

THE  
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
OFFICIAL REPORTS

/Volume 07/

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE FIRST SESSION (1980) OF THE  
TRANSITIONAL NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE THIRD PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA  
UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF GUYANA.

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2 <sup>nd</sup> Sitting	14:00 hrs	Friday, 24 <sup>th</sup> October, 1980
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MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (62)

Speaker

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

Members of the Government – People’s National Congress (45)

Prime Minister (1)

Cde. P.A. Reid, O.E.,  
Prime Minister

Senior Ministers (11)

Cde. H.D. Hoyte, S.C.,  
Minister of Economic Development and Co-operatives

Cde. S.S. Narain, A.A.,  
Minister of Works and Transport

Cde. B. Ramsaroop,  
Minister of Parliamentary Affairs  
and leader of the House

Cde. C.V. Mingo,  
Minister of Home Affairs

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

\*Cde. H.O.Jack,  
Minister of Energy and Natural Resources (Absent)

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

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

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

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

\*Cde. J.A. Tyndall, A.A.,  
Minister of Trade and Consumer Protection

\*Non-elected Ministers

Ministers (2)

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

Ministers of State (10)

Cde. F.U.A. Carmichael  
Minister of State – Regional (Rupununi)  
Cde. P. Duncan, J.P.,  
Minister of State – Regional (North West)  
Cde. K.B. Bancroft, J.P.,  
Minister of State – Regional  
(Mazaruni/Potaro)  
Cde. J.P. Chwritmootoo, J.P.,  
Minister of State – Regional  
(Essequibo Coast/West Demerara)  
Cde. J.R. Thomas,  
Minister of State, Ministry of Education,  
Social Development and Culture  
Cde. R.H.O. Corbin,  
Minister of State for Youth and Sport,  
Ministry of National Development  
Cde. S. Prashad,  
Minister of State – Regional  
(East Demerara/West Coast Berbice)  
Cde. R.C. Van Sluytman,  
Minister of State,  
Ministry of Agriculture  
\*Cde. F.U.A. Campbell,  
Minister of State for Information,  
Ministry of National Development  
\*Cde. H. Rashid,  
Minister of State,  
Office of the prime Minister

Parliamentary Secretaries (6)

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

\*Non-elected Ministers

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

Other Members (15)

Cde. W.G. Carrington, C.C.H.

Cde. S.M. Field-Ridley

Cde. E.H.A. Fowler

Cde. J. Gill

Cde. W Hussain

Cde. K.M.E. Jonas

(Absent)

Cde. P.A. Rayman

Cde. A. Salim, C.C.H.

Cde. E.M. Stoby J.P.

(Absent)

Cde. S.H.Sukhu, M.S.

Cde. C. Sukul, J.P.

Cde. H.A. Taylor

Cde. H.B. Walcott, J.P.

Cde. L.E. Willems

Cde. M. Zaheeruddeen

Members of the Opposition (16)

( i ) Peoples' Progressive Party (14)

Minority Leader (1)

Cde. C. Jagan,

Minority Leader

(Absent)

Deputy Speaker (1)

Cde. Ram Karran,

Deputy Speaker

(Absent)

Other Members (12)

Cde. J. Jagan

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud, J.P., Opposition Chief Whip

Cde. Narbada Persaud

Cde. C. Collymore

(Absent)

Cde. S.F. Mohamed

(Absent)

Cde. I. Basir

(Absent)

Cde. C.C. Belgrave

(Absent)

Cde. R. Ally

(Absent)

Cde. Dalchand, J.P.

(Absent)

Cde. Dindayal

Cde. H. Nokta

(Absent)

Cde. P. Sukhai

(Absent)

( ii ) Liberator Party

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

Mr. M.A. Abraham

OFFICERS

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

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

PRAYERS

Transitional National Assembly

2:05 hrs

PUBLIC BUSINESS

BILLS – SECOND AND THIRD READINGS

HOUSEHOLD SERVICE WORKERS (HOURS OF WORK) BILL 1980

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to regulate the working hours of household service workers and for purpose connected therewith.” *[The Minister of Health, Housing and Labour.]*

The Minister of Health, Housing and Labour(Cde. Green): Cde. Speaker, I beg to move that the Household Service Workers (Hours of Work) Bill 1980, No. 17 of 1980 and published on the 8<sup>th</sup> October this year be now read a Second time.

This Bill had its origin since this Government took office and really is the beginning of the end of a period that has to deal with a category of workers that for years have not had any legal recognition and have worked in a framework where there were no arrangements by the Government or by any statutory body to deal with their problems.

It is perhaps useful to see this Bill as coming out of that Report I referred to which was known as the Report of the Campbell Committee. It was the Household Service Workers Committee appointed by this Government in November of 1965. It was appointed under section 7 of the Labour Ordinance. That Committee did some useful work and among the things it recommended was to enquire into the conditions of employment and wages of household service workers, who were referred to as “Domestics” at the time, who worked in private homes, guest houses and hotels.

The Committee was also charged with the responsibility to make recommendations in a general way for the improvement of these workers. This Report was submitted to the then Governor General in August of 1966 and in March of the following year it was laid before this honourable House.

The recommendations of the Committee on the matters that relate to it continue to attract the attention of Government, the trade union movement and other organisations since then. The Ministry itself made a number of recommendations to Cabinet and some of those recommendations today are really out of date and almost not necessary for me to repeat except to say that because of the peculiarity of the category of workers we are talking about there were both legal and technical difficulties that we had to cope with. In fact, the Committee dealt with wages for hotel workers and guest houses in a particular way and in 1978 in this very House the Minister of Labour brought – and it is now part of our law – a schedule of recommendations which dealt with that particular category, people who worked in hotels as cooks, maids, waitresses, bell-boys. We also took into account a category called trainee waiters.

We also had to cope with another problem and we included at that time in 1978 people who worked in retail spirit shops as vendors and barmen. We also included at that time people who worked in taverns and since, because of our background and history, we identified in 1978 another category of persons, those who worked in what we call restaurants, cook-shops and parlors and, as you know, we now have minimum wages for those persons and hours of work and certain conditions that the employers are expected to adhere to, like keeping proper registers and so forth.

The Committee, appointed in 1965, recommended for those groups of workers – those in private homes, guest houses and hotels and up to the present we have not done anything specifically about persons whom we call “household service workers” who work in private homes. This Bill is intended to deal with that category and even though this Bill is merely the beginning of what I believe is a series of

events and steps to bring justice to those persons we call domestics, in the circumstances which I will outline in a minute, we have done what I believe is the wise and proper thing to do at this time.

The provision proposed, Cde. Speaker, attempts to provide for a 48 hour working week for household service workers and to grant overtime payment at the rate of one and half times the hourly rate for work done in excess of the 48 hours. It also attempts to grant to these persons a day off each week.

The Bill also provides for regulations to be made from time to time where we will deal with the details like ensuring that the employers keep a proper register. Naturally a penalty is attached to those employers who do not conform to these regulations when approved.

