

**THE**  
**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**  
**OFFICIAL REPORT**

[VOLUME 7]

**PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE FIRST SESSION OF THE NATIONAL  
ASSEMBLY OF THE THIRD PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE  
CONSTITUTION OF GUYANA**

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**35<sup>th</sup> Sitting**

**2 p.m.**

**Wednesday, 12<sup>th</sup> June, 1974**

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**MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**Speaker**

His Honour the Speaker, Mr. Sase Naraine, J.P.

**Members of the Government – People’s National Congress (50)**

**Prime Minister (1)**

The Hon. L.F.S. Burnham, O.E., S.C.,

Prime Minister

**(Absent – on leave)**

**Deputy Prime Minister (1)**

Dr. the Hon. P.S. Reid,

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of  
National Development and Agriculture

**(Absent)**

**Senior Ministers (7)**

The Hon. H.D. Hoyte, S.C.,

Minister of Works and Communications

\*The Hon. S.S. Ramphal, S.C.,  
Minister of Foreign Affairs and Justice

\*The Hon. H. Green,  
Minister of Co-operatives and National Mobilisation **(Absent)**

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

\*The Hon. F.E. Hope,  
Minister of Finance

\*Dr. the Hon. K.F.S. King,  
Minister of Economic Development **(Absent)**

\*The Hon. S.S. Naraine, A.A.,  
Minister of Housing

### **Ministers (6)**

The Hon. W.G. Carrington,  
Minister of Labour **(Absent)**

The Hon. Miss S.M. Field-Ridley,  
Minister of Information and Culture

The Hon. B. Ramsaroop,  
Minister of Parliamentary Affairs  
and Leader of the House

### **\*Non-elected Ministers**

\*The Hon. Miss C.L. Baird,  
Minister of Education and Social Development (Absent – on leave)

\*Dr. the Hon. O.M.R. Harper,  
Minister of Health (Absent)

\*The Hon. G.A. King,  
Minister of Trade and Consumer Protection

**Ministers of State (9)**

The Hon. M. Kasim, A.A.  
Minister of State for Agriculture

The Hon. O.E. Clarke,  
Minister of State – Regional  
(East Barbice/Corentyne)

The Hon. P. Duncan, J.P.,  
Minister of State – Regional (Rupununi) (Absent)

The Hon. C.A. Nascimento,  
Minister of State, Office of the Prime Minister

The Hon. M. Zaheeruddeen, J.P.,  
Minister of State – Regional  
(Essequibo Coast/West Demerara)

\*The Hon. C.V. Mingo,  
Minister of State for Home Affairs

**\*Non-elected Ministers**

\*The Hon. W. Haynes,  
Minister of State – Regional (Mazaruni/Potaro) **(Absent)**

\*The Hon. A. Salim,  
Minister of State – Regional  
(East Demerara/West Coast Berbice) **(Absent)**

\*The Hon. F.U.A. Carmichael,  
Minister of State – Regional (North West) **(Absent)**

### **Parliamentary Secretaries (8)**

Mr. J.R. Thomas,  
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Housing

Mr. C.E. Wrights, J.P.  
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Works and Communications

Miss M.N. Ackman,  
Parliamentary Secretary, Office of the  
Prime Minister, and Government Chief Whip

Mr. E.L. Ambrose,  
Parliamentary Secretary, (Agriculture),  
Ministry of National Development and Agriculture

Mr. K.B. Bancroft,  
Parliamentary Secretary (Hinterland),  
Ministry of National Development and Agriculture **(Absent)**

### **\*Non-elected Ministers**

Mr. S. Prashad,  
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of  
Co-operatives and National Mobilisation

**(Absent)**

Mr. J.P. Chowritmootoo,  
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Education

Mr. R.H.O. Corbin,  
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of  
Co-operatives and National Mobilisation

**Deputy Speaker (1)**

Mr. R. C. Van Sluytman, Deputy Speaker

**Other Members (17)**

Mr. J.N. Aaron

Mrs. L.N. Branco

**(Absent – on leave)**

Mr. M. Corrica

Mr. E.H.A. Fowler

Miss J. Gill

Mr. W. Hussain

Miss S. Jaiserrisingh

Mr. K.M.E. Jones

Mr. M. Nissar

Dr. L.E. Ramsahoye

Mr. J.G. Ramson

Mr. P.A. Rayman

**(Absent)**

Mr. E.M. Stoby, J.P.

Mr. S.H. Sukhu, M.S., J.P.,

Mr. C. Sukul, J.P.

