

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 10

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE THIRD SESSION (1983) OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FOURTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA

32nd Sitting 14:00 hrs Wednesday 1984-08-15

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (70)

Speaker (1)

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

Members of the Government - People's National Congress (57)

Prime Minister (1)

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

Other Vice-Presidents (4)

Cde. H.D. Hoyte, S.C., M.P.,
 Vice-President, **Production**,

Cde. H. Green, M.P.,
 Vice-President, Social Infrastructure

Cde. B. Ramsaroop, M.P.,
 Vice-President, Party and State Matters

(Absent on leave)

- * Cde. Dr. M. Shahabuddeen, O.R., S.C., M.P.,
 Vice-President and Attorney General

Senior Ministers (6)

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

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

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

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

- * Cde. J.R. Thomas, M.P.,
 Minister of Home Affairs

- * Cde. C.B. Greenidge, M.P.,
 Minister of Finance and Economic Planning

- * Non-elected Member

Ministers (7)

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

(Absent)

Ministers of State (2)

- Cde. M. Corrica, M.P.,
Minister of State within the Ministry of Internal
Trade and Consumer Protection
- Cde. H.L.B. Singh, M.S., M.P.,
Minister of State within the Ministry of Regional
Development

Parliamentary Secretaries (3)

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

* Non-elected Member

Other Members (23)

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

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

Cde. R. Bishop, M.S., M.P.
Cde. B. Latchminarayan, M.P.

Members from the Regional Democratic Councils (9)

Cde. K.N. Jones, M.P. (Region No. 1 - Barima/Waini)
Cde. K.V. Jairam, M.P. (Region No. 2 - Pomeroon/Supenaam) (Absent)
Cde. C.A. Singh, M.P. (Region No. 3 - Essequibo Islands/West Demerara)
Cde. W. Bipat, J.P., M.P. (Region No. 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)
Cde. H.I. London, M.S., M.P. (Region No. 5 - Mahaica/Berbice)
Cde. I. Chowritmootoo, M.P. (Region No. 6 - East Berbice/Corentyne)
Cde. N.R. Charles, M.P. (Region No. 7 - Cuyuni/Mazaruni)
Cde. D. Abraham, M.P. (Region No. 8 - Potaro/Siparuni)
Cde. D. Hinds, M.P. (Region No. 10 - Upper Demerara/Berbice)

Members of the Minority (12)

(i) People's Progressive Party (10)

Minority Leader (1)

Cde. Dr. C. Jagan, M.P.,
Minority Leader

(Absent)

Deputy Speaker (1)

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

(Absent)

Other Members (8)

Cde. J. Jagan, M.P.

(Absent)

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud, J.P., M.P.,
Minority Chief Whip

Cde. N. Persaud, M.P.

Cde. C.C. Collymore, M.P.

(Absent)

Cde. S.F. Mohamed, M.P.

Cde. I. Basir, M.P.

(Absent- on leave)

Cde. C.C. Belgrave, M.P.

Cde. H. Nokta, M.P.,

(ii) United Force (2)

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

(Absent- on leave)

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

OFFICERS

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

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

PRAYERS

14:10 hrs

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER
Leave to Members

The Speaker: Comrades and hon. Member, leave has been granted for today's sitting to Cdes. Ramsaroop and Ally and to the hon. Member Mr. Singh.

Resignation of Cde. Dr. P.A. Reid, O.E., M.P., Prime Minister

The Speaker: Comrades and hon. Member, I have received a letter from Cde. Dr. Ptolemy Alexander Reid, O.E., Prime Minister, tendering his resignation as a Member of the National Assembly with effect from 16th August, 1984.

With Cde. Reid's resignation, a seat in the National Assembly has become vacant. I will, therefore, in accordance with article 99A of the Representation of the People Act, Chapter 1:03, call upon the Representative of the List of Candidates from which Cde. Reid's name was extracted following the last general elections, to further extract from the said List the name of a person to fill the vacancy.

Resignation of Cde. B. Ramsaroop, M.P., Vice-President,
Party and State Matters

The Speaker: I have also received a letter from Cde. Bishwaishwar Ramsaroop, Vice-President, Party and State Matters, tendering his resignation as a Member of the National Assembly with effect from 16th August, 1984.

With Cde. Ramsaroop's resignation, another seat in the National Assembly has become vacant. I will, therefore, in accordance with article 99A of the Representation of the People Act, Chapter 1:03, call upon the Representative of the List of Candidates from which Cde. Ramsaroop's name was extracted following the last general elections, to further extract from the said List the name of a person to fill that vacancy.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS, ETC.

The following paper was laid:

Annual Report of the Commissioner of Inland Revenue for the year 1983.