Perhaps it is useful to note that on the record it seems that this category was ignored from the time these reports were given, but in terms of Guyana under the leadership of the People's National Congress, things have changed substantially in some areas for the group of people who are primarily engaged in this activity. In our cultural milieu I believe the majority, if not a hundred per cent, of household service workers or domestics are women. In certain countries this work is performed admirably by men. For example, I recall when I was in Tanzania I visited a friend and the person in charge of the household, performing the duties of cooking and looking after the house, was a man and I was very impressed with the quality of his work. In Guyana, however, because of our history and our background this was always work assigned to our women.

2:15 p.m.

It would be interesting to note that – and I can anticipate some of the observations that will be made this afternoon – we have not attempted to deal with wages, and I will explain why very shortly. Women have been entering in larger numbers the job market in other categories of employment and many more opportunities are now available to our womenfolk. In fact, Cde. Speaker, thanks to the initiative taken by the Women's Revolutionary Socialist Movement and other agencies, many of our women have quite recently been trained to function as drivers, mechanics, masons, and plumbers, and in other areas and they have been working quite well. There are some problems but that is not for this afternoon's debate.

In fact, even though it is necessary for this category of workers to function in our society, it is important to note that a lot of our women have other opportunities. The figures in 1970 suggested that only 18.6 per cent of our womenfolk were in the normal job arena. At the end of 1977 the figure was 28.8 per cent. I am happy to note and to report to this honourable House that thanks to this training and initiative taken by the party in Government, the figures we have at the end of 1979 suggest close to 30 per cent of our workforce are women and they occupy positions at various levels. We have female Permanent Secretaries. Even in this honourable House we have a representative gathering of working women. If one were to take the example of one of our recent industries, the Sanata Textiles Mill, what worries some of us in the administration is that the women have made such tremendous progress that in that new industry – and perhaps that may be an indication about the future and for other industries – we have a complete reversal of the normal pattern. The Manager assures me that about 60 per cent, that is more than half the workforce, of that new industry consist of our womenfolk. We have, therefore, just to repeat, to settle the question of the hotel workers and other places.

I wish to say that a number of other things happened since that Report

was examined and tabled in 1966. The Government has not stood still and as a result of the National Insurance Scheme – perhaps this Bill will ensure that all employees of household service workers ensure that they are contributing and participating in the National Insurance Scheme because I believe that every domestic and household service worker in this country qualifies to join and to participate in the National Insurance Scheme. The qualifications for entry to the National Insurance Scheme are that the person must earn no less than \$7.50 per week, that he must work a minimum of twenty hours or more per week, and that he should be between the ages of 16 and 60. From our knowledge, therefore, I believe that all of our household service workers qualify to be participants in the National Insurance Scheme. That scheme, as we all know, provides for a number of benefits, of which the household service workers can be the recipient and these include sickness benefits, benefits in case of injury, funeral benefits, benefits for invalidity, old age, and the attendant benefits for the dependants and the survivors in case of their premature demise. Of course, I almost forgot that it includes maternity benefits.

Therefore, as we present this Bill which is merely the first step of a number of things which need to take place, we urge those persons who are both employees and employers to ensure that workers in this category not only now, for the first time, work specific hours and earn overtime at the end of that period, but that they participate in the National Insurance Scheme which is available to all.

The earlier Commission and Committee did attempt to recommend wages for workers in this category in private homes. Perhaps we can be criticised in presenting this Bill for ignoring and not attempting to include specifically the question of wages and to suggest a minimum wage. We are realists, we recognise the constraints and difficulties and the peculiar circumstances, and we have deliberately avoided that for the time being. But the matter will continue to engage the attention of the Ministry of Labour and other agencies and at proper time, when the circumstances permit, we shall not fail to make it, as we did with hotels, cookshops, and other categories, part of our law and legal system.

That earlier Committee recommended two categories of salaries for skilled and unskilled. When the Ministry examined it there were all sorts of difficulties in terms of identifying who is a skilled cook and what is a skilled maid and who is an unskilled maid, a skilled cleaner, gardener or a babysitter. Incidentally, the legislation covers categories of persons who also function as babysitters, and persons who look after children. We have not included, therefore, the question of a minimum wage. The Ministry of Labour will continue to be a monitoring agency and as we have been doing from time to time, persuade people to pay wages commensurate with the services they receive and what they can reasonably be expected to afford.

We are among two or perhaps three Caribbean countries that have attempted to introduce legislation to deal with this category of worker. In Jamaica, for example, I believe that in 1970 they introduced a minimum wage for this category of worker with great pomp and ceremony. But as perhaps is known to those of us familiar with the situation, it resulted in mass retrenchment and dismissals of that category because some of the householders contended that since the minimum wage prescribed for their helpers at home was in some cases not too far away from the wages of the working mothers and wives and women, they merely dispensed with the services of household helpers and did the work themselves.

Transitional National Assembly

And in Jamaica where this was attempted initially, without first doing the ground-work as we are attempting to do, a large army of people lost their jobs. The other result that we found in some countries is that the minimum wage is honoured in the breach.

2:25 p.m.

Cde. Speaker, what we have done here today, what we propose to do is a first step to deal with a group of workers that we feel for years have been the victims of one type of exploitation or another. We recommend therefore this Bill to this honourable House and I repeat, this action proposed today is but a continuing effort by the People's National Congress to bring justice to every group and to every category of worker in the Co-operative Republic of Guyana. [Applause.]

Question Proposed.

The Speaker: Hon. Member Mr. Feilden Singh.

Mr. M.F. Singh: Mr. Speaker, the Bill before us is entitled Household Service Workers (Hours of Work) Bill 1980. The hon. Minister dealt at length with what had been done by the Government for women generally. That is all well and good. What we are dealing with here is a specific issue, is a specific category of worker, household service worker, which is defined as:

“any person employed as a domestic in any private residence,  
and includes children's nurses.”

It attempts to stipulate hours of work etc. for this category of workers.

We want to examine how effective this Bill will be in respect of carrying out the purpose set out in the explanatory memorandum. We do not object to the Bill per se but we want to point out that the entire legislation in this Bill can be circumvented unless a minimum wage is prescribed by law.

The Hon. Minister dealt in his closing remarks with the reasons why this was not done. We do not accept those reasons. We feel that there is sufficient ingenuity on the part of the legal draftsmen. In the same way in which they can differentiate between skilled and unskilled in other categories, it can be done in this case also in my humble opinion. However, let us remember that as long ago as in 1965, the Campbell Committee was appointed; it reported in 1966; it gave specific recommendations, the conditions of work, status of domestic etc. For years, nothing has been done in respect of that particular category. Now on the eve of an election we have this piece of legislation coming before the House but no enforceable minimum wage.

What will be the obvious outcome? All the employer has to do to circumvent this entire legislation is to reduce the basic wage, calculate the overtime over and above the 48 hours so that he ends up paying the same amount and there is no law at present available to stop him from doing this. There is no law to prevent him from paying, for example, \$5.00 per week and food to this really pitiable category of employees.