Mr. H.A. Taylor

Mrs. L.E. Willems

## **Members of the Opposition**

### **Liberatory Party (2)**

Mr. M.F. Singh, Leader of the Opposition

Mrs. E. DaSilva

## **OFFICERS**

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

Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly – Mr. M.B. Henry, AMBIM.

12.6.71  
2.10 p.m.

National Assembly

2.10 – 2.15 p.m.

## PRAYERS

### ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

#### Leave to Members

**The Speaker:** Leave has been granted to the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Member Mrs. Branco for today's sitting and to the hon. Member Miss Baird to the 25<sup>th</sup> June, 1974.

### PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

#### Private Bill

#### People's Temple of the Disciples of Christ Church

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member Mr. Fowler.

**Mr. Fowler:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move this Petition on behalf of Mr. Eugene B. Chaiken and Mr. Archied J. Ijames, both of 33B, Barrack Street, Kingston, Georgetown, seeking to have introduced in the Assembly, a Private Bill to incorporate the People's Temple of the Disciples of Christ Church.

**The Speaker:** The Clerk will read the Peititon.

The Clerk read the Peititon as follows:

“To: His honour the Speaker  
and honourable Members of the Assembly

**P E T I T I O N**

The humble Petition of Eugene B. Chaiken and Archie J. Ijames both of 33B, Barack Street, Kingston, Georgetown, in the county of Demerara, respectfully shows:

1. That your Petitioners are the duly constituted attorneys and representatives in the Republic of Guyana of the people's Temple of the Disciples of Christ, a church duly incorporated and registered under and in accordance with the laws of the State of California, United States of America.
2. That the People's Temple of the Disciples of Christ is incorporated in the State of California aforesaid, as a non-profit corporation, and its principal and only object is to further the Kingdom of God by spreading the word.
3. The People's Temple of the Disciples of Christ has a total membership of over ten thousand (10,000) persons who believe in and accept the authority of the New Testament and recognise Jesus Christ as their only Head.
4. That the Objects of the Bill are inter alia to incorporate the People's Temple of the Disciples of Christ Church in Guyana, with a right to determine its own affairs through or by a Board of Directors, to acquire and dispose of property and to provide for other matters relevant to the administration of the said church.
5. The philosophy of the People's Temple of the Disciples of Christ is that Christianity must be practiced in a real and practical manner as was intended by Jesus Christ. The members of the Church live in communities which are self-sufficient and in which they feed and house themselves by their own communal and cooperative efforts, in such activities as farming, fishing, carpentry etc.



12.6.71

National Assembly

2.10 – 2.15 p.m.

6. That your Petitioners are desirous of establishing and incorporating a Branch of the said Church in in the Republic of Guyana in terms of the bill here to attached and marked “A” and intituled People’s Temple of the Disciples of Church of Christ Church (Incorporation) Bill.

7. That your Petitioners humbly request that the Honourable Members of the National Assembly be pleased to permit the introduction of the Bill and to enact the same.

Wherefore your Petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.

Eugene B. Chaiken,  
Petitioner.

Archie J. Ijames,  
Petitioner.

Dated the 19<sup>th</sup> day of March, 1974.”

2.15 p.m.

**The Speaker:** In accordance with article 57 (4) I will now put the question that he Promoters be allowed to proceed.

*Question –*

“That the Promoters be allowed to proceed with the Bill”.

*put, and agreed to.*

12.6.71

National Assembly

2.15 – 2.25 p.m.

**The Speaker:** The Promoters may proceed accordingly.

### **PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS**

The following Papers were laid:

Annual Report of the Guyana Police Force by the Commissioner of Police for the year 1972. [**Minister of State for Home Affairs on behalf of the Prime Minister**]

### **INTRODUCTION OF BILLS – FIRST READING**

The following Bills were introduced and read the First time:

(1) Tax (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 1974, Bill No. 16/1974, published on 11.6.74.

**[The Minister of Finance]**

(2) Cane Farmers Rehabilitation Fund Bill 1974, Bill No. 17/1974, published on 20.6.74.

(3) National Cane Farming Committee (Amendment) Bill 1974, Bill No. 18/1974, published on 10.6.74. [**The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House on behalf of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Development and Agriculture**]

**PUBLIC BUSINESS****MOTION****APPROVAL OF THE COMMONWEALTH CITIZENSHIP ORDER 1974 (NO. 63)**

“Be it resolved that this National Assembly in terms of section 15 of the Guyana Citizenship Act, Chapter 14:01, approve the Commonwealth Citizenship Order 1974 (No. 63), which was made on the 13<sup>th</sup> of May, 1974, and published in the Gazette on the 18<sup>th</sup> May, 1974,”

**[The Prime Minister]**

**The Minister of Foreign Affairs and Justice on behalf of the Prime Minister (Mr. Ramphal):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to move the Motion standing in the name of the hon. Prime Minister. It is a Motion for the approval of the Commonwealth Citizenship Order 1974, No. 63 of 1974.