[The Minister of Finance and Economic Planning.]

QUESTIONS TO MINISTERSSalary, Allowances and Duties of Chairman of Elections Commission

The Speaker: Cde. Collymore.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Cde. Speaker, with your permission - I have the
Minister of Home Affairs
permission of Cde. Collymore - I wish to formally ask the/Question No. 12
standing in the name of Cde. Clinton Collymore, namely:

- (a) Will the Minister state why it was necessary to increase the salary and allowances of the Chairman of the Elections Commission?
- (b) Will the Minister state what are the duties of the Chairman of the Elections Commission, how many times per year the Commission meets and for how long and how many hours per week the Commissioner works at the office of the Elections Commission?

The Speaker: Cde. Thomas.

The Minister of Home Affairs (Cde. Thomas): Cde. Speaker -

- (a) The post of Chairman, Elections Commission is a Constitutional one treated as equivalent to that of a High Court Judge.
- (b) (i) The duties of the Chairman are fully defined in article 162 of the Constitution.
- (ii) The Elections Commission meets at least once per month and on such occasions as required by the exigencies of the service. Because of the inadequacy of the accommodation at the General Post Office Building, the Chairman is temporarily accommodated at the Attorney General's Office.

Dumping of Contaminated Foodstuff

The Speaker: Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: I wish to ask for Cde. Collymore Question No. 13 on the Order Paper:

Will the Minister confirm or deny that more than 500 bags of wheat flour, which had been in Police and Municipal custody, were recently 'dumped' (destroyed) together with a quantity of split peas, salt and cheese because these foodstuffs had become contaminated?

If the answer is in the affirmative, will the Minister state early whether, before they became contaminated, consideration had been given to making these foodstuffs available to hospitals, the Palms, Prisons, the Dharam Sala and other similar institutions?

If not, why not?

The Speaker: Cde. Thomas.

Cde. Thomas: Cde. Speaker -

- (a) It is true that a much smaller quantity of wheaten flour and split peas was overrun by weevils while held under Police control to satisfy various postponements of court trials in relation to the charges which were instituted against persons for reasons relating to the possession of the commodities named.
- (b) These were not given to the Palms, Hospitals, Prisons and other institutions.
- (c) Because they were unfit for human consumption and human beings live in these institutions.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: As a supplementary question, would the Minister be kind enough to tell us exactly what amounts were involved because our information is that these items were not really held as exhibits. They were all left for a long time to rot at various points.

The Speaker: That is not the answer. The answer is that they were held for some time. You now want to find out the quantity?

Cde. Thomas: I am sorry I do not have the exact quantity because these items were really held in parcels, small parcels, containers of all sorts and, as a result, it is difficult to quantify them unless there is very detailed measurement.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Will the Minister say what is the current practice with respect to items seized and kept.

The Speaker: That is not a supplementary question.

Reports of the Auditor General

The Speaker: Cde. Narbada Persaud.

Cde. N. Persaud: Cde. Speaker, I wish to ask Question No. 14 on the Order Paper standing in my name. I am fully aware that action has been taken on the first part already. The Question is:

- (i) Will the Minister state when the report by the Auditor General for the years ended 31st December, 1975, 31st December, 1976, and 31st December, 1977, will be laid in the National Assembly?
- (ii) Will the Minister further state when the reports for the years ended 31st December, 1978 to 31st December, 1982, will be laid in the National Assembly?

The Speaker: Cde. Greenidge, part (ii) of the Question only.

The Minister of Finance and Economic Planning (Cde. Greenidge): Cde. Speaker, the report of the Auditor General in typewritten form for the years ended 31st December, 1978, to 31st December, 1980, has recently been received by the Minister responsible for finance who will approach Cabinet shortly to obtain approval for same to be laid in the National Assembly. The report for the years ended 31st December, 1981 and 31st December, 1982, is expected to be submitted to the Minister responsible for Finance by November, 1984, shortly after which it will be laid in the National Assembly.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

The following Bill was introduced and read the First time:

Guyana Manufacturing and Industrial Development Agency Bill, 1984 -
Bill No. 12/1984.

/Vice-President, Production./

PUBLIC BUSINESS

MOTION

Report of the Public Accounts Committee for 1967

"Be it resolved that the Report of the Public Accounts Committee on the Public Accounts for the year 1967, which was laid in the National Assembly on 5th August, 1980, be referred to the Government for its consideration." /Cde. N. Persaud./

The Speaker: Cde. Narbada Persaud.

Cde. N. Persaud: Cde. Speaker, I wish to move the Motion as stated on the Order Paper standing in my name.

It is well known that the Public Accounts Committee has completed the examination of the report of the Auditor General for the year 1967 since 1977. The report of the Public Accounts Committee on the public accounts for the year 1967 was laid in the National Assembly on the 5th August 1980.