Mr. Speaker, let me give you an example of one category that I know about where real exploitation is taking place. There are poor girls who come from the hinterland areas; they come down to Georgetown to work because life is so difficult in those areas. What happens? Somebody collars them off; they are taken into a family. What kind of wages are they paid? I know of cases where all they get is food, some clothes and lodging. How do you calculate overtime in those circumstances? They are paid no salary, merely given food and clothes, place to sleep and when you go and ask about it, you are told that they are part of the family. They are not really being paid or employed, they are part of the family circle. How does this Bill help that kind of person? This type of thing is rampant; it is going on all the

time. How do you calculate overtime in such a case? In the absence of any legally enforceable minimum wage what can I do; what can the Labour Department do in a case like that? I say, nothing. We all know that the category of worker which we are trying to deal with here is among the poorest and the most exploited.

In my opinion, this legislation will make very little difference. Let me quote figures and give an example. Suppose an employer at the present moment is working his employee 56 hours per week. All right, he is working the employee 8 hours more than the minimum prescribed here. He is paying that employee \$30 a week. Do you know what he will do before this comes into operation? What he will do is this, say to the employee, "I am reducing your wage from \$30 to \$24 per week." The employee used to work 56 hours. There is overtime to be paid for eight hours at 75 cents an hour which amounts to \$6. So \$24 reduced wage plus \$6 overtime comes back to the same \$30. Legally, there is not a thing you can do about it in the absence of legislation to the contrary. So what good is this? How does this help an employee like that? How does it help an employee in those circumstances? He ends up receiving the same wage but you can do nothing about it.

Mr. Speaker, this is good for election purposes but as I said it does not make a difference. Looking at the Bill itself, it does not make much difference with what will happen in respect of the employee. The employee will still end up getting the same wage and the salary will be readjusted. As I just said, I explained it all. There is nothing to prevent the employer from readjusting the salary, put a smaller minimum, give the rest in overtime and end up paying the same thing. I gave the figure just now.

Mr. Speaker, I do not think that the hon. Minister can say that under Clause 9 there can be any regulations made to stop that because the regulations cannot deal with the minimum wage. This whole bill is about hours of work and the regulations can deal only with hours of work. New substantive legislation will have to be passed in this honourable House, to fix a legally enforceable minimum wage before we can really help this category of workers. I do not want to make a big song and dance about it. I do not object to the Bill, but I say that it does not help very much.

2:35 p.m.

Cde. J. Jagan: Cde. Speaker, this legislation which is before the House deals only with the question of maximum hours of work and sets out a 48 hour week with a full day off each week. This legislation, as the Minister himself confessed in his most defensive and apologetic address to this House, has a history. The history to my recollection begins with the 1964 elections when his party made a promise that it would rectify the position for domestic workers. Grand promises were made of what help would be given so that domestic workers would not have to continue to punish. The outcome of that promise was the setting up of the Campbell Committee which, as he said, was appointed in November 1965 and there end the P.N.C. promises because that Report was submitted 14 years ago. August 1966. It took them a few months to lay it before this Parliament and from the time these two occurrences took place – the completion of the Report and the handing over and the presentation to this House, nothing has been done until the publication of this Bill on October 11, 1980. What a shame! It has been pigeon-holed. It has been literally put in the deep freeze and let me say to this House that it is not for want of reminding. The members of the P.N.C. have been reminded over and over again that this Report exists and they must act on it. They cannot give an excuse that they forgot about it because



they were reminded. I personally have raised this matter – I cannot say how many times. I never had a positive reply because they were dodging the issue and we know why they were dodging the issue. Not for the excuses given here but for the fact that many of their own supporters are the employers of domestics and they would have to dig deeper into their pockets to hand over some more money to these exploited employees.

On March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1978, one of my colleagues, Cyril Belgrave, asked the question in this House about a minimum pay for domestic workers. That is approximately two and half years ago and that question has not been answered because they cannot answer it and so the question is, as the last speaker said, how effective can maximum hours be without a minimum rate of pay.

We have heard the excuse that perhaps they can be criticised for not having put in minimum wage but they claim they have these peculiar circumstances and it will continue to engage their attention. How many times have we heard those words? Yet these groups over here, the P.N.C., belabour us with their ideology of co-operative socialism, their adherence to all the tenets of Marxism and Leninism. But let us look at little Trinidad and Tobago. Dr. Williams makes no claims to be a Marxist-Leninist. Dr. Williams does not tell anyone that he is building a socialist society. No. He states what he is, whatever that may be, but Dr. Williams and his Government in a non-socialist Government and certainly a non-socialist atmosphere on November 28, 1979, passed effective legislation of which I have a copy here and ordered for minimum wages and terms and conditions of service for household assistants made by the Assistant Minister of Labour. They have set out the wages and they have done it like this: Full time household assistants for the year 1980 will be paid a weekly wage of \$55 and in 1981 in Trinidad a household worker will be paid \$70 a week. Then they have done it in a different way. They have categorised part-time household assistants and they have set out hourly rates – 1980, \$1.42 an hour; 1981, \$1.70 an hour.

They also state in the Bill – just one page, a very simple piece of legislation much simpler than ours. It states – Hours of work: a 44 hour week, even better than this 48 hour week in this so-called “Socialist Republic of Guyana”. A 44-hour week spread over six days. It is very clear. A person without too much knowledge of legal matters, I am sure, could draft this. There is provision for vacation leave – 14 days a year. Everything on one page. Another one: sick leave- 14 days sick leave per annum. It says “Other Matters”- that the duties of household assistants should be clearly set out in writing. You have the basic things set out here in the most simple language that any worker can read. You don’t have to be a lawyer. Minimum wages for this year, minimum wages per week, hourly wages for part-time workers. It also sets out the overtime hourly rate. Everything is set out here: overtime hourly rate; the 44 –hour week, a six day week, holidays with pay and sick leave. So it can be done. We can see it is not impossible to do, but instead we have this gimmick, the gimmick at the zero hour. Why did it take 14 years to toss up this sheet of paper? Why did it take 14 years and they could not produce what Trinidad produced a few months ago? It is amazing.

So the fact remains that the Guyana domestic workers are not being given a square deal. Attention is not being paid to their needs. The Campbell Committee sat down and belaboured and presented what at that time was a pretty good report. I cannot really recall all the details of the Report but I do recall that at that period – things have changed now – it was all right, and if it had not been stuck in a pigeon-hole or put in the deep freeze perhaps decent legislation could have come out of the Report and we would not have to sit and listen to all the puerile excuses that have been presented with this Bill.

One would imagine that in 14 years we could have something better. There is a radio programme “From Word to Word.” We are now “From Election to Election”. From the 64<sup>th</sup> election right up to the

1980-10-24

2:35 – 2:45 p.m.

coming one, it has taken them all this time not even to fulfill a promise but to partially fulfill a promise that will probably not work at all because the maximum hours of work cannot stand alone unless they have the foundation of a minimum wage.

The Speaker: Cde. Minister.

Cde. Green (replying): Cde. Speaker, the Bishop of Hereford was once being patronised by a certain Lord of the English Court and the Lord boasted that he never went to Church. The Bishop said to him angrily, “Why do you not go to Church? I have noticed you have been absent for a long time.” The Lord said, “The reason I don’t go to Church is because there are too many hypocrites and there is too much hypocrisy there.” The Bishop said “Oh, do not let that keep you away, there is always room for another.”