Hon. Members will be aware that the Constitution assigns a special status to person who are Commonwealth citizens. The Constitution itself, and the Citizenship Act that was enacted in 1967 in pursuance of the constitutional provisions, identifies those person who are citizens of the Commonwealth, and identifies them by reference to the countries which are members of the Commonwealth.

Since the promulgation of the constitution in 1966 the Commonwealth has of course, grown and, indeed, between the time when the Constitution was promulgated and the time when the citizenship Act itself was passed new commonwealth countries had been added for example, Botswana and Lesotho and, indeed, in the Caribbean our own neighbouring country of Barbados.

It is necessary, therefore, from time to time to add to the list of countries that have become members of the Commonwealth through becoming independent and the procedure established under the Citizenship Act require an affirmative Resolution of this House for the purpose of adding to the Schedule to the Act the names of these new Commonwealth countries. Now, within recent times, to the existing Schedule it is necessary for us to add the new member states of Swaziland, Bangladesh, Western Samoa, the Bahamas, and Grenada. The purpose of this is to do just that, to add these new Commonwealth Members States to the list of Commonwealth countries set out in the Schedule to the Act.

I therefore, with some confidence, commend to the House this Order which is designed to have that affect of enlarging the membership of Commonwealth States and the concept and status of Commonwealth citizenship.

*Question proposed.*

**The Speaker:** Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Singh):** Mr. Speaker, I do heartily agree with and endorse the remarks made by my hon. and learned Friend, that this is merely a routine matter of bringing up to date the list of countries to be regarded as Commonwealth countries whose citizens would then be entitled under our Constitution to special treatment afforded to Commonwealth citizens under Chapter 3 of our Constitution and under the enabling law, the Guyana Citizenship Act.

We certainly heartily endorse this and agree that Commonwealth citizens should be given such preferential treatment. But I should like to go a step further and I should like to take this opportunity of asking the hon. Minister what is the position in respect of the Commonwealth Caribbean and, particularly, travel between these territories.

We all have seen the recent trends towards closer Caribbean integration we are all very happy about this. First we have seen CARIFTA, then CARICOM and then we have seen further developments. But yet travel between Guyana and the Caribbean territories is still subject to the same restrictions as international travels, for example, you must have the same valid passport or international travel document before you can travel even between the Caribbean territories. There are no special arrangements at all.

In fact, the position same time ago was that citizens of the United States could have come down here with only ordinary identification. But, as I understand it, the present position is that travel between Guyana and the Caribbean territories is subject to the same restrictions as international travel. Surely after having had CARIFTA and CARICOM, and with Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica participating jointly in the smelters to be set up in Trinidad and in Guyana I would have brought that the time had come – in fact there are some who would say that the time had arrived a long time ago – to give particular attention to this question of movement between Caribbean territories including Guyana. Surely we have reached the stage where we should cut out all the strict formalities in respect of travel between Guyana and the Caribbean territories.

**2.25 p.m.**

I am wondering whether I could, with your leave, Mr. Speaker, take this opportunity of asking the hon. Minister what has been done in this direction. Could he give us some information as to what is being done towards the question of travel between Guyana and the Caribbean territories in view of all the recent trends and developments in closer association between these territories?

[Mr. Singh continued]

**The Speaker:** hon. Minister.

**Mr. Ramphal:** Mr. Speaker, I am deeply moved that my hon. and learned Colleague who leads the Opposition espouses sentiment and causes that have long represented the settled policy of this Government. The concept of freedom of movement – indeed, of mobility in the Caribbean – has long been a major plan of our concept of Caribbean economic integration – indeed of integration of the Commonwealth – indeed of integration of the Commonwealth countries of the region at all levels.

It was the Government of Guyana that took the initiative, over a year ago, in raising the question of a simplification of the travel procedures for West Indian citizens within the West Indies. As a result of proposals submitted to the last Heads of Government Conference by Guyana, a meeting of Ministers of Home Affairs of the Commonwealth Caribbean Countries was held some months ago at which, assisted by immigration experts from the region, a scheme for simplification of travel and travel documents was worked out. That scheme has been under consideration by the Governments of the region in the months since then and I am glad to say that it is an item for consideration by the forthcoming Commonwealth Caribbean Heads of Government Conference which is to be held in St. Lucia in just over a month from now.

