

National Assembly Debates

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2006-2007) OF THE NINTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN Part I of II

37th Sitting

14:24H

Friday 14 December 20

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (71)

Speaker (1)

The Hon Hari N Ramkarran SC, MP - (AOL)

Speaker of the National Assembly

Members of the Government (42)

People's Progressive Party/Civic (41)

The United Force (1)

The Hon Samuel A A Hinds MP

(R# 10 - U Demerara/U Berbice)

Prime Minister and Minister of Public Works and Communications

The Hon Clement J Rohee MP

Minister of Home Affairs

The Hon Shaik K Z Baksh MP - (AOL)

Minister of Education

The Hon Dr Henry B Jeffrey MP

Minister of Foreign Trade and International Cooperation

The Hon Dr Leslie S Ramsammy MP

(R# 6 - E Berbice/Corentyne)

Minister of Health

The Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett MP - (Absent)

(R# 9 - U Takutu/U Esseq)

Minister of Amerindian Affairs

*The Hon Dr Ashni Singh MP

Minister of Finance

*The Hon S Rudolph Insanally OR, CCH, MP

Minister of Foreign Affairs

The Hon Harry Narine Nawbatt MP

Minister of Housing and Water

The Hon Robert M Persaud MP - (AOL)

(R# 6 - E Berbice/Corentyne)

Minister of Agriculture

The Hon Dr Jennifer R A Westford MP - (AOL)

(R#7 - Cuyuni/Mazaruni)

Minister of the Public Service

The Hon Kellawan Lall MP

Minister of Local Government and Regional Development

*The Hon Doodnauth Singh SC, MP

Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs

The Hon Dr Frank C S Anthony MP

Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport

The Hon B H Robeson Benn MP

Minister of Transport and Hydraulics

**The Hon Manzoor Nadir MP

Minister of Labour

The Hon Priya D Manickchand MP - (AOL)

(R# 5 - Mahaica/Berbice)

Minister of Human Services and Social Security

The Hon Dr Desrey Fox MP - (AOL)

Minister in the Ministry of Education

The Hon Bheri S Ramsaran MD, MP

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Minister in the Ministry of Health

*Non-elected Minister **Elected Member from TUF

The Hon Jennifer I Webster MP

Minister in the Ministry of Finance

The Hon Manniram Prashad MP

Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce

Mr Donald Ramotar MP

The Hon Gail Teixeira MP

Mr Harripersaud Nokta MP

Mrs Indranie Chandarpal MP

Ms Bibi S Shadick MP

(R# 3 – Essequibo Is/W Demerara)

Mr Mohamed Irfaan Ali MP

Mr Albert Atkinson JP, MP

(R# 8 - Potaro/Siparuni)

Mr Komal Chand CCH, JP, MP - (AOL)

(R# 3 - Essequibo Is/W Demerara)

Mr Bernard C DeSantos SC, MP - (AOL)

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Mrs Shirley V Edwards JP, MP

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Mr Mohamed F Khan JP, MP

(R# 2 - Pomeroon/Supenaam)

Mr Odinga N Lumumba MP - (AOL)

Mr Moses V Nagamootoo JP, MP

Mr Mohabir A Nandlall MP

Mr Neendkumar JP, MP

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

*** Mr Steve P Ninvalle MP

Parliamentary Secretary

Mr Parmanand P Persaud JP, MP

(R# 2 - Pomeroon/Supenaam)

Mrs Philomena Sahoye-Shury CCH, JP, MP - (Absent)

Parliamentary Secretary

***Non-elected Member

***Mrs Pauline R Sukhai MP

Parliamentary Secretary

Mr Dharamkumar Seeraj MP

Mr Norman A Whittaker MP

(R# 1 - Barima/Waini)

Members of the Opposition (28)

(i) People's National Congress Reform 1-Guyana (22)

Mr Robert HO Corbin

Leader of the Opposition

Mr Winston S Murray CCH, MP

Mrs Clarissa S Riehl MP

Deputy Speaker, performing duties of Speaker of the Nat. Assembly

Mr E Lance Carberry MP - (AOL)

Chief Whip

Mrs. Deborah J. Backer MP

Mr Anthony Vieira

Mr Basil Williams MP

Dr George A Norton MP

Mrs Volda A Lawrence MP

Mr Keith Scott MP

Miss Amna Ally MP - (Absent)

Mr James K McAllister MP - (AOL)

Mr Dave Danny MP

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Mr Aubrey C Norton MP

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Mr Ernest B Elliot MP

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Miss Judith David-Blair MP

NAD 14 DECEMBER 2007

(R# 7 - Cuyuni/Mazaruni)

Mr Mervyn Williams MP

(Re# 3 - Essequibo Is/W Demerara)

Ms Africo Selman MP

Dr John Austin MP

(R# 6 - East Berbice/Corentyne)

Ms Jennifer Wade MP

(R# 5 - Mahaica/Berbice)

Ms Vanessa Kissoon MP

(R# 10 - U Demerara/U Berbice)

Mr Desmond Fernandes MP

(Region No 1 – Barima/Waini)

(ii) Alliance For Change (5)

Mr Raphael G Trotman MP

Mr Khemraj Ramjattan MP

Mrs Sheila VA Holder MP

Ms Latchmin B Punalall MP

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Mr David Patterson MP - *(Absent)*

(iii) Guyana Action Party/Rise Organise and Rebuild (1)

Mr Everall N Franklin MP

OFFICERS

Mr Sherlock E Isaacs

Clerk of the National Assembly

Mrs Lilawatie Coonjah

Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly

PRAYERS

[The Clerk reads the Prayers]

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Honourable Members, I apologise for the late start of the National Assembly today. It was due to unforeseen mechanical circumstances.