2:45 p.m.

Cde. Speaker, I listened to the two members of the Minority Group, and,

perhaps, Cde. Speaker, we need to remind them that the new Constitution provides for a minority group. (Interruption). The intention, Cde. Speaker, is that they must not oppose everything for the sake of opposing. They must recognise their new role under the Constitution as a minority group to aid and to help us. What we got is merely the right to get up and oppose. I am glad to hear that the hon. Member Mr. Singh is not opposing. But the hon. Member Cde. Janet Jagan mouthed almost the exact points made by the hon. Member, my good friend – and perhaps that is an indication of what will happen soon – Marcellus Feilden Singh.

I would like to deal with the first point that has been belaboured because what was said was a lot of theory. We are dealing with a real situation. It is easy to quote Trinidad, but are the workers in Trinidad in fact getting what the law demands? What worries me – my good friend Fielden Singh alluded to people being brought from the hinterland and exploited by the people on the coast. The members of his small group, are the architects of that system. Some members of the clergy are the persons who have encouraged it for years. My good friend Phillip Duncan will support me on this question.

Secondly, some of the merchants who support the People's Progressive Party, even now that we have legislation, are those who get the girls to sign for \$10 and give them \$5. They know that. I have spoken, Cde. Speaker, not apologetically. I am not apologising. I dealt with a real and serious situation and to say that nothing has been done is either to suggest that the comrades are deliberately not understanding or are not capable of understanding.

Let me again repeat what I said. I made the point that since this Government took office a large army of women who normally could only find employment as domestic assistants and as household service workers have been trained and have found other jobs. That is the point I made. So do not say we have done nothing, that is either ignorance or hypocrisy.

The Speaker: Cde. Green, let us finish this Session on a high note.

Cde. Green: I apologise, Cde. Speaker. We must not conclude this Sitting with this hypocrisy. Both Members of the Minority Group spoke about the zero hour. Only the Cde. President knows that hour. I do not know how Janet Jagan could know zero, one, two or three hours. We do not have to bring this Bill to catch votes. The particular category referred to here already support the People's National Congress Government. [Applause.]

The Speaker: Let me have some order in the Gallery, please.

Cde. Green: What we are seeking to do is to carry out a promise that we, in fact, made, and the position taken by the People's National Congress and the Ministry responsible for Labour is that we have to look at the total society and to see step by step what efforts can be made to assist particularly, groups of workers and workers as a whole.

I deliberately referred to Jamaica because what happened in Jamaica – and I believe it was an organised thing – is that the Government passed a law to say pay domestics “X” dollars per week. The women who were functioning as secretaries and who were working at various places got together and said, “Look, we cannot afford to pay and we will not pay” and they retrenched all the workers. Who benefits at the end of the exercise? We have said that we introduce legislation which makes it clear that persons must not be called upon to work from sun down, to sun up. We say that we will introduce later on, regulations to deal with a number of other matters but, that for now the householder must keep a proper register and I propose to use the Ministry of Labour's staff to, from time to time, see that this legislation we are about to pass is honoured in the way it is intended to be honoured.

We feel that we have made another step considered with an attempt to help the workers and I

1980-10-24

2:45 – 2:55 p.m.

appeal to all categories involved to honour what we are doing here and to ensure that National Insurance Scheme which was initiated by this Government is applied to these workers which is intended to aid all working people in our society. I therefore commend this Bill to this honourable House.

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

2:55 p.m.

INCOME TAX (AMENDMENT) BILL 1980

A Bill intituled:

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

The Speaker: Cde. Hope.

The Minister of Finance (Cde. Hope): Cde. Speaker, in presenting the Income Tax (Amendment) Bill 1980, I wish to make a few brief remarks to give the background to this Bill. The Bill, first of all seeks to honour certain understanding which, over the course of the last few months, the Government has been able to arrive at with the Trade Union Congress. These refer to the following improvements which the Government wishes to make in its tax legislation affecting workers.

First of all, severance pay. Until now workers who have lost their jobs, for one reason or another, and have been awarded severance pay, found that they had to pay income tax on that severance pay. What the Bill seeks to do now is to make severance pay in the hands of workers tax free and that takes effect from the year of income, 1979.

There is also the question of station allowances which workers stationed in the hinterland and far-off areas have received until now. These allowances have, been taxable. The concept we have arrived at now is that these allowances have in the past been provided essentially to compensate the workers, to some extent, for the difficulty in living in areas far removed from built-up centre. Therefore, since they are in fact cost reimbursements in a sense, we have decided to put into the Bill an arrangement whereby such station allowances in the hands of workers would also be tax free.

Similarly, workers have received lump-sum payments as a medical discharge, something parallel to severance pay and we have decided to treat that in a parallel way by making such payments also tax free in the hands of the workers.

Cde. Speaker, we have also been saying as part of the incentive scheme that incentive payments received by workers should be tax free. What the Bill now seeks to do is to put that decision into law by proposing that incentive payments received by workers when the Minister certifies that they are incentive payments, should be tax free in the hands of the workers.

When the Budget was presented last year, a number of proposals were made. The remaining proposals in this Bill seek, in fact, to implement those proposals made in the Budget. Basically, one of the interesting aspects of the Bill is that now common-law wives are being put on the same basis as married wives for the purpose of income tax. In other words, wherever the law at the moment refers to wife, the term common-law wife or reputed wife is being included to give these persons equal status in the law so far as tax is concerned.

Provision is also made in the Bill to increase the allowances available to workers by 25 per cent, that is, the present allowances of \$1,000 for a working man or a working woman, is being increased by 25 per cent to \$1,250. And all other allowances have been consequentially increased. That is the proposal. For the wife whether reputed or married the allowances will now be \$1,250. For children the allowance will be \$500 rather than \$400, and for dependent relatives the allowance will be \$375 rather than \$300.

Also another interesting aspect of this Bill is that it enables the father of a child who has been born out of wedlock to claim for that child in certain circumstances. Until now, the mother of that child who has been born out of wedlock has an inherent right from the fact that she is the mother to claim for the child. Similarly if her husband is not the child's father, the husband can claim for that child once he remains the husband of this woman whose child is born out of wedlock. What the Bill is seeking to do is to enable the father of that child to claim in certain circumstances:

- (1) Where he accepts paternity.
- (2) Where he is in fact supporting the child substantially.
- (3) Where the mother of the child can certify in writing to the Commissioner of Inland Revenue that the man is, in fact,

1980-10-24

2:55 – 3:05 p.m.

supporting the child. In those circumstances the father of the child can claim rather than the mother or the husband of the mother.

At the same time, the law would however require the income of the reputed wife to be joined with the income of the man with whom she is living. In that context she is put in exactly the same position as the married wife living with her husband.

Basically, Cde. Speaker, these are the things which the Bill seeks to do in effect. As I said before, the purpose of this Bill is essentially to bring into effect some of the Budget proposals in so far as those proposals affect income tax. The Bill also seeks to give equal treatment to a reputed wife as in the case of a married wife with respect to the tax system.