I would hope that at that Conference the proposals by the Government of Guyana and the recommendations by the meeting of Ministers of Home Affairs will be adopted and the scheme that we have long fought for will be put into operation. It will be a great satisfaction to know when that happens that we have with us the Opposition in the Guyana Parliament cheering our successes.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

*Motion carried.*

**INCREASE IN LIMIT OF CONTINGENCIES FUND**

Whereas in accordance with Article 113(1) of the Constitution of Guyana (Chapter 1:01 of the Laws of Guyana) Parliament may have make provision for the establishment of a Contingencies Fund and for authorizing the Minister responsible for finance to make advances from that Fund if he is satisfied that there is an urgent and unforeseen need for expenditure for which no other provision exists;

And Whereas in accordance with section 25(1) of the Financial Administration and Audit Act (Chapter 73:01) the Minister responsible for finance may establish the Contingencies Fund by issues from the Consolidated Fund not exceeding in the aggregate five hundred thousand dollars for such greater sum as the National Assembly may approve;

And Whereas by Resolution No. XVI dated 25<sup>th</sup> August, 1970, the National Assembly approved of the limit of the fund being increased to the amount of two million dollars;

And Whereas it is now more appropriate to increase the limit of the Fund to cater for increased unforeseen expenditure which may have to be incurred by the Government in the carrying on of the business of the Government:

Be it Resolved:

That this National Assembly approve that the Minister responsible for finance may establish the Contingencies Fund by issues from the Consolidated Fund not exceeding in the aggregate an amount equivalent to two per cent of the estimated annual expenditure of the last preceding financial year as shown in the annual estimates of revenues and expenditure approved by the National Assembly with respect to that year.

**[The Minister of Finance]**

**The Minister of Finance** (Mr. Hope): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the Motion standing in my name: the Motion really seeks to bring about a change in the system of establishing the level of the Contingencies Fund. The Contingencies Fund, as Members would recall, is provided for in the Constitution as well as in the Financial Administration and Audit Ordinance. As a matter of fact, the Constitution expressed the purpose of the Contingencies Fund as a Fund to meet unexpected, unforeseen and urgent expenditures for which no provision had previously been made in the current year's estimate.

The fund was originally placed at \$½ million dollars at a time when the level of Government activity was relatively low and, therefore, it was probably adequate at that time. But as the years passed by it became quite clear that the level of half a million dollars was inadequate to meet unforeseen and necessary expenditures for which no provision had been made. By a Resolution in 1970 Parliament approved an increase of that Fund to \$2 million.

At that time the total Government expenditure, both current and capital, amounted to less than \$200 million. Since then, of course, the provisions for Government expenditures have increased. In fact, the provision for this year, both on current and capital, is just under \$400 million. Bearing in mind the Development Programme, as planned, it is quite clear that as the years go forward the level of Government expenditure will increase.

The Contingencies Fund obviously has direct relationship with the level of Government activity. Government provisions in the estimates are a direct financial reflection of those activities and we feel, therefore, that there must be a direct relationship between the level of the Fund and the level of Government expenditures. What we propose to do, as the Motion indicates, is to establish a percentage relationship between the Fund and the level of Government expenditures rather than fixing it as a finite sum which cannot be changed unless there is a specific Motion of this kind.



Therefore, we are seeking in this Motion Parliament's approval that the system of fixing the Fund should be changed from a fixed amount to a percentage of the preceding year's estimates. This, as I said, would facilitate Government's business at a time when the volume and variety of Government's business and activity is expanding and is certainly likely to expand in the next year or two.

I would like to commend this Motion to the house to have the level of the Contingencies Fund fixed in a way that will permit variation in terms of or in consonance with the level of Government expenditures. The Motion requests that the level be fixed at two percent of the previous year's estimates of the Government's current and capital expenditures.

*Question proposed.*

**The Speaker:** Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr. M.F. Singh:** Mr. Speaker, we have a Motion before this honourable House. The hon. Minister of Finance has recommended it for favourable consideration by the House. After all the 'whereases' let us get down to the meat of the matter and look at the factual situation.

The first thing we must look at is Article 113 of the Constitution. It states:

“Parliament may make provision for the establishment of a Contingencies Fund and for authorizing the Minister responsible for Finance to make advances from that Fund if he is satisfied that there is”

And I emphasize these words –

“an urgent and unforeseen need for expenditure for which no other provision exists.”