I must say that Mr Corbin has asked to be excused for a while; he will be late as well

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

By the Speaker of the National Assembly:

Manual of Rules of Procedure, Practices and Conventions used by Parliamentarians in the conduct of the Business of the National Assembly

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES

By the Speaker of the National Assembly (Chairman of the Standing Orders Committee)

Report of the Standing Orders Committee

ORAL QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Mrs Deborah J Backer: Mr Speaker, I submitted an oral question.

The Speaker: We are coming to you Mrs Backer.

Mrs Deborah J Backer: I am sorry.

The Speaker: We just missed you Mrs Backer, but I will make a step backwards

Mrs Deborah J Backer: I stand to ask the oral question in my name, namely:

Could the Hon Minister of Home Affairs inform this National Assembly which other CARICOM countries have enacted legislation granting CARICOM Nationals permission to enter and remain in their country for a period of six (6) months?

The Speaker: Six weeks or months?

Mrs Deborah J Backer: Months.

The Speaker: The Hon Minister of Home Affairs

Hon Clement J Rohee: I am not aware of any other CARICOM country which has enacted such legislation, Mr Speaker.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

The Speaker: Honourable Members, there are two questions on the Order Paper for written and they have been circulation in accordance with the Standing Orders.

1. HOSTING CARIFESTA X

Member Asking: Mr Neendkumar MP

Minister Answering: The Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport

Now that Guyana is hosting CARIFESTA X, could the Minister inform this House on the plans of the Government of Guyana and the status of preparations for the largest Cultural Festival in the Region?

**Written Reply submitted by the Minister of Culture,
Youth and Sport:**

Since the announcement by His Excellency President Bharrat Jagdeo that Guyana would be hosting CARIFESTA X, significant progress has been made. There were several meetings with the CARICOM Secretariat to clarify roles and responsibilities. On 12 October 2007 at the COSHOD Meeting of Cultural Ministers in Guyana, the Government unveiled its plans and preparation for CARIFESTA X.

The organisational structure for CARIFESTA X includes a prime ministerial oversight committee CARIFESTA Board with eighteen Sub-Committees and a CARIFESTA Secretariat. The Secretariat is operational and is located at 91 Middle Street, South Cummingsburg, Georgetown. Contact numbers are 225-9840, 225-9845, 225-9626 and fax 225-4947.

E-mail carifesta10guyana@gmail.com. Website is at www.carifesta.net.

We will be hosting the following activities during CARIFESTA X; these are -

- (i) Performing Arts - Music, Dance and Drama
- (ii) Literary Arts - Book Fair, Poetry and Prose
- (iii) Visual Arts - Film Festival, Art Exhibition
- (iv) Culinary Arts
- (v) Philatelic Arts
- (vi) Festival Arts - Country specific celebrations
- (vii) Symposia on various aspects of culture and art
- (viii) Super Concerts
- (ix) Community Festivals
- (x) Fashion Focus
- (xi) Grand Cultural Market and Trade Fair
- (xii) Activities of the Indigenous Peoples

- (xiii) CARIFESTA Calypso and Chutney Competitions;
- (xiv) Pan Music and
- (xv) Children/Youth Forum.

Already countries from Latin America and the Caribbean have been invited to participate. The response so far has been favourable, with sixteen countries already indicating their participation. CARIFESTA chapters have also been established in the United States, Canada and the UK. These Chapters will be bringing down contingents to perform during CARIFESTA and would also encourage friends and family to come to Guyana during the period. Many international agencies and organisations dealing with culture and cultural industries have also been invited to participate. Several cultural icons from the Caribbean would be invited to take part in the festival.

Some of the venues that have been identified for CARIFESTA activities are:

- The Umana Yana
- The National Cultural Centre
- The Theatre Guild
- The National Conference Centre
- The National Park
- The National Exhibition Site
- The Guyana National Stadium at Providence
- The Various Museums
- The National Library
- The Castellani House
- The Cliff Anderson Sports Hall
- The National Gymnasium
- The University of Guyana
- The Parade Ground
- The Botanical Gardens and
- The Seawall band stand, among others.

At the Regional level, the regions are in the process of identifying sites within communities for community festival. All site appraisals would be completed by January 2008 and the works needed to improve the venues will proceed shortly thereafter. A series of

capacity building workshops is planned for the first quarter in 2008, to ensure that Guyana will have the technical skills required to host the various shows.

Work would commence in January 2008 on various cultural pieces that Guyana would showcase during CARIFESTA. These would include theatrical pieces, dances, poetry, fashion and rehearsals for the opening and closing ceremonies. During CARIFESTA, the Government will launch a series of books called the Guyana Classics. In the lead up to CARIFESTA a lot of work would be done with Steel Band and the intention is to have the National Steel Band for CARIFESTA X.

The magnitude of CARIFESTA X requires the participation of all Guyanese. Several meetings have been held with various stakeholder groups including hoteliers, airliners, entertainment promoters, Private Sector Commission, regional officials, et cetera, to get them involved in CARIFESTA X. The response

has been great. If you would like to get involved please contact the Secretariat.

2. PRESIDENT'S YOUTH AWARD PROGRAMME

**Member Asking: Mr Steve Ninvalle, MP,
Parliamentary Secretary**

**Minister Answering: The Minister of Culture,
Youth and Sport**

Could the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport state which regions and communities have benefited from the President's Youth Award, Republic of Guyana programme since its inception to now?

**Written reply submitted by the Minister of Culture
Youth and Sport:**

The President Youth Award, Republic of Guyana was initiated by President Janet Jagan on the 3 October 1998. This programme is part of the Duke of Edinburgh Global Award Programme and is administered by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport.