During the examination of the report of the Auditor General for the year 1967, the Public Accounts Committee came across a number of discrepancies and a number of irregularities. Some of these have been clearly stated in this report which I now wish to lay on the table.

Cde. Narbada Persaud continues:

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It is customary that the Government, having received the Report of the Public Accounts Committee should examine this Report by the Public Accounts Committee and report back to the Parliament as regards steps that have been taken to correct some of those recommendations or action taken on some of those recommendations by the Public Accounts Committee as regards the stopping of such irregularities.

It is well known that since some time in the 1950's the Government has not come back to this National Assembly and stated exactly what it has done as regards the recommendations and reports of the Public Accounts Committee. I do hope, Cde. Speaker, that this Report, having been presented since the 5th August, 1980, the Motion being moved today in this National Assembly with the state of the country's financial affairs, with the new Minister of Economic Development and Finance, every effort will be made to examine this Report and to come back to this Parliament and let the Parliament know what action has been taken on the recommendations stated in this Report. I now move the Motion standing in my name.

The Speaker: Who will second it?

Cde. Fowler: Cde. Speaker, I rise to second the Motion.

Question put and agreed to.

Motion carried.

Farewell to Cde. Dr. Ptolemy Alexander Reid, O.E.

The Speaker: Comrades and hon. Member, we have now completed the business listed on our Order Paper for this sitting, but as this is the last occasion on which Cde. Dr. Ptolemy Alexander Reid, O.E. will be present as Prime Minister and as a Member of the National Assembly, I am sure that Members would agree that we should include in these proceedings and in our Records some special remarks to mark the occasion.

It was in the year 1964, following the general elections which were held on the 7th December that year, that Dr. Reid first entered Parliament. With the electoral system of proportional representation introduced for the 1964 elections, the name Ptolemy Alexander Reid appeared as the second name on the list which bore the title "People's National Congress".

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Following the elections, Cde. Reid became a Member of the House of Assembly and first made and subscribed the oath therein on the 31st December, 1964. He was, however, appointed to be a Minister and first became Minister of Home Affairs with effect from the 15th December, 1964. He served as such for two years. He was then appointed Minister of Trade. On the 25th September, 1967, he became Minister of Finance.

At the next general elections which were held on the 16th December, 1968, Cde. Reid was re-elected to the Assembly and continued as Minister of Finance. He became the country's First Deputy Prime Minister on the 1st February, 1969 and continued being responsible for the Ministry of Finance. From 1971 he was responsible for the Ministry of Agriculture and was also Minister of National Development from 1972.

He was re-elected to the National Assembly in 1973 and continued as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Development and Agriculture.

With the introduction of the new Constitution in 1980, Cde. Reid became the country's second Prime Minister. He was for the fourth consecutive term elected to the National Assembly at the last general elections which were held on the 15th December, 1980 and continued as Prime Minister. He would be serving as such until the end of today, as his retirement takes effect from tomorrow. He has, therefore, served in our Parliament for nearly twenty consecutive years - as a Minister from the 15th December, 1964, as Deputy Prime Minister from the 1st February, 1969, and as Prime Minister from the 6th October, 1980.

During his membership in Parliament, he has been responsible for several departments of Government, and for several subjects and matters.

His contributions in the Assembly have been many. He presented to and successfully piloted in the Assembly budgets for four years. As a teacher, he imparted much to us.

For his distinction and eminence, he was in 1980 given the highest award of the State, the Order of Excellence of Guyana.

Cde. Reid leaves us today at the good ripe age of 66 years. With his departure he carries away with him years of accumulated knowledge and experience, the benefit of which we are now losing.

In his letter to me Cde. Reid said, and I quote:

"That the President of this Co-operative Republic of Guyana has over the years expressed such confidence in me by appointing me to various responsible positions in this House, culminating in the office of Prime Minister and First Vice-President, has left me with an undying gratitude and sense of humility.

I thank him and all this House as well as my fellow Guyanese who have shown over the years such good sense in the development process of our country.

May you all be assured that I retire not into idleness, but into greater depths of the exciting challenges ahead in the construction of a socialist society, guided by our great architect, President/Leader, Cde. L.F.S. Burnham, O.E."

He has also recorded his deep gratitude to his fellow Parliamentarians on both sides of the House, present and past, and also to the entire staff and visiting supporting personnel.

Cde. Dr. Ptolemy Alexander Reid, we thank you for your service here. We shall greatly miss you and your contributions, but we extend to you our best wishes for many more years of peace and happiness. Our great wish is that good health would be restored to you.

Comrades, I would also like to take this opportunity of bidding farewell to Cde. Bishwaishwar Ramsaroop who is also leaving us.