**12.6.71**

**National Assembly**

**2.25 – 2.35 p.m.**

Clause 2 states:

“Where any advance is made from the Contingencies Fund a supplementary estimate shall, as soon as practicable, be laid before the National Assembly for the purpose of authorizing the replacement of the amount so advanced.”

**2.35 p.m.**

Clearly this is intended to be a temporary bridging device for financing expenditure not previously authorised by Parliament and it is the clear and unmistakeable words of the Constitution – the highest document of the land – which states that there must be –

“an urgent and unforeseen need for expenditure for which no other provision exists.”

It goes on to say that where any advance is made it must, as early as possible, be replaced by bringing application for supplementary provision to be approved by Parliament.

So that you advance the money for the purpose of meeting urgent and unforeseen expenditure for which there is no other provision and then, immediately thereafter, bring an application for supplementary provision. When that is passed the sum is repaid to the Contingencies Fund to bring it back to the same level to which it was before the sums were advanced.

This provision of the Constitution is not meant to cover the case where, for example, a Government department sees that its allocation in a vote would be exceeded because of the commitment of the particular Ministry and that particular Government department does nothing at all about it until the very last minute and then goes to the hon. Minister of Finance and embarrasses him by saying “Look, the vote has come to an end; unless you give us a

12.6.71

National Assembly

2.35 – 2.45 p.m.

[Mr. Singh continued]

supplementary provision, unless you make an advance out of the Contingencies Fund, work will come to a standstill.”

I appreciate the difficulty in which the Minister is placed in these circumstances and I know that this happens. Accounting officers wait until the last minute then they go to the Minister of Finance and say “Look, unless you give us an advance from the Contingencies Fund, work will come to a standstill; we have got to have the advances.” The Minister in his predicament, because of the threat that work will come to a standstill and because the work may be of a very important nature, makes an advance from the Contingencies Fund.

This provision of the Constitution is not intended to cover that sort of situation. The correct procedure is for the accounting officer, as soon as he sees that it is likely that the vote will be exhausted, to go immediately to the Minister of Finance to request supplementary provision before the vote is exhausted and then the Minister brings it to Parliament. A supplementary provision is granted, if Parliament approves, before the provision is exhausted. In that case there is no need for an advance from the Contingencies Fund.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, we have seen this in Parliament. Unfortunately, in the past, this procedure has been honoured in the breach rather than in the observance. How often in the past have we not observed in the remarks column, “Amount already advanced from the Contingencies Fund?” It is something that has recurred time and time again in Financial Papers presented to this honourable House. But again I remind the honourable House of the provisions of the Constitution if the Minister is –

“Satisfied that there is an urgent and unforeseen need for expenditure for which no other provision exists.”

What we have to do is cut out this business of applying for funds; of making advances from the Contingencies Fund to meet deficits in a vote when, in fact, the particular accounting officer should have made application for it long before.

The hon. Minister rightly pointed out that the limit of the Contingencies Fund used to be \$½ million in the days gone by. In August, 1970, this was raised to \$2 million and the question arises: Should this not be enough? When one takes into consideration the limiting words of the Constitution “\$2 million to meet urgent and unforeseen expenditure,” is not \$2 million enough to cover what is clearly limited here in the Constitution to “urgent and unforeseen expenditure?”

Now what is the Government asking for? It is asking for the Fund to be increased to two per cent of the estimated expenditure for the previous year. I am glad that the hon. Minister clarified a doubt in my mind. He said this means not only current but both current and capital expenditure. So that if we take last year, 1973, what current expenditure \$173,628,502 and capital expenditure \$145,176,013, there is a total expenditure of \$318,804,515. Two per cent of that would be \$6,376,090. What are we trying to do? We are trying to raise the present limit of \$2 million to \$6,376,090. We are trying to raise it to approximately \$6.4 million.

The suggestion is that, since there is a higher budget, the Contingencies Fund should be higher. I cannot agree with this line of reasoning. If we budget properly, if we plan and prepare our Estimates properly, then we should have almost everything in it. Of course, the budget would be higher but that higher budget would incorporate almost everything. It will be higher because we will try to see, realistically, everything that could possibly be Government expenditure for the forthcoming year and put almost everything in it. Of course, there may be some things which will come unexpectedly and will be unforeseen but with proper budgeting is it not likely that there would be a lessening of the amount of unforeseen expenditure? It is not wrong to say that because the budget is higher the unforeseen expenditure would necessarily be higher?