It is opened to all young people from the age of 14 to 25.

Participation is in the following areas:

- (i) Services - to learn to give useful service to others;
- (ii) Expedition - to encourage the spirit of adventure and discovery;
- (iii) Skills - to encourage the development of personal interest and practical skills;

(iv) Physical Education - to encourage participation in physical recreation and improvement of performance.

There are three levels of the Award:

- (i) Bronze - person participating for this award must be at least 14 years of age and must participate for six months;
- (ii) Silver - participants must be at least 15 years of age and must participate for one year;
- (iii) Gold - participants must be at least 16 years of age and must partake for eighteen months during which they will participate in Residential Projects which involve participant's participation in another region.

Since the inception 7152 persons have enrolled in this programme and to date 4,937 have graduated with

gold, silver and bronze (see Appendix for Table I). Over the last two years it has been evident that this programme is growing rapidly. In 2006, 816 persons graduated and in 2007, 1,715 persons graduated (Table I).

In 2008, the programme would expand to Regions 8 and 9. Unit leaders have already been trained to implement programme in these two regions.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS INCLUDING POLICY STATEMENTS

Venezuela incursion into Guyana's Territory

The Speaker: The Hon Minister of Foreign Affairs

, 11 December, a five-person Venezuelan delegation led by the Minister responsible for Latin America and the Caribbean visited Guyana to deliver an official reply to our own note of protest at the incursion.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is now in the process of analysing this response to determine whether it fully addresses and satisfies all our concerns. At the conclusion of this process a decision will be taken on any necessary follow-up action.

On arriving in Guyana the delegation paid a courtesy call on the President. The Minister conveyed to the President the greetings and good wishes of President Chavez and expressed regrets that the incident took place and assured the President that it was not Venezuela's policy to condone or to instigate such actions towards *a sister nation*.

Thereafter, at the meeting which was held at our Ministry, the Minister echoed these are the sentiments of friendship and goodwill for Guyana. He explained that the incident may have been an un-intended consequence of an exercise which had been undertaken by the Venezuelan Government

to remove a number of illegal miners, many of them Brazilian, Guyanese and Venezuelan, who were operating in the riverain areas and causing serious damage to the environment. I was shown some photographs of this.

After some discussions, it was agreed by both sides that a working group would be created in early January 2008 to recommend measures and mechanisms to obviate hopefully the recurrence of such incidents. Thereafter a Memorandum of Understanding could be signed with the concurrence of both governments establishing forms of cooperation to maintain security and stability in the border areas without prejudice of course to any existing agreements that we have for managing the controversy.

The two sides also agreed to resuscitate at the earliest opportunity the good officer, procedure of the UN Secretary General, which had been suspended as a result of the death of Mr Oliver Jackman. It was felt that this continues to be a useful instrument in our common search for a peaceful solution to the controversy. Our countries will now consult with a view to nominating a suitable replacement for Mr Jackman.

It was also agreed that another instrument which had been in abeyance the High Level Bilateral Commission for Cooperation will be revived and will be held in March next year to discuss concrete programmes of cooperation and hopefully to plan for a visit by President Jagdeo who has been invited by President Chavez some time ago. That will provide a high level of dialogue as the Minister said for resolving some of these critical issues.

Mr Speaker, I should finally let you know that I had a similar briefing with representatives of all the parties present in this Assembly and I provided some intermediate details, which I hope will remain in confidence. I stand ready of course to provide Members with developments as they occur and as appropriate. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you very much Honourable Minister

PUBLIC BUSINESS

(i) GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Honourable Members, we can now proceed with the next Item on the Order Paper ...

BILLS - Second Readings

**1. LOCAL AUTHORITIES (ELECTIONS)
(AMENDMENT) BILL - Bill No. 26/2007
published on 2007-12-05**

*A Bill intituled, an Act to amend
the Local Authorities (Elections)
Act to provide for the
postponement of elections of
councillors of local democratic
organs*

The Honourable Minister of Local Government and Regional
Development

Hon Kellawan Lall: Mr Speaker, this is a very simple piece of legislation being considered and that is to postpone the Local Government Elections until December next year. When the elections were postponed the last time, it was hoped that within a year's time we would have had things in place to have these elections. However, what transpired since then has occasioned yet another postponement and that is the preparation of a new voters' list. I think Members are aware that there have been some discussions between the major political parties in the country as to the need for a new voters' list. There has been a long drawn out discussion on this matter. Eventually it was agreed that we are going to have a new house-to-house registration to prepare a new voters' roll before we could have new elections. We had hoped on the government's side that we could have reached an agreement whereby we could have postponed the new registration after the holding of local government elections, because these elections are really needed on the ground. If you see from my perspective what is going on from a

day-to-day basis in the NDCs;, in the RDCs - but not so much the RDCs - but the municipalities, once can see the need for some sort of drastic changes in those statutory bodies. As you know, we have had to set up many IMCs and even some of these IMCs are floundering, so we really do need renewal. It is my hope that we are going to do everything possible to see to it that we have these elections before December next year and we would have that much needed renewal down on the ground.

I must report, however, that in spite of the fact that we have not had elections for quite a number of years, quite a number of activities have been going on in the various neighbourhoods. As I said, many of the councils have not been functioning, but those that are there at the moment, they are trying their best and outside of Georgetown, this year for instance, the NDCs and the municipalities will be collecting and spending some \$500 million, I think that is outside of the government's subvention, which is geared mainly for capital works within the NDCs and the municipalities.

