeed, for that matter, from the rest of the world. Guyana is a member of the Caribbean Community. The world economic problems have affected, in varying degrees, the individual economies of our Caricom sister-States and that of Caricom as an entity. One damaging effect has been the sharp contraction of intra-regional trade. This is a source of great worry and concern within the region. Guyana must therefore continue to play an active role in Caricom affairs and do whatever it can to help to strengthen the integration movement and to work with others to achieve the objectives of the Community.

We believe that there is still very much we in Caricom can do among ourselves to improve the economic climate. We have, therefore, been working for some time now on certain investment mic models which, in our view, can help to promote co-operation and stimulate trading and economic activities in the region. These would facilitate joint ventures between Guyana and Caricom (and also extra-regional) partners in the exploitation of Guyana's resources for mutual benefit. In this

way, we would be able to make greater use of indigenous regional resources, create more manufactures for trade within and outside the region, expand services, and generate more employment and wealth within Caricom. We hope to be able to persuade Caricom Governments and entrepreneurs about the feasibility and advantages of these models.

In the meantime, a trade delegation headed by the Comrade Minister of Trade is at present visiting certain Caricom countries to explore possibilities for strengthening our trading and economic links. This is an example of the vigorous initiatives that the Government will be taking in the fulfilment of its obligations under the Treaty of Chagaramus.

Move Our Nation Forward

Comrade Speaker, in another nineteen days we will be marking the sixteenth anniversary of the inauguration of the Republic; and, in another three months or so, we will be celebrating the twentieth anniversary of our Independence. These are short periods, I admit, in the life of a state; but, for us, they have been seminal years during which we have sought to prove to ourselves that we are free men and not subjects or pawns of any alien power. Out of our diverse origins, we have sought to fashion a distinctive Guyanese way of life and an authentic Guyanese personality — and, moreover, to create a Guyanese nation with a common purpose and a common destiny.

The years we have traversed have not been without dangers, difficulties and vicissitudes; but we have also had our full measure of exciting challenges and wonderful achievements. And because of our work, our steadfastness and our loyalty, we have today, in this great country of ours, something of value. Let us cherish, defend and preserve it.

And members of this honourable House can best demonstrate their pride in and love for our country in these times,

by doing everything in their power to propel our economy into an era of sustained prosperity.

Comrade Speaker, I said earlier on, that despite serious economic difficulties, we have survived. The optimism among our people to which I have referred is, in a sense, a reflection of a consensus that it is not sufficient now for us to merely survive: we need to move our nation forward.

We know that we have the resources, rich, bountiful and diverse. We have demonstrated that we have the will to take strong, decisive action and the intelligence to devise appropriate mechanisms to suit changing circumstances. We are a talented people possessed abundantly of the skills needed for development.

Necessity for Fiscal Prudence

The prevailing mood of optimism is a valuable asset for facilitating the forward movement of our nation. Government proposes to foster it by paying judicious attention to the quality of life, among other things, by identifying and removing unnecessary irritants in our society. But, while it is a prime objective to quicken the pace of growth and expansion of our economy, Government must, in the final analysis, have due regard to the absolute necessity for fiscal prudence.

In this regard, the reduction of the public sector deficit and its containment within manageable limits will be a constant preoccupation and a national priority. Consequently, public corporations will have to achieve an acceptable level of business performance and the deficits will have to be controlled, as a matter of course. The issue of the public sector deficit, therefore, will be the major consideration as we undertake the work of reinvigorating our economy. Fiscal prudence, development and growth: this is the task, this the labour to which we must all bend our efforts. Members of this honourable House have a great opportunity to play a pivotal role in mobilising

and motivating our people for the sustained and strenuous work that lies ahead, as we attempt to move our nation forward.

In closing, I can do no better than commend to you the national slogan for the year 1986 and urge you to STAND UP FOR GUYANA by the quality of the service you give to the Guyanese people, inside and outside of this honourable House, and by the personal example you set them of genuine patriotism and unselfish commitment to the cause of Guyana.

Let us *Stand up for Guyana* by *moving our nation forward*.

I extend to each and every one of you my best wishes for success in your parliamentary endeavours.

Office of the President
February 4, 1986

THANKS TO THE PRESIDENT

The Speaker: Cde. President, on behalf of the Members of the National Assembly and myself, I thank you for your congratulations. I also wish to offer you, Cde. President, our thanks and gratitude for the excellence of your presentation.

This occasion has been made memorable by an address both profound and stimulating. In due course it will be debated. Then it is to be hoped there will be a serious study of its admirably formulated subject matter.

May this Parliament be remembered not only for its achievements along the difficult but worthwhile path towards prosperity but for the high quality of its debates and a firm sense of purpose.

I would also wish to thank Comrade Joyce Hoyte for gracing these proceedings with her presence.

Once again, Cde. Leader, our best wishes to you both.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, "That this Assembly do now adjourn to Thursday, 6th February at 14:00 hrs. /The Minister of Manpower, Housing and Environment./

Adjourned accordingly at 18:10 hrs.