**12.6.71**

**National Assembly**

**2.45 – 2.55 p.m.**

**[Mr. Singh continued]**

The ordinary housewife knows this. If she budgets properly in respect of the allowance that she gets from her husband – and one presumes that she is not a working wife – there will be no need for her to go to husband at the end of the month or during the middle of the month and say “Look, I did not budget properly. This is unforeseen expenditure. I want X dollars more or X plus dollars more.”

With proper budgeting then, no matter what the level of expenditure is, unforeseen expenditure should be kept at the very, very minimum.

**2.45 p.m.**

Let us remember that when we prepare Estimates we show two things: first, what we propose to spend and, secondly, how we are going to find the money to finance that level of expenditure. So, when we are saying that we will raise the level of this Contingencies Fund which is intended to apply in respect of urgent and unforeseen expenditure, are we therefore saying that urgent and unforeseen expenditure may well be of the level of \$6.4 million based on the estimated expenditure for 1973? If that is what we are saying, then we will have to appreciate that we will have to find the additional funds to meet that additional expenditure.

We are asking for this amount to be increased. It may well be that the hon. Minister would say – I am anticipating him – that there may be savings in other areas, therefore our excess of expenditure over revenue, as projected in the 1974 Estimates, does not necessarily mean that we will touch anywhere the level of \$6.4 million which we are now being called upon to approve. That is not the point.

The Government is asking for two per cent of the 1973 expenditure. Two per cent is roughly \$6.4 million and that is what they are asking to be approved as the level of the Contingencies Fund. And let us bear in mind that this Contingencies Fund level will be

replenished every time the House is approached for supplementary provisions; so if you advance the whole of \$6.4 million and then you come to the House for supplementary provisions, immediately that supplementary provision is passed, the total amount of supplementary provisions passed will be refunded to the Contingencies Fund – if this resolution is passed – to put it back to the level of \$6.4 million approximately.

It is being said that our estimated expenditure might be well over \$6.4 million? Because, as I said, every time you bring supplementary provisions it will reimburse the Contingencies Fund.

If this is the case, a serious question arises. What then is the purpose of the Estimates in December? We spend a long time – several days, weeks, nights – debating the Estimates. What is the purpose of a debate on the Estimates if we are now seeking to raise the level of unauthorized expenditure of \$6.4 million? If it is possible that this expenditure could be exceeded – as is anticipated by the hon. Minister – by \$6.4 million, what really is the purpose of our spending days, nights, weeks debating these Estimates?

I anticipate that the hon. Minister will tell us that the energy crisis is the cause of this. He will say that when this was passed in December, 1973, we did not have the energy crisis, but, I say that if we did not have a world energy crisis, Guyana would have had to invent an energy crisis to meet the serious predicament which the Government of Guyana now faces. Why? Because of mis-mangement, because of misguided spending, because of the huge increase in the bureaucracy; and I am not talking merely as Leader of the Opposition, I am talking after the hon. Prime Minister himself. Look at page one of the Daily Chronicle of Monday June 10, 1974. The article is headed “Government to consider re-direction of Public Servants.” If one is to believe this newspaper – and I have no reason to believe that they will mis-quote their own Prime Minister – it is stated in paragraph two:

“He also said that too many offices (government) were overstaffed resulting in not enough jobs for these clerks to do.”

“Too many Government offices were overstaffed” – and he is talking about his own Government offices.

The hon. Minister obviously is in a predicament. I have always admitted that I have the utmost regard for the ability of the hon. Minister, a former civil servant, but I do say that I recognise the predicament and I humbly suggest to him that he is going about finding the answer in the wrong way. The answer is not increase the Contingencies fund. If we increase the Contingencies Fund, this will be endorsing inefficiency, the kind of things that the hon. Prime Minister talks about. It will be endorsing the type of action where accounting officers wait until the last minute and then apply for advances from the Contingencies Fund and telling the hon. Minister of Finance, “Hon. Minister, if you don’t give us an advance from the Contingencies fund, work will come to a standstill.

I know about this: I was a Minister in the Government for two years and a civil servant for eight years. I know how the system operates. I am quite acquainted with what goes on in the Civil Service and that is why I sympathise with the plight of the hon. Minister, but I say that he must not condone inefficiency. He must tell the accounting officers in no uncertain terms, “If your vote is likely to be exhausted, long before it is exhausted you must come to me and seek supplementary provisions and give me an opportunity to bring the request before Parliament for approval. You must not come to me and say, ‘Please give me an advance from the Contingencies Fund or else work will come to a standstill.’