I think that a very important aspect of local government is the reform process that is taking place - the discussion. I think it was generally agreed upon those local government elections,

whenever they are going to be held, it is going to be done within the new constitutional and legislative framework. I think the last report I heard is that the taskforce is making very good progress. They have been meeting very regularly. I understand there are some new members representing some of the political parties; there is fresh blood. I understand things are going well. Work has been expedited on the Local Authorities (Amendment) Bill, the Fiscal Transfer Bill, the Fiscal Transfers Regulations, the Local Government (Amendment) Bill and the Local Government Commission Bill. I understand that the Elections Bill is almost completed and discussions are to commence very soon on the Fiscal Transfers Bill and the Regulations.

I am also being briefed that the Municipal and District Council Bill 2006 which was passed and enacted has to be re-tabled because it was not assented to by His Excellency and that is going to be done early.

In addition, I am being advised by the Co-Chairman, Mr Collymore that they have been able to source some funding through the USAID in providing legal consultants to assist with the drafting of legislation and also the provision of some consultancies to handle what would be a very delicate public

awareness campaign, because as you know, the new legal and election framework for the upcoming local government elections will be new and there will be need for us to do an intensive PR campaign to alert and to sensitise the people in the various neighbourhoods as to what their new roles would be as electorate and so forth. I think most of the Members have been briefed on those aspects of what we are talking about in terms of the electoral process and procedures in the local government reform process.

Finally, Mr Speaker, I want to say that I would like to see if you can have some discussions with the opposition and to explore the possibility of us having elections for Mayors, because there is a possibility of having these elections in the six municipalities. I know that the opposition in the past has raised this issue and there has not been any kind of agreement, but if they so desire, we can probably enter into some discussions and see if at least at the municipal level we can have some kind of movement and some kind of renewal and energy into some of these municipalities. So I am inviting the opposition, if you can perhaps explore that possibility in the next few weeks or perhaps early in the year.

[Interruption: ‘And Norton.’ “Norton, I suppose is still part of the opposition”]

Mr Speaker, with those words I wish to put to the House this Bill to postpone the local government elections until on or before 1 December next year. Thank you. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Member Mr Keith Scott

Mr Keith Scott: Mr Speaker, Comrades all, I rise to speak on behalf of the People's National Congress Reform-One Guyana on Bill No. 26/2007 - Local Authorities Elections (Amendment) Bill that seeks the postpone once again of these elections.

If I were to close my eyes now, listening to the Minister just regurgitating what transpired last year in this Hansard, I would surely believe I am still hearing the same set of promises that he made. Among them the promise of:

- fiscal transfers;
- accession of foreign currencies from donor agencies to encompass the bringing about of the local government elections;

also promises, promises and promises and yet at the same time, we have been saddled inevitably with postponement after postponement.

I wonder what that clause really meant. When I looked at this Bill - Clause 1 which said that we want the Bill to be effective from 1 November 2007? I am just curious and I would like the Minister to tell me what is the reason for the retroactivity of the Bill here now in December 2007.

Although the Minister in December 2006 had promised that he will do everything possible to hold local government elections in 2007, at the end of 2007, I must admit that I am not surprised. I must confess, what surprised me, however, for reasons both the House and the nation know, we are all aware, Sir, I would have thought that the person piloting this Bill today would have been somebody else. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, given the many reasons advanced from 1997 to last year for annual postponements for these elections, one would have thought that no more excuses would have been offered. It is clear that we have had enough of excuses. It is evident that unless the report of the Joint Taskforce on

Local Government Reform becomes available and is adopted in this House and by this House, we shall be saddled with postponement *ad infinitum*. We have just been told again that a clean list is the reason why we could not have gone earlier into elections; house-to-house registration is why we could not have gone earlier, but we are all aware that we on this side of the House have been pressing for a clean list, for house-to-house registration for the longest while. That then is not enough to say is the reason why we have not had elections before. What has happened, had we had those things in place since in 2006, then that as an excuse would never have arisen. However, we wish to join with him in saying that we do support a clean list and we do support house-to-house registration. Now that we have got that there is nothing to prevent an acceleration of the pace of both of them and the encompassing of the local government elections by half of next year.

Last year, the Minister had said that there was common ground between the opposition and the government on outstanding issues like fiscal transfers, the establishment of the Local Government Commission, the boundary demarcation and the voter's education. I am happy to hear that he has now promised that he himself will see (if he is

still there) that there will be an intensification of voter education, because we regard that as paramount owing to the fact there will be a joint type of constituency-based elections as well as PR. It is paramount that voters must be educated.

Sir, the principles dealing with the fiscal transfers; the principles dealing with the outstanding issues have already been agreed at the Joint Taskforce level. It is only now for the overseeing by the drafters and the agreement between the Taskforce people that we can then proceed. There is no need therefore for any long set of delays. This House and this nation need to be assured that we shall hold elections as quickly as possible. There can be no longer any more ambivalence or delays.

However, in that sense in terms of elections, we have had the Minister unilaterally ousting councillors, installing IMCs and imposing his political dictat instead of respecting the will of the people. This behaviour affects a healthy democracy. These delays - are they really because of the issues that have been presented to the House like house-to-house registration or fiscal transfer or disagreements within the Taskforce Commission or have there been ulterior motives which surround the continuing delays of these elections since 1997.

We would like to know. Maybe these delays over a period of time are really what the government wanted. A state of paralysis, benign neglect and helpless councillors then they could step in like knights with shining armour to the rescue to reap the political benefit and the long hoped-for award and reward of electoral victory in the municipalities that has always eluded them. If that is the plan, Sir, I would like to assure them that this approach will surely fail.