Cde. Ramsaroop first entered Parliament on 3rd January, 1969, and has been a Member of the Assembly since that time. He first became a Minister on the 1st February, 1969. On the 8th August, 1980, he was appointed a Senior Minister and on 1st January, 1981, he became a Vice-President.

As a Minister, he has had responsibilities for Housing and Reconstruction and for Trade. He has also been the Leader of the House since the beginning of 1971.

Cde. Ramsaroop has, in his letter to me, expressed to Members on both sides of the House his personal thanks, gratitude and regard for the co-operation and friendliness which were proffered to him over the years and which made his service in the House a pleasant one.

I also wish to thank Cde. Ramsaroop for his services in general and more particularly as Leader of the House. I am sure you will wish me to extend our best wishes to him in his new fields. Cde. Hoyte.

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Cde. Hoyte: Cde. Speaker, as you have announced to this honourable House, Cde. Ptolemy Alexander Reid will be retiring as a Member of the National Assembly with effect from tomorrow's date. He thereby brings to an end an illustrious and remarkable parliamentary and ministerial career. However, he will be retiring not merely as a Member of the National Assembly, but as the Prime Minister of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana and as a Member of the Government.

His retirement surely will be a landmark in the history of our country. As he himself has said in his letter to you, Cde. Speaker, he will not be retiring from the service of the people of Guyana.

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If I might summarise his career in a few words I would say that it was dedicated to furthering the interest and well-being of all the people of Guyana. His was, is and will continue to be, a life of service. [Applause] - for everything he has done in his life has had a relationship to people and their welfare. In his early years he was a school teacher - serving not only the young people of his native village, Dartmouth, on the Essequibo Coast, but young people throughout the Coast and indeed throughout the length and breadth of Guyana and even today we come across many people who are proud to tell us of the influence which Cde. Reid has had on them in their early formative years, not only students Cde. Speaker, but teachers we had the good fortune to work with him or study with him during those seminal years when he served the teaching profession - and even after he returned to this country having qualified as a Veterinarian he continued to be in contact with people. He was a familiar sight in our farming areas, in our backlands on his mule or horse, helping farmers, helping our rural folk to understand the importance of new techniques and of proper husbandry. Not merely in his particular speciality of veterinary medicine, but in agriculture as a whole, for he had two loves. One was a general love for people and the other was a more specific love of agriculture and those loves dominated his life and I believe gave expression to everything he did in the course of his political career, so that when in 1964 he became a member of the Government he was bringing to that post a great deal of experience of the problems, life-styles, cultural aspirations of the people of this country, our farmers, our urban communities, of the ordinary people in whom he always took a particular interest and with whom his contact has always been close.

He became a Minister on the 15th December, 1964, so that almost to the day it is nineteen years and eight months he has served continuously in governmental office. During that period he has been, as you yourself have remarked, Cde. Speaker, Minister of Home Affairs, Minister of Trade, Minister of Finance, Minister of Agriculture, before acceding to the Office of Prime Minister on the 6th October, 1980.

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He was, throughout his life, a teacher, a motivator and a inspirer. He saw it as his task to make people aware of the importance of a number of things which would help this country to develop economically and socially and when one examines his style, when one examines the things he did, when one examines the way in which he organised his ministerial tasks, one discovers at the bottom of all of that an interest in people for he believed that the only end of political and social action surely must be the welfare of people and it is to the promoting of that welfare of people that he dedicated his life.

Some years ago I read a small booklet that was handed to me by a citizen who was distributing these booklets. The name of that booklet was "The Surrendered Life". It dealt with a number of persons who had surrendered their life to religion and when I think of Cde. Reid and I reflect upon his life and his service to the people of this country, I remember that book, I remember that title, because of me his life has been a surrendered life - but surrendered to the real religion of service to people, not to abstract concepts, not to speculative things, but to the concrete issues affecting our society and our communities, the issues of food, clothing, housing, the issue of education, the issue of proper medical care, the issue of the proper use of leisure time and the provision of facilities for enjoying that leisure time and developing ones individual potential to the highest level.

He taught us many things during the course of this life which he surrendered to the service of the people of Guyana. He taught us to be aware of our individual potential, of our creativity. He taught us to take pride in ourselves, as Guyanese and as human beings. He taught us to love Guyana and to dedicate our lives to the service of Guyana in the same way as he had dedicated his life. He taught us in a special way- not through much talking because one of his great virtues was his refusal to talk a great deal. He taught us by example, by the example of the things he did, by the example of his own life.

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That is why we could always find him in the farms, in the villages, among the ordinary folk of this country, in the Lodges and Friendly Societies, among the people who organised their religious life in indigenous churches. In the by-ways where the simple ordinary people live we found Dr. Reid there, teaching, motivating by example.