The words of the Constitution are very clear and unambiguous. It is stated that there must be “an urgent and unforeseen need for expenditure for which no other provision exists.” The hon. Minister must not encourage expenditure not previously authorised by Parliament.

**12.6.71**

**National Assembly**

**2.55 – 3.05 p.m.**

**[Mr. M.F. Singh contd.]**

**2.55 p.m.**

The whole purpose of the legislation is to prevent expenditure which has not been previously authorised by Parliament, and the whole tenor of the legislation is that expenditure should come before Parliament for approval before advances are made by the hon. Minister from the Contingencies Fund.

The first suggestion which I have to make to the hon. Minister is to enforce rigidly the rule that as soon as it appears likely that a vote would be exhausted the accounting officer must make application promptly to Parliament for supplementary provision before the vote is exhausted.

The second recommendation I should like to make the hon. Minister is that any advances should be made before urgent and unforeseen expenditure as stated in the words of the Constitution, and when that advance is made the amount advanced should be brought promptly to Parliament for approval so that the Fund could be restored to its original limit. At the present moment it is \$2 million. The Constitution clearly states:

“Where any advance is made from the Contingencies Fund a supplementary Estimate shall, as soon as practicable, be laid before the National Assembly for the purpose of authorizing the replacement of the amount so advanced.

The hon. Minister makes an advance for urgent and unforeseen expenditure. Immediately he makes such an advance he must come to Parliament and seek covering approval.

How ridiculous would be the state of affairs, if we were now to give the hon. Minister blanket approval to advance a sum of to the extent of \$6.4 million, increasing it from \$2 million to \$6.4 million, without parliamentary approval. What it means is that he will have a ceiling of



\$6.4 million. He can go as high as \$6.4 million approximately and then, after having expended that amount, he comes to Parliament and says: “Will you please give covering approval for this?”

The point is being made that the Constitution was written a long time ago and at that time our expenditure was much smaller. Let me say this: We are dealing, not in relation to the level of expenditure, but in relation to what is urgent and unforeseen. That is the association we must make. We have at the present moment \$2 million to meet urgent and unforeseen expenditure without parliamentary approval having been given. Let us forget about trying it to the level of expenditure in any particular year. Let us limit it as the Constitution limits it.

This is the document that we have to go by, the Constitution. It says it must be limited to urgent and unforeseen need. What is urgent and unforeseen need? We now have \$2 million for urgent and unforeseen need. Surely that is enough. It is not enough that the sum of \$2 million has been set aside for urgent and unforeseen need? Are we saying that urgent and unforeseen need must go up to \$6.4 million? Remember that \$2 million is not the limit for the year. That \$2 million can be replenished at any time at all by coming to Parliament and seeking the necessary approval.

All I am saying is that it is wrong to give blanket approval for approximately \$6.4 million and then when we have spent that entire amount or very nearly that you come with one big paper and say: “Here we have spent it already, go ahead and approve it.” What are we then? We are merely a rubber stamp in that case. We are serving absolutely no useful purpose. I can understand that circumstances will arise whereby there would be urgent and unforeseen need for expenditure. But I cannot understand why urgent and unforeseen need for expenditure should extend to level of \$6.4 million.

Therefore, I recommend my two points for the consideration of the hon. Minister. We do not agree, that this Motion should be passed and the fund should be tied to the level of expenditure when, clearly, it is the intention that it should be tied to unforeseen expenditure.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Hope** (replying): Mr. Speaker, I was certainly very disappointed and sorry to hear that the Opposition does not agree with the Motion.

Sir, in 1970 when this Fund was increased for \$½ million, when there was a proposal before this House to increase the Fund from \$½ million, the very hon. Member who so vehemently criticizes the new level even more vehemently criticized the change from \$½ million to \$2 million. Yet today we hear him speak as if it there is something sacrosanct and very proper in the \$2 million. So proper, so sacrosanct is it that it must not be changed. In other words, just four years later we are hearing the same hon. Member admitting that the \$2 million was right, it was proper, it was functional: when four years ago the same hon. Member vehemently opposed the increase I venture to predict, sir, if that same hon. member is here four years hence we will hear him speak just as well in favour of this new level.

I think the difficulty of the hon. Leader of the Opposition lies largely in confusion an upper limit with actual utilization.

In fact, in 1970, when the limit was raised to \$2 million, the records will show that the limit was seldom exceeded before a supplementary provision was placed to clear the Fund. Last year circumstances did require us to come to the House on several occasions when the advances from that Fund amounted to the \$2 million limit. The point I am making, sir, is that he hon. Member obviously missed the fact that we are talking about the limit. We are not talking about actual utilization.