The present system of local government has failed to deliver services to the communities. Local democracy has not advanced. In fact, of the sixty-five NDCs and the six municipalities they have all regressed since 1994. That was the year of the great expectations, today they all stand as symbols of a system starved of funds and short on the delivery of services. The present system is a failure; it has not delivered adequate services to the communities, roads are still in a state of disrepair and we all can attest to that wherever we live. We can speak of any area in Georgetown or otherwise where roads remain in a state of disrepair. Water continues to be non-existent! where I live I have not seen water! my office does not have water to the first story for years ... *! [Interruption: 'Where?' "In King Street"]* Properties are still to be properly valued. As you know there

are mansions going up daily in this city and yet the under-valuation compounds it in that the city is robbed of much needed revenue in that way. Garbage is still to be collected and disposed of in an environmentally safe way. Sir, the IMCs have failed to find acceptance and many local bodies have been dissolved; Corriverton, for example, is now in disarray; Linden is cash-trapped and cannot function; only the other day the Chairman was on the television complaining about the inadequacies of funding. Is this how the Minister governs? Is this an idea or an example of good governance? The people need a democratic renewal. Councillors have resigned; some have died; others are tired. Is there no one to replace those who leave? There is need then for new blood. While Part II of Provision 4 of Chapter 28:06 which allows for the annual election of mayors, deputy mayors, chairmen, vice-chairmen and deputy vice-chairmen of local authorities have been repealed, although just a while ago, I heard the Minister indicated a willingness to look at that section which was repealed. I will not speculate as to the reason why; instead I would welcome the fact that it is an effort and recognition that those incumbents are no longer capable of performing, because we all know that when you are in power for too long, in excess of ten years, you all

become jaded. *[Laughter]* Nothing therefore prevents the holding and having internal elections for these new officers. Georgetown in particular has suffered the most as a result of this deliberate policy of neglect and total continuous incumbency. The Mayor and City Councillors have been shabbily treated and disrespected by the Minister of Local Government over a long period of time. *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Honourable Members, I remarked on the last occasion that I am always loathed to stop Members from speaking or to restrict their natural flow as Mrs Backer will attest to, but this is a Bill on postponing Local Government elections. How is it relevant how the Minister is treating the City Council? I can see some indirect relevance in terms of water, because if the Local Government system is not functioning properly and needs renewal then maybe things like water and so on are affected, but you know that is stretching a point almost to breaking. So I would respectfully ask Members, let us not allow this debate to degenerate into an assessment of the entire local government collapse or lack of collapse in the whole country. The purpose of this debate is merely to postpone the elections. There is a lot you can talk about on postponing the elections; it has been postponed for a long time now; there is a lot of

meat on that issue. Honourable Members, please, I do not think that it is relevant that we have a debate on the whole problems of this entire country at the local level.

Procede, Honourable Member.

Mr Keith Scott: Mr Speaker, your point is well made, however, Sir, we must look at the reasons why these postponement have been occasioned over a period of time. If it was just a question of administration or administrative aspects that fell down like not having house-to-house registration or so on, we could have said that in two seconds that yes, we agree that it has been for this administrative reason and we should therefore sit down and do not have a debate, let us have the Bill passed. However, Sir, we must understand that beyond a sensible reason for the postponements, there has been a deliberate effort to undermine the functions of these authorities so that they can look bad. *[Applause]* That is the reason why we need to illustrate the machinations behind the cancellations so that the people can understand that it is not just a peripheral or ordinary postponement, but a deliberate political policy so that they can seize what they could not get all the time. *[Applause]* When you see the Minister calling on the Town

Clerk to meetings with here people to the exclusion of even letting the Mayor and his Councillors know that there are meetings to discuss for the benefit of the City and he does not know that constitutes eye-pass. That would never have happened in the days of Elmo Mayers or EA Adams, because they would never have allowed their stewardship to be so compromised. These are the kind of illustrations that we wish to let people see. There have been good things done by municipalities in the past, for example National Front Alliance in 1999 put forward ideas that will help the city function better, even the current system that was called the Georgetown Plan. Citizens helped to put forward ideas. Hamilton Greene and the GGG put forward ideas even to function within the limited aspect of the Local Government system to help the city and the municipalities. These ideas were things like container tax, road tax, parking meters, lotto funds, these things were rejected by the government, yet today we see the government resuscitate and bring in the lotto for the benefit of what they said was the whole country. Now they are talking about bringing parking meters; these ideas were there since 1999 and 2000. Were they used, we would have had a functioning local authority that would have made us even less dissatisfied with what we have today.

Our dissatisfaction is because we have recognised that the system has failed and this is why we are also supporting changes, but this does not mean that we have to blind our eyes to what has gone wrong and so that we can avoid to create the same set of errors once more.

Sir, even though we praise the fact that the lottery has come in, we are still awaiting a report in this House ...

[Interruption]

The Speaker: Honourable Member, if you do not voluntarily accept my guidance, I will have to make a ruling. The issue of the lottery is totally irrelevant to this debate and I ask you not to refer to it.

You may proceed Honourable Member.

Mr Keith Scott: I will go back to the confines of the Bill, Sir. We feel that the Bill is worthwhile being postpone at this moment of time and in that case we will not offer any explanations or any more items against its postponement, Sir. I thank you.

The Speaker: Honourable Members, why don't we postpone this debate for an hour and bring the tape recording

of this similar debate last year and just play it and then have a vote, because the same thing we are saying every year?

The Honourable Member Mr Nokta ...