In addition, the Bill seeks to give, tax free, certain payments. These payments will be incentive payments under approved incentive schemes, severance pay which I know many Unions have been interested in for a long time, as well as medical discharge payments, all of which will now be tax free.

Cde. Speaker, with that brief explanation I wish formally to move the Second Reading of the Income Tax (Amendment) Bill.

1980-10-24

3:05 – 3:15 p.m.

3:05 p.m.

Question proposed.

The Speaker: Cde. Narbada Persaud.

Cde. N. Persaud: Cde. Speaker, the Income Tax (Amendment) Bill, like the Household Service Workers Bill has come significantly at the last Sitting of this Parliament. It is obvious an election gimmick and, of course, a cheap way of campaigning. It is trying to bribe the workers, the very workers whose rights have been trampled upon, whose freedom has been taken away and who are prevented from choosing a Government and a Trade Union Council of their choice.

Passing this so-called “tax relief bill” today will help in any way whatsoever despite coercion, force and threat to mobilise the 100,000 persons wanted for the puppet show which takes place on Sunday next - -

The Speaker: Cde. Narbada, did you hear what I said to Cde. Green? That I want today to go off at a high level? You are accusing them for electioneering and that is what you are doing now. Let us try and keep the discussion on the Bill.

Cde. N. Persaud: Workers are fed up, frustrated and disgusted with the regimentation, the paramountcy of the party policy - -

The Speaker: Cde. Narbada, what has that got to do with this Bill?

Cde. N. Persaud: He says it is a tax incentive - -

The Speaker: I am not inclined to that view. Speak on the merits of the Bill.

Cde. N. Persaud: This pittance offered in the Bill will not motivate the people towards increased production and productivity. It is too late and too little. The whole tax system, income tax and other taxes, needs revamping towards a more equitable and fair system. Because the distribution of income is inequitable and unfair, the tax system becomes also inequitable and unfair. The increase offered therefore in this Bill this afternoon is a sham and offers absolutely nothing to the small man, the real producers of wealth. It is a deliberate attempt to fool the people by luring them into a false sense of understanding by bringing the Bill this afternoon, on the eve of election, in this House that the P.N.C. Government is indeed doing something for them. But, obviously, this is not the case.

How will the workers be better off when one considers all the additional burdens which have been placed on their backs during the last few years in particular? Despite this measure which seems to offer some relief, the 1980 Budget Estimates show an increase of approximately \$2.5 million in income tax, and I am talking about personal income tax, as compared with that under the 1979 Estimates.

I want to give an example in this House to show where the small man will not benefit from this measure and I want to take an average family with four children, husband and wife. That is an average family I think we will all agree. If he works for \$250 per month he will not pay income tax. Therefore this measure will not save him from anything. If he works for \$300 per month he was not paying income tax under the old system. This will not give him any relief. If he works for \$350 per month he was still not paying income tax. Therefore this Bill will not bring any relief for him.

The point I want to make here is that this Bill will not assist the small man and the small man is getting far below \$350 per month. The minimum wage at the amount is about \$280 per month, if so much. That is the minimum wage but I have moved to the point of \$350 per month with a family of four children. This measure will bring absolutely nothing to such a family. This measure will only bring relief to persons in the same category I spoke about, a family of four children, when the salary reaches \$380 per month. Only then they would be able to get something from this measure. The workers at the bottom of the ladder were not paying and will continue not to pay under this system. The income tax

measure has, therefore, brought no relief to the small man. One has to work for a salary of \$462 per month going again with those four children before he now starts to pay income tax. How many of us in this country are working for a salary of \$462 per month?

Again I want to emphasise the point that this Government, claiming to be working-class, has brought under this Bill no relief to the working man of this country. Under the old system, if this Bill was not brought to the House, it means that the man who now works for \$462 per month would have been called upon to pay \$135 a year as income tax – if this relief was not brought. That is to say that income tax is now chargeable at the salary of \$462. Without this measure it was chargeable at \$350. I am saying, therefore, that what the man pays, working for a salary from \$380 to \$462 is \$135 per year or \$2.60 a week.

I want now to compare that – and that is why I call it a pittance – against all the additional burdens that that same family is now being called upon to bear – to prove the point that this Bill has brought no relief to the small man.

We have the system where workers are called upon to work over-time because of the exigencies of the service. Let us take the waterfronts. The Government wants to save money and so the workers have to unload the boats in a certain time. Of course, over-time is involved and their salaries go up, but, Cde. Speaker, when the week is finished one should really examine how much money goes back to the Government.



Transitional National Assembly3:15 p.m.

(Cde. N Persaud continues)

Let us take this bauxite industry, let us take the sugar industry, the productive sectors. The Government has been talking about increased production and productivity. The workers are called upon to produce more. If you produce more then you earn more. What provision is made so that when these workers earn additional money from overtime work that they are exempted in some way or the other form paying back most of that money to the Government. Yet we talk of increased production and increased productivity. No incentive whatsoever.

The income, as is said, is not fairly distributed. The World Bank Report – and, Cde. Speaker, you may be aware that a team from the World Bank came here in May 1980 to look into the economy of this country and they reported that Guyana with its \$580 U.S. per capita in 1979 is among the lowest in the Western world. The Report is here. Now with that very low per capita income Guyana, workers are called upon to pay such heavy and various taxes in this country. Now we know for a fact that the unemployment is very high in this country. Allowances is given for a husband, wife and children, but how many families around us, because of the great unemployment situation in this country do not have to subsidise those many hundreds and thousands of people who are without work? No allowance is given for that. Official sources – and this Report – put the unemployment figure at 20 per cent, that is, one out of every five persons in the labour force. Our labour force is very small. Unofficial records put it at two out every seven. Where must they get their source of income from? They have to depend upon us to work, yet no provision is made as far as that is concerned.

This Report also states that another 22,000 will join the unemployed by 1982. I am sure the Government is in receipt of one of these reports. The comrade said they are creating new jobs, giving a reason why \$2.5 million is put in the 1980 Estimates. I want to end today, on a very high note, on a very high pitch. I want to refer to the very small allowance that is given and to prove that for all the burdens put on the backs of the workers, it means nothing at all, particularly for the small man.

This Report states that in 1977 the rate of inflation in Guyana was 11 per cent. This very Report puts it two years after, at the end of 1979, at 20 per cent. This very Report also states that the cost of consumer goods went up by during 1979 by 20 per cent. Yet this Government comes here as a working-class Government, as a socialist Government, on the eve of election, to make a big noise and to put in the newspaper and on the radio, as the last act of this Parliament, that it has increased the allowance. But the members of the Government are not talking of all these things that that delegation found that are recorded in this Report. I am only taking those that are relevant to this debate. As I said, the World Bank then reported that in 1978 the retail prices – and, Cde. Speaker, I think - -

The Speaker: Look, Cde. Narbada, I am not allowing a debate on the economic policy of the Government. I have given you a very long latitude. Just deal with the merits now if not I will call somebody else.