One great lesson he was never tired of inculcating in us was the lesson of self-reliance and production. He created, I believe, in the people of this country a greater awareness of the link between those two concepts and of the importance of them to the continuous expansion of our freedom and the achievement of those objectives which we have set ourselves nationally. For he was a socialist, believing in people, believing in people's welfare, but he was not committed or dedicated to the vocabulary of socialism. He was a socialist by action and example and everything he did in a practical way illustrated and advanced the cause of the socialist principles to which he subscribed.

In this honourable House his influence has been remarkable. How many times have we not seen him raise the level of the debate from trivial to a high moral and intellectual tone. He was a great speaker, not a speaker who emitted, so to speak, flashes or sparks of rhetoric, but a speaker who delivered his message from the heart with great sincerity, so that we were forced to listen and we were forced to acknowledge the wisdom of what he was saying.

Whenever Cde. Reid was around he had a sobering effect upon all of us. We gave up light banter; we gave up the invective which sometimes permeates the debates in the House. We gave up inattentiveness because when he was around we always found ourselves in a region of great calm; we found ourselves influenced by the personality of the man and we felt that while he was around we could not afford to give the slightest suggestion that we were not serious about the public business which the people of this country have elected us to perform.

As a man inside, outside, of this House, he was a person of integrity. I was about to tack on an adjective to "integrity" but integrity cannot be qualified and the integrity of which I speak transcends the mere common or garden honesty about material things. His was an integrity of the soul. He would never sacrifice

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a principle for any transient personal or political gain and no matter how difficult the problem was, no matter how fraught with political danger, Cde. Reid always took the position that we must tell the people the truth. That has been his great strength, his great virtue, that when he spoke we accepted without question the truth and validity of what he was telling us because that was the man and it was inconceivable that Cde. Reid would say to us anything that was not true, anything in which he did not personally and sincerely believe.

Added to that integrity, there was what I would call the "grace" which he had of an unfailing courtesy. I do not believe that Cde. Reid has ever in his life, has ever in this Assembly, has ever outside of this Assembly, been discourteous to any person. It was a special mark of the man that courtesy emanated from him as a natural attribute and generated the respect and admiration even from those people who might not have agreed with him politically. There was not a scintilla of pettiness or rancour in his make-up. He stood for all the routine virtues and he stood, above all, for respect for people. He practised that and that was so intricately interwoven in his personality that most people regarded Dr. Reid as a very gentle and kind person.

That perception of the masses of people is a correct one, but Dr. Reid could be strong, strong for the things which were important, strong for the things he believes in, but beneath that strength and the firmness which very often had to accompany that strength there was a great and persuasive humanity. It could not be otherwise given his great love for, his great interest in, people and the way in which he organised his life to serve the people of this country.

Cde. Hoyte continues

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He is a man of great wisdom and that wisdom is transmitted in such simple ways that very often, it is only after a great lapse of time that we who have benefited from that wisdom recognise what a great gift he has transmitted to us. And yet, with all his strength, coupled with humility, his great dedication, his seriousness, yet with all those, there was that underlying quiet humour which pervaded everything he did and which was perhaps the great evidence of his underlying humanity.

On a personal note, Cde. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge my own great debt to him for he has guided, advised, me on many occasions, sometimes in direct ways and sometimes merely by example and I know that I speak for all my colleagues on the Government benches when I say that we are grateful to him for everything he has done to us as individuals, to shape our political careers and to form our political consciousness, to help us to develop not only as politicians, but as human beings and I am glad of this opportunity to be able to acknowledge that debt.

Today he is leaving this House not, as I have said and as he himself has said, to idle, but to dedicate his life to continued service to people without being hampered by the problems and the cares of Government office. He has no intention of rusting unburnished.

His career has been a towering and influential one. His influence upon this Assembly and upon the politics of this nation has been enormous and its effects have been incalculable when we remember that a generation of Guyanese has grown up during the period he has been directly involved in public, political life and that generation, of necessity, has been influenced by him in the way they see life, in the way they see themselves and in the way they see their obligation to this land of their birth.

He has worked to make Guyana a great, proud and productive country. I believe that as we bid him farewell from this House, as we wish him well in his new sphere of activities and endeavours, as we tender to him our love, our

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respect, our gratitude, that the best way we can really honour him and convince him of our appreciation of everything that he has done and everything he has stood for, is to dedicate ourselves towards that objective he had set himself of helping to make our country great, proud and productive.

Cde. Speaker, on behalf of my colleagues in this House, we say to Cde. Reid that we are grateful for his life and for his service, that we wish him every success in the work he proposes to do for the rest of his life. Thank you.