Mr Harripersaud Nokta: Mr Speaker, I fully agree with you that the subject matter is a straightforward one and there is no need to go into all these things which the Honourable Minister is talking about. The Leader of the Opposition knows the reasons why local government elections are being postponed and this is because of the fact that after the President and the Leader of the Opposition met some years ago, a Taskforce was set up and that Taskforce had a Co-Chairman to settle all the problems concerning reforms, fiscal transfers and all the things concerning local government and the reform system. The fact of the matter is that the taskforce has been moving very slowly on the work and as a result of that the Minister cannot move forward without having the reform. The opposition will not allow that and so you have to wait until the reform. I understand that the Taskforce has been meeting sometimes, has gone a far way in sorting out many of the matters which no doubt very soon we will hear or we will have some pieces of

legislation coming here to tidy up in order to bring about the local government elections.

The Minister is very honest to say that he cannot hold the elections this year and all that he is asking for is a postponement to next year - one year from now - so that registration can take place; a voters' list can be prepared, fiscal transfers can be ironed out and all the other matters can be done.

The Elections Commission has already announced that they will start national registration from 7 January. Okay, let us allow that body to carry out its work. Let us allow the Taskforce to complete whatever outstanding issues they may have so that the whole arrangement pertaining to reforms, legalities and so forth can be ironed out in time so that within the year which the Minister is asking for - by next year elections will be held. We, on this side are very optimistic that all the preparations will be done so that next year we will be able to have elections for local government.

So, Mr Speaker, I fully support the Minister with this Bill and ask that the House approves appropriately. I thank you.

[Applause]

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Member Mr David Patterson

Mr David Patterson: Mr Speaker, for the second time in this Ninth Assembly and for the eleventh time under this Administration, we are debating a Bill to postpone or to defer the local government elections for yet another year.

Mr Speaker, irrespective of the reasons offered here today from both sides of the House on past and future actions why these elections have not been held, we in the Alliance For Change, as I stated last year, deem the non-holding of these elections to be undemocratic.

Our Constitution provides that these elections should be held every three years. This is something that has never ever being done. Further, we have never even had two consecutive local government elections. Mr Speaker, ten years after their expiration dates; ten years after their sell-by dates, the people of Guyana are being fed the same bit of medicine from their City Councillors and NDCs, persons

who have long forgotten the reasons why they accepted that job in the first place. They have long lost their will to serve the people. It is encumbered on us, we, in this Assembly - Parliamentarians - to relieve them of their sufferings, to end their tenure.

Mr Speaker, we acknowledge the efforts being made to enable the holding of all elections in the future, in particular local government elections next year, namely the preparation of a new electoral list via the forthcoming house-to-house registration process. And we are also encouraged that minor progress - and I state minor progress - has been made in removing some of the obstacles to holding local government elections next year. I am referring to the local government Taskforce. We would like to caution that the house-to-house registration is not the only measure that requires resolution for the successful holding of the local government elections.

On a point of support, the Alliance For Change notes that GECOM has acknowledged that in the accumulation of the house-to-house registration process, all electors, existing and new registrants, will be issued with new identification cards and these new cards shall be available before Local Government Elections 2008, if that happens. It has always

been the stated position of the Alliance For Change that only with these new identification cards can we fully endorse any future elections.

Mr Speaker, on the matter of the Local Government Taskforce - This Taskforce was established in 2001, yet six years has passed and we are yet to arrive at an agreed position. Mr Speaker, the ANC in South Africa and the then Apartheid government was able to reach agreement for the holding of elections in South Africa in less than three years. The Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland between the Protestants and the Catholics was done in less than three years and recently we have heard that Israel and Palestine signed an agreement for Palestinian State by the end of 2008. Mr Speaker, in all the above examples, these countries not only have the question of democracy at stake, but also literally the lives of their citizens, yet here in Guyana six years have expired and we still cannot reach an agreement on the measures for effective local government. Mr Speaker, I think that is a poor reflection on us as politicians.

Mr Speaker, my colleagues on the government's side will blame the members of the main opposition party, while the main opposition party will do vice versa. Mr Speaker, they

are both correct, the blame lies with both of them. *[Applause]* Mr Speaker, if we leave this process in the collective hands of these two parties, I will fear for the outcome. That is the reason why we in the Alliance For Change have been asking in and outside of this Assembly for the inclusion of the Alliance for Change on this Local Government Taskforce.

Mr Speaker, the exclusion of the Alliance For Change in this process is another glaring example of the collective efforts of these two old dinosaurs to drive the voice of a sizeable percentage of the country' electorate. Mr Speaker, we have repeatedly asked to be included in these discussions with no success. We have even gone as far to ask just to be included so that we could have at least a bare minimal observer status, yet this has fallen on deaf ears. We only request that we can only attend these meetings so that we can hear first hand the deals that are being made ... *[Interruption: 'What?]* ... the deals - the six-year old deals. The matter of our involvement in the Local Government Taskforce is a matter which we even brought up with the Leader of the Opposition and up to this date we have received no results just promises.

Mr Speaker, via this Parliament and this debate, I hereby make another call for the inclusion of the Alliance For Change in the Local Government Taskforce. *[Applause]* And I can go further, should we be included, I can guarantee you that we should have a swift resolution to the very many of the issues that are still outstanding. We are the voice for reason.

Mr Speaker, I noted your comments on keeping the debate relevant. So in closing, it is my hope that this is the very last time that this Assembly shall be asked to defer local government elections and I say so even with the knowledge that should elections be held in 2008, both national and local government elections will be due in 2011. I am hoping that all systems shall be in place whereby we can hold both elections at the same time.

Mr Speaker, finally, I will hope that in the 2008 budget that will be shortly be presented adequate provisions will be included for both the completion of the house-to-house registration process and for the holding of local government elections. I would hope that the excuse would not be proffered by GECOM that by delays are due to the lack of

funding and I say that on the backdrop of the windfall that the government has received from the excess VAT.