Cde. N. Persaud: We agree that to a point the measure this afternoon will bring some relief, but the question is to whom. To all the big ones. They are going to get the benefits. The Government claims to be a socialist Government. Income tax in Socialist countries, direct tax move downwards. The significance of income tax loses that significance as time goes on and is completely abolished with time to come. I want to call on the Government this afternoon - -

The Speaker: Cde. Narbada, you had better call on them very quickly before I call on you.

Cde. N. Persaud: to think that taxes put forward in this Bill will not not solve the problems in this

1980-10-24

3:15 – 3:25p.m.

country. Therefore, we must all agree that the workers who are the producers of wealth, the measure having - - /Interruption./

The Speaker: Hon. Member Mr. Singh, you wanted to speak. Please proceed.

Mr. M.F. Singh: Mr. Speaker, we would have liked to see this Bill go further and give more relief but we see no reason to oppose this Bill and, therefore, we do support the measures in this Bill. They are merely giving effect to the proposals in the Budget Speech made earlier this year and in respect of which I talked in extension. Hon. Members will remember that I did make the point and given actual figures to show that in truth and in fact most of the small men will not benefit in that they would not have been paying income tax under the previous system, therefore, they would not pay even with the benefits given here. I agree with the point made by the last speaker.

Though we agree with the legislation, one can see that there can be difficulties in interpreting this legislation and, in fact, in working it. To give you one example, right now for a husband to get allowance for his wife he has got to submit a marriage certificate. Now that we have added reputed wives who are living with husbands and the other way around for more than one calendar year, I can see that there will be difficulties in respect of establishing that. A mere marriage certificate would not be enough. I do not know what the Minister has in mind that will have to be submitted. But as I understand it, you cannot have more than one woman for whom you can claim an allowance at any one time. That has been made abundantly clear. I think the Minister's colleagues would like to have that made pellucidly clear, that you can claim for only one woman as your wife or reputed wife. You cannot claim for your wife and a reputed wife. There seems to be some doubt over there. Please make that quite clear to them, that it is only one you can claim for. I am satisfied in my own mind that it is only one and I accept that.

However, to be serious again, the Inland Revenue Office is a very important office. At the present moment you have to spend a lot of time there when you want to get documents. They are understaffed, in my humble opinion. To get a tax exit you have to wait long periods. They have problems in respect of their computerised services and trained personnel, from what I can gather, to operate their computers. They have problems in respect of electricity blackouts when the computers do not work. I recognise their limitation but we always had problems in respect of that Inland Revenue Department, even before the computerisation, do not let us blame it only on computerisation, lack of trained personnel, and outages or blackouts or whatever you care to call it.

3:25p.m.

There are problems and I am saying that there will be even greater problems. Some certificates or something will have to be produced to prove who is a reputed wife and under what circumstances that person is a reputed wife and all these will have to be examined. That will be a greater strain on that staff which is already overtaxed. I am making a plea to the hon. Minister now to have a detailed look at the staffing and the arrangements so that the taxpayer who already has problems in dealing with the Inland Revenue Office, will have with these additional burdens no greater problems. In fact, I will implore that there be fewer problems.

Right now the hon. Minister knows that refunds to the ordinary taxpayers are years behindhand. I notice here that section 4 is retroactive;

“Section 4 shall come into operation with respect to and from the year of assessment commencing on 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1978.”

That refers to the incentive schemes. Now if they had paid income tax on incentive scheme payments, how long will it take for them to get refunds which are given under this? Perhaps the hon. Minister would make a special effort for these small people to get their refunds if they have been paid these incentives. I want to be constructive on this last occasion and I am making a plea for us to look carefully at that department with respect to its whole operations.

The proviso to the new section 21A states that no one can claim unless they have been living together for one calendar year. I suppose that is fair enough. So if you live with your reputed wife from February, I take it you will not claim for that year, you have to wait until the next year, so that if you change, you cannot claim at all. There would be some versatile ladies and gentlemen who will not be particularly helped by the provisions of this Bill. However, that is one of the administrative matters that I see have been effectively handled here by the hon. Minister.

Before I close I want to say that I deeply regret that at this time when the Government is making such a big song and dance about equality between men and women and equal status for women, that the members of the Government have not seen it fit to include in this Bill provisions for separate assessment of income tax for working wives or working reputed wives. One will notice that instead of doing that, in Clause 13 they are saying that if you are a man living with a reputed wife her income must be added to yours like a wife's income. She is an appendage to you and her income is added to yours, you pay the tax on the higher scale and there is no separate assessment of income tax for her. I think the time has come when we must change this and let working wives enjoy the status of having their income tax assessed separately. Let us have equality to that extent.

I am quite aware of many wives who are educated and talented. The hon. Minister Mr. Hamilton Green can tell you why his wife is not working for a salary because she has to pay too much income tax. She is no longer a Minister of the Government. She is a capable woman but it does not pay her to work because the majority of her salary comes out of Hammie's salary as income tax. This is a case –

The Speaker: Hon. Mr. Singh, you are having a private conversation? - -

Mr. M.F. Singh: I am making a plea that this Bill should have gone further. I am making a plea that my dead colleague, God rest her soul, Eleanor Da Silva made for years in this honourable House, that working wives should have their tax assessed separately and not be mere appendage with respect to the man and an appendage to his income tax.

With that as my final plea to the Government let me end by saying we support the Bill, we wish it had gone further.

The Speaker: Cde. Minister.

Cde. Hope: (replying) The criticism was made that this Bill was presented at this time because of the impending elections. On the contrary, Cde. Speaker. A number of these provisions which we have brought before this House in the form of a Bill have, in fact, been in practice in the department of income tax through administrative procedures and these particularly refer to station allowances as well as severance pay. Of course, as the member subsequently realised, a number of other proposals were made in the Budget and what we are doing is implementing the Budget proposals.

Cde. Speaker, sometimes along the line one got the impression that the speaker from the minority party considered that we were bringing income tax relief to people who already were not liable to pay income tax. Obviously, that is nonsense. We could not be proposing income tax relief to people who

were already exempt from paying income tax. I wish to point out that apart from those who are not required to pay income tax for any kind of reason, there are about 190,000 persons who are paying income tax as of now. The point I want to make is that every one of those 190,000 persons will be relieved in different degrees as a result of this Bill. That is a fact which I think needs to be understood, that there are about 190,000 persons, all taxpayers and all of them will be relieved in some way as a result of these proposals in the Bill. As a matter of fact, I think many persons did not realise that the Bill enables parents to claim for any number of children who are not products of a formal marriage. In the past, the parents of these children could only claim for up to four. In other words, until now, where there was a common-law relationship, only four children of that relationship could have been claimed for as a maximum, irrespective of the number of children. In other words, where there were nine children in a common-law relationship, the parents could only have claimed for four. Under these proposals the parents can claim for all and that can be very significant for a large number of existing households. In fact, when we were doing the Budget and this proposal was finally accepted by the Cabinet, substantial reduction had to be made in the estimated income tax to be collected as a result of this proposal. We need to point it out as well as in order to counter those people who continue to plead that these reliefs are really insignificant in terms of the effect.

3:35p.m.