/Applause/

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Cde. Speaker, Cde. Hoyte and yourself have referred to the Parliamentary, Governmental and Political careers of Dr. Reid. It is left to me, Cde. Speaker, on behalf of the People's Progressive Party, to wish Dr. Reid - though no mention was made - health as he parts with this Chamber today.

I have been in this Parliament from the 1964 period myself. That would mean that from the 1964 elections to the current time, I have had the opportunity as well to hear and to observe Dr. Reid during his contributions in this House. There is to be no doubt that he was very cool and calm even amidst sometimes very turbulent moments in this House. That quality is probably contributable to age, but I do not think there is any stethoscope to detect exactly where it has emerged from. There can be no doubt sir, that we had moments of violence because I myself, on behalf of the People's Progressive Party, contributed during debates which premised on the field of agriculture and I think you will recall, the House will recall - those who were here in those days - that Dr. Reid contributed very strongly. He was Minister of Agriculture charged with the responsibility of defending the Government's programmes and policies.

I want, in the finest traditions of this House, to wish him well and to say that whenever we part with anyone in this House, there must be moments and times to spend a couple of minutes evaluating the contributions of that person. So, I think the House has not fallen short this afternoon in doing that. So, once again I wish Cde. Reid every success. Thank you.

/Applause/

15:00 hrs.

Mr. M.A. Abraham: Mr. Speaker, permit me, on behalf of my Leader and my Party, to associate myself with the sentiments expressed both by the Prime Minister to be and by Mr. Persaud and to add a few comments of my own.

Sir, when the P.N.C. in its weaker moments - as most institutions must have their weaker moments - bared the sharp edge to its last, it was, in the opinion of the Speaker, Dr. Reid who tempered that sharpness and advised moderation and common sense. For the few years, the short time that I have known Dr. Reid, he conducted the business of Government and his Party in this House with calmness and equity, never one to be ruffled. Indeed Sir, he bore the very name of a great statesman. May I, on behalf of my Party, wish Dr. Reid continued good health and that his retirement would be a happy and a peaceful one. Dr. Reid's absence will surely be felt in this Assembly and this nation would have been deprived, be it prematurely, of his sterling service and contribution to its development. Dr. Reid, we bid you happy farewell.

The Prime Minister: Cde. Speaker, this is one of the for me and I realise how painful an experience it is. Nineteen years and eight months must be a fairly long period in one's life in any one activity. As I looked around when I came in a little while ago, I was searching for any faces that were here in 1964 December on my side of the House and then on the side of the Minority Party in Government. Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud has said rightly that he was there. He has been here for a long time. I thought that for our side Cde. Oscar Clarke was here but I am not seeing him. Between then and now tremendous changes have taken place and I wish to thank you, Cde. Speaker, for the remarks you have made. I wish to thank my good friend Reepu for the remarks he has made. To Cde. Hoyte I wish to say I shall pray to live long enough to qualify for some of the things he has mentioned.

I try to remember that time when I was nineteen years and eight months ago. For one thing was certain I did not walk into the Assembly with a stick. It is made by my good friend Diane. I did not walk into this House with 198 pounds for in those days I weighed 255 pounds. It was not such a large gallery as here and

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so I am deeply grateful for all that has been said about me and I wish to recall on this last day my deep gratitude to Cde. President himself, to you, Cde. Speaker, and all my colleagues on both sides of this House for we are all politicians and in that field we are together.

When I came into this House in 1964 it was not a dream as part of my own life for I have come from a little village and the rural community that was the swamp - a place with no good school, a place with no good road and if at times I feel depressed and I am in agony I just reflect on that little village to see what changes have taken place there.

I must remind myself that even though I said the 'Minority Party' I have to recognise my good friend from the U.F. for I thought in those days if there was any real consideration to the development process was when that group found a place in the political battles of this country. We talk in those difficult days. Today, however, we have come a long way. Much has been done but there is so much more to do. I ^{don't} want there to be any mistake that I am leaving this House because of ill health. Of course, I am far from being the strong figure I was in those days. Thanks to my own Government, the Government of Cuba, the people of Cuba I am well on the road to total recovery if only to have a chance to manifest in further work so that I can qualify for the good things my good friend has said about me.

15:10 hrs

Today is the last day and I have already said it is painful, that this has been a painful decision. It is not the first of this type I have made. In my whole life there have been times when people thought things were going just right for me, everything seemed blossoming for me. I remember when I resigned from my first full-time job as a school teacher how many of my friends thought it was sheer madness to think of leaving a position where so many opportunities were then open as compared with the time when I joined the teaching profession when it was almost compulsory that one had to be a member of a particular religion to get a position in particular schools. Some of the battles were being fought and there were then openings for young people all around. Local people were becoming inspectors of schools. I left at that time, left with a small sum of money to start a new life, so to speak. That was so painful a decision that it was arranged that there should be no occasion of farewell for me. I just could not stand it. But the decision was made. It was hard and difficult but there was a feeling that such is life if genuine development is to take place. Some of the decisions will be harsh, will be difficult, will be painful, will even be bitter.