Mr Speaker, with those words, I would like to offer our support for the very last time for these local government elections to be deferred and we hope it is the last time. And I cannot take my seat, Mr Speaker, without agreeing with a comment made by the last speaker on this side of the House and I fully agree with him that should you be in government for an excess of ten years, you become jaded and I know that he is saying that from the experience *[Laughter]* and he is trying to encourage you on the other side to vacate that position at 2011. I thank you. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you very much Honourable Member

The Honourable Member Mr Ramotar ...

Mr Donald R Ramotar: Mr Speaker, first of all I would like to say that we on this side of the House are ready to face the polls at any time that the arrangements are in place. I want to say also, Sir, that at no time can we be accused of

holding back local government elections in this country. I say this and I would like to correct some of the erroneous statements made by the two opposition speakers who have spoken so far. I would like to draw your attention to the fact that in 1992 when we got into government we wanted to have local government elections immediately, but that was not possible, because there was no Elections Commission until it was established in 1994. and we had the elections at that point in time.

The next elections which were due in 1997, had to be postponed, because of the proximity with the national elections in the same year, and that had nothing to do with us not wanting to have local government elections.

After the 1997 elections ... and by the way it is stated in the Constitution that you cannot have local government elections and national elections in the same year, and that any time in the same year if these two events would clash obviously the national elections would take precedence. I would also like to say that after 1997, we knew what happened; we are just pretending here as if we do not know what took place after the 1997 elections. We did not have an Elections Commission and a new Elections Commission was set up in

2000 to run the elections of 2001 and you will recall, Sir, those elections were due in January 2001 and it was eventually held in March of that year. Then, with the change of the Constitution, Sir, it was stated in the new Constitution ... in which all of us took part ... that you should have local government elections under a new system, but the new Constitution or those who were writing the new Constitution did not elaborate on what should be that new system. That was when the Taskforce was set up in order to deal with these issues.

I also want to point out, Sir, that I am not so sure if the opposition really wants local government elections and that includes the AFC on this. Let me say, the fact that we had elections in 2006 that was pronounced to be free and fair by all who were involved, including the international community, to now say that you want to contest a local government election on a new list, when that list itself was pronounced to be clean - that list was pronounced by all and sundry to be clean.

Mr Raphael GC Trotman: Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order and based on your ruling vis-à-vis the Member on relevance, the clean list or un-cleanliness of the list in 2006

has nothing to do with postponement of local government elections - nothing, it is irrelevant *[Applause]*

Mr Donald R Ramotar: Mr Speaker, I am just trying to reply. These matters were raised by the opposition speakers and we were being accused of postponing the elections.

Mr Speaker, again at the previous elections ... *[Interruption: 'Irrelevant!']*

The Speaker: Mr Ramotar has answered the ... *[Interruption]*

Mr Donald R Ramotar: I have a right to reply.

The Speaker: Just a minute Honourable Member. Mr Ramotar has answered the objection and has stopped talking about the 2006 list, so there is no reason for me to make a ruling, Mr Norton. It is not that the Speaker has gone silent.

Mr Raphael GC Trotman: Thank you, but as Mr Corbin has said, the public will censure him.

Mr Donald R Ramotar: There is talk also about new registration cards; again it is a red herring. No one ever complained about the national ID cards that we have before

and now therefore to talk about new ID cards is another red herring.

Mr Speaker, I also hope that this is the last time that we will have this debate in the National Assembly. As I have said, you are pushing at an open door; we are ready for the race any time it is there. We are always ready to face the pools because we have confidence in the people in this country that they will always return the People's Progressive Party/Civic in any time we contest elections and therefore we do not have anything to be worried about. I want to say and you can see that the problem with the local government elections is one that has been caused by the fact that there is definite need for renewal of democracy in the country. Therefore local government elections in this country are indeed badly needed. We will support every effort that is there to have these elections as early as possible and that is why I thought that if the opposition was serious, immediately after the last elections we could have used that list that was pronounced to be clean to have those local government elections.

However, Sir, being that as it may, I just want to say once more that I hope that this is the last time we will have to debate this issue in this National Assembly and hopefully all

arrangements will be in place to have these elections before the end of next year. I thank you for your attention.
[Applause]

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Member Mr Basil Williams

Mr Basil Williams: Mr Speaker, if it pleases you, Sir, we are here again on this annual ritual, this pilgrimage ...
[Interruption]

The Speaker: Do you agree with me, Honourable Member that if it annual ritual ... *[Interruption: 'Yes, Sir!']* we can play the recording. Yes, Mr Speaker and you will not have any opportunity to hold me liable for irrelevance.

Let me first begin to clarify some of the issues and contentions raised by the previous speakers. In the first instance, to deal with the Honourable Members on this side of House who are with us, we must recognise that the AFC to content that they are not a part of the dinosaur team on the Joint Taskforce leaves a lot to be desired. For the simple

reason, this Taskforce is constituted in 2001. The AFC was not in existence at that time; I m not sure if they are existing now, but for sure they were not in existence at that time.

Secondly, if the AFC is so desire to be a part of this Taskforce, they ought to have formally written the Leader of the Opposition expressing such a desire. As far as I know that has never been done up to this time, because everything has a procedure and I am not sure if they expect the PNCR-IG to deal with issues raised by them in the Press. We do not think that the Media is the proper route to get us to deal with this question of Membership of the joint Taskforce on Local Government. But in addition to that the Members of the AFC would agree with us that that notwithstanding, we have taken every routine opportunity when we meet with them on the joint opposition team to deal with GECOM on election matters to keep them abreast of the developments of the Joint Taskforce. Sir, we just wish to enter that clarification at this time and to assure the AFC that once they adopt the proper route and do the proper then that issue can be adequately be dealt with.