Also we need, side by side with these income tax proposals, to remember that while the proposals are put into effect, the Government has been making positive steps in other directions to ease the burden of the average Guyanese and from this point of view I think we need to recall that almost all the existing housing schemes organised by the Government, whether it is self-help, whether it is co-operative or otherwise, are very highly subsidised.

Similarly pure water schemes in this country are very highly subsidised, school uniforms and school books are largely free and the schooling is free. I think we need, when we get people talking about the costs they have to endure, apart from these allowances, we need to remember that the Government has been taking positive steps in other directions to ease the burden of living. Those are the remarks I wish to make.

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.

#### MISCELLANEOUS LAWS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1980

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to amend certain laws.”

[The Minister of Home Affairs.]

The Minister of Home Affairs(Cde. Mingo): Cde. Speaker, I beg to move the Second Reading of the Miscellaneous Laws (Amendment) Bill 1980.

The objective of the main provision of the Bill that is before the House is very simply to provide certain assistance to the President in the discharge of some of his functions.

Under the previous Constitution, the President, being Head of State but not Head of Government,

1980-10-24

3:25 – 3:35p.m.

was free to assume a number of formal, though important, functions. Now that the President is both Head of Government he is obviously not as well situated as the previous President to discharge all of these functions personally. It would be wise therefore for Parliament to...

1980-10-24

3:35 – 3:45p.m

make provision enabling the President to delegate some of these functions without, of course, denuding him of his overall responsibility.

One of these areas concerns the administration of oaths under the promissory Oaths Act, Chapter 27:06. Under section 6 of that Act the President is required personally to administer all oaths to all Judges. This is also the case with the Secretary to the Cabinet or any officer appointed to exercise the functions of that post.

Subsection (3) of that section provides that any other oaths required to be taken under that Act can be taken before the President or before such public officer as the President may in any case direct in writing under his hand.

It will be seen that so far as this Act is concerned it permits the President to delegate only in certain cases and then only to a public officer. He cannot, for example, delegate to a Judge. There is some provision for delegation in section 27 of the Interpretation and General Clause Act, Chapter 2:01, but the category of possible delegate is rather limited and the procedure for delegation requires the making of an Order by the President. That procedure is less flexible than the procedure provided under section 6(3) of the Promissory Oaths Act under which the delegation can be affected more simply by written directions under the hand of the President.

Put briefly then, the Bill seeks to enlarge the category of office holders in respect of whom, as well as the category of persons to whom, the President may delegate his authority to administer oaths by the flexible method of written directions under the Promissory Oaths Act.

The second part of the Bill makes reference to certain orders which were made by the former President under section 6 of the Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana Act 1980 which empowers the then President, by such Orders, to modify existing laws to such extent as may, in his opinion, be necessary or expedient to enable the Constitution to function as from the date on which it came into force.

A similar power was given to the Governor to modify laws to facilitate the functioning of the Independent Constitution. Three such Orders were made by the former President and it is proposed to amend the Bill so as to specify them with some particularity since they were made by the former President in anticipation of the commencement of the new Constitution. It is thought convenient to take the opportunity presented by this Bill at the second sitting of this Parliament, under the new Constitution, to bring these Orders in a formal way to the notice of Parliament and for its own sanction. These then are the reasons which I ask the House to consider in support of my Motion for the Second Reading of this Bill.

3:45 p.m.

Question proposed, 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. Mingo: I wish to move the Amendment standing in my name.

Amendment –

That for the words, “any orders made under section 6 thereof”, the following be intitled:  
“the Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana (Adaptation and Modification of Laws) (Representation of the People) Order 1980, the Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana (Adaptation and Modification of Laws) (Representation of People – Presidential Candidate) Order 1980 and the Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana (Adaptation and Modification of Laws) (Elections) Order 1980”

put and agreed to.

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

Assembly resumed.

Bill reported with an Amendment to Clause 4; as amended, considered; read the  
Third time and passed.

LAST SITTING OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

The Speaker: Comrades and hon. Members, as this is the last Sitting of Parliament, I would wish to take this opportunity of thanking all of you for the co-operation you have given to me over the past nine years and ten months when I had the honour and privilege of serving you as Speaker of this Parliament. Except for one or two occasions, our relationship has been cordial and friendly and the onerous work was made easy by the ready co-operation I received from all parties on all occasions. During my tenure of service, I was greatly enriched by the experience I have gained in serving as Speaker of this Parliament.

May I also take this opportunity to express my personal thanks to the President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, who as Prime Minister and Head of Government gave me the fullest support, help and assistance in the carrying out of the arduous, administrative and other duties as Speaker of Parliament.

I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Clerk, Deputy Clerk and all members of the staff who supported me and gave untiring...

service during my entire period as Speaker and without whose help I doubt I would have been able to carry out the work of Parliament, and to the press and radio for making available to the nation the work of the Assembly.

Finally, may I take this opportunity of wishing all Members and their families good health and success in the future and particularly in the elections ahead. Cde. Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: (Cde. Reid) Cde. Speaker, it has fallen on me this time to respond to what you have just said and to observe that this is the last day of this Parliament. I too wish to join in thanking the Clerk, the Deputy Clerk and all the workers of the Parliament and, especially, you yourself, Cde. Speaker, for the effective work you have carried through over the period. I know all of us have missed the President in this closing session, but changes will always come about.

Parliament itself, however, has been one of those institutions that have grown slowly but strongly over the centuries. Institutions that have a character to last for a long time tend to grow very slowly. The history of Parliament is far back to somewhere around the year 1265 when Simon de Montfort had the idea of a Parliament which was developed by Edward I and so in 1295 there came into being in England the first model of Parliament. That is a long time from now. Like a tree of a particular nature every ring became part of the growth of Parliament and customs and precedence can be manifested in those annual rings. I said a particular kind of plant because it is given only to those that grow large and long as the oak, our mango tree, our silk cotton tree, that will last for centuries.

So today as we observe the closing of this Third Parliament and the curtain is drawn remember those who were here at the commencement of this Parliament but are not here today. Some have been removed by illness. But one particular reaper, namely the grim reaper, has carried off some of its members. We miss them, we miss their contribution. But, of course, their places have been taken by others and thus, this relay race continues. I am particularly glad that those of us who are here have survived. Some of us have grown with Parliament, some of us have developed. We have seen some of the changes that have touched us as individuals and persons, for today we have not the former Prime Minister with us, but in spirit we still have the Executive President of the Co-operative Republic and we hope that in the next Parliament we shall have the joy and privilege of seeing him from time to time.

We close, I think, this Parliament because Parliament, as individual sessions, do not last forever.

A note has just been passed to me to remind me that this very day is the remembrance day of the first year of the passing of one of our stalwarts who graced this Parliament, namely, Cde. Vincent Teekah. It is probably apposite that at this time we are saying farewell, goodbye to this Third Parliament. But I cannot take my seat without mentioning some of the significant changes that have come about during the Parliament, the nationalisation of so many expatriate industries including what was described in the past as Bookers Guyana. All these are now owned and controlled by the people of Guyana. (Applause). It is during this Parliament that we saw that far-reaching change of free education for all from nursery to university. If there is anything very significant about the revolution it is just that.