In this year of politics we have had to make several difficult decisions, several painful decisions, not only to ourselves but often to the community at large. I am retiring now at a time when I think people are beginning more and more to understand the rightness of the road the People's National Congress has taken to overcome this crisis. We need to pursue that road persistently and vigorously. Many of our neighbouring territories who thought that we were all wrong are now coming more and more into the fold. If true development is to become a reality then the key to it all is our ability and capacity to use the resources we have at our disposal.

If I have done anything worthwhile, it is due to the co-operation of my colleagues all around, even my colleagues in the Minority Parties. I remember the time when the battle was whether to have new varieties of paddy or not. Today I am certain no one objects to new varieties of paddy. I believe that we have overcome that period when my friend in the United Force would want to

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tell us "Bring back sardines, bring back salt fish, from foreign countries." I am certain that with more matured people around him he never would have thought of making such a request at all. As one who claims to be a socialist, there can be no fault in endeavouring to use our own resources notwithstanding the thinking of the United States of America and its command over the media.

I am leaving in a new period of the world, a new age that in recent times has been identified properly. In 1957 one would have thought that we had come into the sputnik age, that we had come into the space age and men so debated. Today we are discovering that that was part of the deception that is practised by the developed world so as to throw us off the mark. Really and truly we have entered the age of informatics without recognising it. "Informatics" is a new word. I have difficulty in calling it. We have come to a period now when there is a chance for us who claim to be socialists, but the root of socialism must be concern for people, not a few, not the elite, but all.

Because of this new age it is found that capital, that finance, alone or even in great measure, cannot really cause genuine development to become a reality. This is the time. I am going to do what is described as I have made it clear to the Speaker that I am not retiring into idleness. In 19 years and 8 months, even though I talked but to the moment, I must have spoken thousands of words. I remember the story of one learned professor at a University. One day he looked back at how many words he had spoken, how many lessons he had taught telling people what to do. That day he came to himself and said, "Let me stop talking and get out into the field and do something that will talk better than I can do."

That is my task in life from now on. I will talk but little and even if I want to talk this afternoon much longer, the circumstances are such as my friend said: I am not allowed to stand on these two legs. These are all signs of the times and I must get into the field, close to nature, close to the land, close to our plants, close to our animals and see what message they have which I can clarify. That will be better than the message I have been carrying all these years. I have not yet worked out the details but just as I took a long time sending that note to you, Cde. Speaker - last night I wrote it when we were busy planning other

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things and some friend, seeing me busy trying to write, said, "Are you writing the programme?" I said, "I am now writing the letter of retirement to the Speaker." That is production.

I do believe that as soon as I am away from the hustle and bustle ideas will come to me and the plan for putting those ideas into action. I hope so to continue to live that people in seeing what I have been doing and what I am endeavouring to do would want to come to the decision to find out from me something. Then I would probably speak, but I want something to show what can be done with the resources we have available to us.

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National Assembly

15:20 - 15:30 hrs.

Ten years ago it would have been a question of madness if you had asked anybody to produce roti from rice flour. Today that is a reality. It is a reality that has a lesson to teach in itself that once we apply our minds to the resources we have, then significant changes will take place. I do hope that the day would never return when we ^{would} have to import wheat to give us flour for we have so many grains, so many vegetables that can produce good and nutritious flour. That is one example.

Before I take my seat, I wish to say just three things I have been trying to promote from time to time at every opportunity I have to speak and that is, if we are to keep up with the changes in the world, we need more and more schools in infancy - probably I should say like the President's College - so that we can understand the language of this world and so the three things I would like to leave with you are these:

We need to have bodies that are physically fit. Do not allow yourselves, when you reach to 66, to find difficulty in walking. You can prevent that from now. We must learn about this body for we know so little about it and we must learn how to take care of it so that people would not deceive us about our bodies.

In some countries, every effort is being made to bring those two issues to reality. We have been fooled notwithstanding the colleges and universities that so many of us have attended. So often some are the worse opinionists than those who have ever been. We lead so many people astray consciously or unconsciously. We should know what to do to keep the human body strong and healthy.

I get agony when people say that because of habit we cannot feed ourselves. And greater is the agony when some of the opinionists are those who use taxpayers' money to get training. We must not destroy ourselves and our country. If we cannot do that, then education is not worth anything.