Secondly, the limit will stay over a long time. We would like the limit to be more durable than four years. That is why we have placed it in terms of a percentage so that we do not have to come to the House at a later stage to have it increased again. It does not say that these limits will at all be reached in this year or next year for that matter.

Thirdly, sir, the hon. Member obviously confuses advances from the Contingencies Fund with over expenditure. The expenditures which will be met from advances from the Fund will obviously come to the House and form part of a supplementary schedule. It does not represent any extra expenditure above and beyond what will normally have been approved by the supplementary schedule. I think therefore he should realize that what the government is aiming at is really only to put a proper limit which can be durable.

Fourthly, sir, the fact of the limit does not indicate in any way that the advances will be made for any other purposes than was contemplated in the Constitution. Circumstances do occur. I am not sure whether the Leader of the Opposition feels that he himself can predict all the unforeseen. The purpose of this limit is really to provide against the eventuality of something occurring which is unforeseen, which is urgent, which is necessary, and we have always approved expenditures along these lines.

The hon. Member speaks about the Permanent Secretaries and accounting officers seeking advances from the Contingencies Fund merely to satisfy a vote which is about to be exceeded. That was obviously the hon. member's own experience as a Minister but he should not assume that those conditions still persist.

**3.05 p.m.**

The fact that we have said, and the hon. Prime Minister has said, that he has recognised areas where there can be increased efficiencies is not to be regarded as an indication that the Fund will be improperly used. I think the hon. Member should recognise that it is a good thing that the Government can recognise where problems are arising, where there is need for efficiency and where there can be economies. It is because we recognise the need for economies that the hon. member was able to quote from the newspaper as he did a moment ago.

[Mr. Hope continued]

He must understand that the same Government which recognises the need for economies, which is proposing measures to achieve those economies, is not going to be the Government which will, in almost the same breath, propose to the House a measure designed to enable inappropriate or excess expenditures. We feel that it is entirely a reasonable position for a Government which is involved as this Government is in development of the whole country, a Government which is responsive to the needs of the people and will not sit by and see disaster or any difficulties arise and say, "This cannot be done because Parliament has not voted expenditure". It is for this reason we have to provide the means by which we can respond quickly to unforeseen events which require expenditure.

I think it is in this light that the hon. Leader of the Opposition should view the request. We have had one example in, say, the multilateral schools where, because the weather this year has been very good so far, work proceeded much faster than one had anticipated in the Estimates. Now, does the hon. Leader of the Opposition say that since the weather was good that work should not be proceeded with simply because the funds were likely to be exhausted and there was an inadequate amount on the Estimates?

It is for circumstances like these where the Government needs to be responsive to changing situation, to developing situation that the measure seeks to cater. We do not have a static programme, either current or capital; it is dynamic; it must be modified as events during the year require modification and all these events are not always foreseen. Therefore, the thrust of the Motion is really to seek a revision of the limit. But the hon. member, I repeat, is confusing an upper limit with actual utilization. I may assure him that this is not necessarily the case. There is no nexus between actual utilization, in the first year at least, with actual limits. I can also assure the hon. member – as it has always been our practice – that as soon as practicable after an advance has been made from the Contingencies Fund, the request will be made to Parliament to approve that expenditure.

I note another form of confusion in the hon. Member's presentation. Where the Constitution did say, "as soon as practicable" the hon. Member interpreted that to mean "immediately". I would assume that these are words he himself used. Perhaps he did not realize what he was saying. He was reading from the Constitution "as soon as practicable" but elaborated on those words by saying "immediately". If the Constitution writers intended it to be "immediately" they would have used the word "immediately". But "as soon as practicable" after the advances are made, the relevant paper will be brought to the House for approval. I can assure the hon. Member that this will be done.

I can also assure the hon. Member that we will use advances from the contingencies Fund only for purposes which are in fact urgent and unforeseen; but he must recognise that the government will not stand by and see things to be done and say they cannot be done merely because Parliament has not yet met to approve the expenditure. It will use the Contingencies Fund for those urgent, unforeseen circumstances to assist the development of the country and to promote the well-being of its people.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

*Motion carried.*

**The Speaker:** Hon. Leader of the House.

**12.6.71**

**National Assembly**

**3.05 – 3.13 p.m.**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House (Mr. Ramsaroop):**  
Your Honour, permit me to move the Adjournment of this Honourable House to a date to be fixed.

**Adjournment accordingly at 3.13 p.m.**

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