3:55 p.m.

But Parliament as an institution has had upheavals. The battle was fought for years between the Monarchy and the Royalty, between the Nobles and the Monarchy, and it was not until as far back as 1688 that the Nobles had the better of the Monarchy. And even though they had made changes in theory by having two chambers, the House of Lords and the House of Commons, the House of Lords had the highest nobility and the highest of the Clergy, and the House of Commons had the ordinary people and the Nobles of a lower level, for the people, there was no significant change, for it was government by the



1980-10-24

3:45 – 3:55 p.m.

Nobility for the Nobility. Thus the suffering and the punishment continued and the exploitation even grew more acute for the ordinary people because then the Nobles saw them more as rivals than in the days when they had to suffer at the hands of the King.

Today, Parliament has changed so far that we see in our very near future co-operative units in our various communities. Sometimes we hear of the People's Parliament out in the communities. It seems to me that these co-operative units will become an extension of this Parliament. For what was the objective of Parliament in the early days? One of the objectives was to discuss with the people, to hear the grievances of the people, to give explanations for the happenings and I am reminded, as I mention that objective and that scene, of the face- the- community meetings, instituted by the People's National Congress, as an unofficial extension of this Parliament.

We hope that with the coming into force of more and more of the rules and regulations of the People's  
New Constitution there will be greater parliamentary...

democracy in our country and more than that, betterment for the people of Guyana, the people for whom this Parliament was established and is to be continued to serve. I hope that s Parliament is dissolved, I understand as from tomorrow, many of us will have some time to think upon these things, especially the changes that have come about. And since none of us here can tell when the elections will be, for we have until the 25<sup>th</sup> or 26<sup>th</sup> January, I want, Cde. Speaker, with your leave, to take this opportunity, if perchance we have the new Parliament after Christmas, to wish my comrades, especially my friends from the minority group a merry and pleasant Christmas.

I am sure, Cde. Speaker, that the new Parliament cannot be the same. We are bound to see new faces. It is my hope, however, that Parliament will continue to grow, more rings will be added to the tree and greater strength will be given to the tree so that in our country, notwithstanding the upheavals in the world, through this Parliament, it might be our good fortune to maintain peace and love so that genuine development can take place in our country and in time you would see a Parliament with a common goal, a common objective, where the criticisms will be constructive toward development and we will go forth from here to the public at large with that common goal, with a common message, to remove the deceptions, the myths and the falsehoods and thus carry the thrust for people's development more and more.

It was a long long time ago somewhere between 5 BC and 4 BC that the principle was established that the only authority Parliament must have come from the people. Today, we hear about people's power as if it were a new thing, but theory is different form practice. It is my hope that as we promote the theory of people's power, in practice and in reality that will be to the benefit of all the people of Guyana. [Applause.]

Cde. Speaker, again I wish to thank you for the service you have rendered. I wish to thank my colleagues for the way we have worked and sometimes the way we have played. Some of them have got accustomed to swimming. I want to thank the minority party represented at this moment by my good friend, I nearly said Cde. Feilden Singh, Mr. Feilden Singh, for the contribution he has made in this Parliament.

And if I were a hypocrite I would have wanted to wish that I would see him here again when the new Parliament comes. But if I am to wish him that, I would wish that if I am to see him it would be with the People's National Congress. [Applause.] It has been a learning experience for me personally and I wish to record my own special and personal thanks to the President of Guyana who through his wisdom has kept us together and even under these strenuous economic crises has also kept our country moving onward, upward and forward. [Applause.]

Mr. M.F. Singh: Mr. Speaker, the proclamation in my hand says that the life of this Parliament comes to an end tomorrow. I have had the pleasure of serving continuously in the several Parliaments since 1966. We have not agreed with everything that has been passed in this honourable House, including the new Constitution, but certainly we regard it vitally important to the maintenance of the multi-party system – we regard this Parliament as vitally important to the maintenance of democracy and the freedom of expression. Parliament is the highest forum in the land. Members of Parliament enjoy privilege here in respect of what they say. So often what you can say here in Parliament cannot be said at the street corners without dire consequences.

Dr. Jagan himself admitted these things when he re-entered Parliament in 1976 after his boycott from 1973. We do not believe in boycott. No useful purpose they serve. We are realists. We did not agree with the new Constitution but the fact of life is that today we are living under the new Constitution.

1980-10-24

3:55 – 4:05 p.m.

[Applause.] So why should we boycott it? The members of the P.P.P. staged a boycott of the last Sitting of Parliament. They came here today. How sensible or consistent is that? I don't know. I certainly cannot understand it except for the fact that if you attend Parliament you get paid at the end of the month.

I want to say that we have considered it an honour and a duty to serve in this honourable House and hope that this honourable House, under the new Constitution, will serve the purpose for which it was intended. To the Government I say: we have disagreed but I thank God it has never descended to the level of personal antagonism.

1980-10-24

4:05 – 4:10 p.m.

To you I say, sir, your job has not been made easy by both sides of the House but you have prevailed. Thank you very much. To your hard-working staff, your Clerk and your Deputy Clerk, Mr. Speaker, I want to say from the bottom of my heart that I have always received the utmost co-operation and assistance. I want to express my thanks to them. To the official reporters, to the marshal, to the staff generally, I want to say a hearty thank you for their co-operation. To the Press I want to say Thank you even though at times I wished they reported a little more of what I said and perhaps a little less of what the Government members said. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you also – I know the time is going – for your good wishes in respect of the forthcoming elections but finally I want to say that I certainly don't know whether I will be coming back into this honourable Houses after the next elections and therefore I wish to take this opportunity, in case I don't have another opportunity of doing it, to wish the members on the other side, yourself, your staff, indeed the Guyanese nation generally, a happy and peaceful Christmas and God's blessing in the New Year on the Guyanese people and Guyana, the nation, generally. Thank you.

PROCLAMATION DISSOLVING PARLIAMENT

The Speaker: Comrades and hon. Members, I would like to read this proclamation made by the President of the CO-operative Republic of Guyana and signed L.F.S. Burnham, President.

“WHEREAS it is provided by section 8(5) of the Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana Act 1980 that, unless sooner dissolved by the President pursuant to the provision of article 70(2) of the Constitution, the Parliament constituted by the President and the transitional National Assembly shall stand dissolved on 26<sup>th</sup> October, 1980;

AND WHEREAS the Parliament so constituted is still in session;

AND WHEREAS it is provided by the said article 70(2) that the President may at any time by proclamation dissolve Parliament:

NOW, THEREFORE, in pursuance of the said article 70(2) I do hereby dissolve Parliament on 25<sup>th</sup> October, 1980.

Given under my hand and Seal of  
Guyana at Georgetown, Guyana,  
this 24<sup>th</sup> day of October, 1980 in  
the eleventh year of the Republic.

By the President's Command.

1980-10-24

4:05 – 4:10 p.m.

C.E .Douglas,  
Permanent Secretary to the Office of the President.”

Comrades and hon. Member, this brings this session of Parliament to a conclusion.

Ended accordingly at 16:10 p.m.

[END OF SESSION]