The next point is that we must start from early to teach our children in nursery schools something about the world in which we live. People who wanted to rule the world and rule us taught our children in preparatory classes that we are not great people, we are some strange human beings dangling somewhere between apes and monkeys. All the pictures in those little books gave evidence of that

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so that they were better prepared to rule and command us. Those days are gone. But, we still have the remnants and so it will be useful in this age of informatics that we ensure that our children are properly informed about the world.

I had a great shock in my life when one fellow who was in an intellectual position argued with me in my own premises for one hour because he did not believe that the world in which we live is organised by people. I tried to convince him of that fact. He left unconvinced. Then it struck me how much ^{work} we are left to do and that we are in trouble.

If our children learn about this, that when they come to your age - they must not get to my age, I was too late - when they get to their teens and early twenties, they must understand that the great battle in the world is between two powers that want to rule this world, that have great influence on the other nations. That is the great battle of this world and the sign that socialism is winning is because the world is in crisis. So, instead of being depressed, we should be uplifted. We are winning or else the world would not have been in crisis.

I heard a speech from a fellow who later became a priest that it is only at fruit trees boys throw stones. If we were not winning, the world would not have been in crisis. The world has been thrown in crisis by those that are ruling the world so that they can destroy this new thing of socialism. The President of the United States of America has shown that the greatest evil in the world is socialism. He has the arrogance to tell the entire world that and that is not the end of the story - people are accepting that. Some of them have spent years in formal training and education believing that to be the greatest evil in the world.

I have just come back from Cuba - certain circumstances caused me to have gone there. I always wanted to visit Cuba and so in 1973 - even though I am not a lover of travelling - I made a special effort to see that place, not because I did not believe what they were doing, but because I wanted to prove to myself that when the United States of America is against a country, that country must be doing the right thing.

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In 1973 when I was there, there was proof to show that people who had had no opportunity, who grew up as I grew up in some village far away that nobody bothered about, who had come out of the revolution, were now deriving great benefits.

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When I saw the thousands of little children dressed in clean and neat uniforms doing all kinds of physical exercise, singing and doing drama and dance, I came to the conclusion that I was right, they cannot be wrong but probably because my parliamentary career is about to end something happened to take me back there very quickly so that I can see a little more and when I reached therein pain within a day or two I was relieved of this pain through the skill and expertise of the Cuban people and I questioned "When had they learned all this?". and the Orthopaedic Surgeon said "Since the revolution". He himself went to school since the revolution. He says his son who is also an Orthopaedic Surgeon went to school in Cuba to become such a trained person he is. We must be stedfast in season and out of season.

I said that now because you all believe that I have come to the end - bear with me another minute.

I leave at midnight tonight all parliamentary duties. I have warned my friend, do not come to take over before twelve o'clock midnight, there will be no room for him if he comes before 12 o'clock because I am not relieving myself of one minute of this time. This time I leave this country of ours in a state where there are equal oppportunities for all of us not like the 1930's when I was struggling along to do something and the members told me "If I knew you were not confirmed I would not have given you the job" in an area where they needed people to work. We have come a long way since the 1930's and thereabout. I know of young people who has passed examinations to do further training at secondary school that could not accept because it was not practically part of Guyana's theory and all sorts of constraints there were. Today we have secondary schools all over our country. Criticise the education as much as you like I would not dare to say I am only compete in knowledge with some of the young people coming out of these same schools. I would not dare sometimes to compete with some who have not even entered the school for I have a little grand-daughter and when somebody was talking to me about Michael Jackson and I was in a new world for in a way they were talking about the little three year old knew the name Michael

Jackson, knew the picture, knew to dance and sing some of the things he does, but I was in utter darkness.

In this age of computerism I dare not compete with those who have mathematics - only we can penetrate the quality of it properly. Opportunities are all around for us at this time and it is for us who are opinion leaders and more so political leaders to ensure that we study hard, we learn well so that we can keep up with these changes and be fit and proper to give proper direction.

My last few words are taken from a poem written by a good friend, Ivan Forrester, whom I met years ago at Bartica with no imagination that he was such an artist. I saw his collection of poems and it is from one of these I have taken this:

"Tomorrow's laurels are pinned
On the mirrored diary of today"

Finally I want to thank you all. I should want to wish you well. I know, I have no doubt that the P.N.C. piloting this country there can be nothing but success for all of us. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Comrades, before we take the adjournment I would like to take this opportunity of inviting the Press, Staff and Members of Parliament for a farewell drink for the Prime Minister who will be with us for some time.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved; "That this Assembly do now adjourn to a date to be fixed".
/ The Minister of Home Affairs /

Adjourned accordingly at 15:38 hrs.