Now, the Honourable Minister for Local Government spoke about the desire to postpone the house-to-house registration

until after the next local government elections. The Honourable Member Mr Ramotar also expressed the desire to go on with local government elections without having house-to-house registration, but we hope that notwithstanding those expressions of hope and wish that they would recognise the importance of the completion of the work of the Joint Taskforce as a condition precedent to the holding of the next local government elections. I know that they recognise that and so notwithstanding that the Honourable Member said that we are pushing at an open door and they are ready for elections; we might be pushing at an open door, but they are on the inside holding back the jockey, because we know over the years their members on the Taskforce have stymied the work of the Taskforce. On the last occasion for the entire year, (I do not want to refer to the Honourable Member Mr Collymore as a jockey) because Mr Collymore always had to wait until the boys in Robb Street indicated to him how to proceed on the Taskforce or whether to proceed at all. We are not going to rehash that because the work has resumed and notwithstanding that the Minister is saying progress is taking place on the Local Government Commission Bill and the Fiscal Transfers that is not so we have not start working on those two Bills. We are now trying to complete the Local

Government Elections Bill and I can tell you, we recognise that we are proceeding on what we call the Rohee formula; I am not sure if I should really say the Rohee formula, because other persons are claiming this formula, but let us use the Rohee formula. The Rohee formula simply means nothing is agreed until all is agreed and that is how we are proceeding on the Joint Taskforce. *[Applause]* To extrapolate, this simply means that we would not complete the Local Government elections Bill alone and bring it to Parliament; the agreement taken at the Taskforce level is that we must complete deliberations of all the Bills that would include the Local Government Commission Bill and the Fiscal Transfers Bill and Regulations thereto. All would come as a package to Parliament; that is the agreement undertaken by the Joint Taskforce on Local Government. So for any reason, we happen to see an attempt to bring only the Local Government Elections Bill, then we must know immediately that something is radically wrong and there has been a departure from faith.

Now, Mr Speaker, I am not going to go into the contents of these Bills, because the Local Government Commission would be a reformed Commission and Fiscal Transfers will deal with garnering financial resources and also allocation by

the government. We have not touched those as yet whatsoever. It is important and I can confirm; I am not sure if I can go that far, but I know that we have spoken with USAID about the assistance for public education and also for providing draftsmen to assist - independent draftsmen - but under the control of the Chief Parliamentary Counsel (CPC) so that they alone will be working on these Bills, so that the work could be expedited and brought before us here today.

Now, Mr Speaker, there are obvious links with the holding of the next elections with the completion of the house-to-house registration registrations and suffice it to say that an integral part of any house-to-house registration is the issuance of new ID cards and the decommissioning of the existing ID cards that we had attending the last elections. *[Applause]*

Therefore, in conclusion, we have no problem in recognising that elections could not be held at this time and so we would agree to the postponement and we expect that all efforts would be made to have elections within the next year as has been indicated. However, we must continue to insist and I am not sure why the Honourable Minister is saying that we must have a talk on this. We do not have to talk about what is in the legislation; the law is there and so we keep insisting

year after year that there is no impediment to the holding of elections for mayors, deputy mayors, chairmen and deputy chairmen of the NDCs. I am not sure why the Honourable Minister left out the NDCs, but internal change is needed not only in the municipalities, but also in those many NDCs throughout the length and breadth of this country. And so we are insisting that there must in accordance with the Municipal District and Council Legislation Act and the Local Government Act hold elections so that a new mayor, deputy mayor, et cetera, could take office as the legislation stipulates on 1 January 2008. That is our position on this matter. Thank you, Mr Speaker. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Minister of Local Government and Regional Development

Hon Kellawan Lall: Mr Speaker, I listened to the points made both the relevant and the irrelevant and I wish only to make one brief note and that is to inform the Honourable Member who just spoke that we did not discuss the elections

of Chairmen for NDCs, because this has been happening by law - an amendment here in Parliament - only elections for mayors have been postponed over the years and I think it has to do something with once the local government are postponed that Act comes in automatically. That is my understanding of it, but there elections of NDCs being held. With that small little note, I wish to beg that the Bill be read a Second time.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

IN COMMITTEE

Clauses 1 and 2

Put and agreed to.

Clauses 1 and 2, as printed agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

ASSEMBLY RESUMED

Bill reported without amendment, read the Third time and passed as printed.

**2. NATIONAL REGISTRATION (AMENDMENT)
BILL 2007 - Bill No. 27/2007 published on
2007-12-05**

*A Bill intituled, an Act to amend
the National Registration Act*

The Speaker: Honourable Members, I understand that there is some kind of application in relation to this Bill.

Hon Doodnauth Singh: May it please you, Mr Speaker ...
I hereby request that the Second Reading of the National
Registration (Amendment) Bill 2007 - Bill No. 27/2007 be
deferred until the next sitting.

The Speaker: Thank you very much, Honourable Member.

That is agreed.

[Bill Deferred]

We will now proceed with the next item on the Order Paper

**2. IMMIGRATION (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) BILL
2007 - Bill No. 28/2007 published on 2007-12-05**

*A Bill intituled, an Act to amend
the Immigration Act*

The Honourable Minister of Home Affairs

Hon Clement J Rohee: Mr Speaker, the Bill before this Honourable House seeks to make an amendment to the Principal Act, which provides for an Immigration Officer to grant to a CARICOM National on arrival at our port of entry a permit to enter and remain in Guyana for six months.

The present legislation stipulates that such a person would be allowed to enter and remain in Guyana for such period not exceeding three months as may be specified in the permit and that has to do with a passenger intransit or for medical treatment or as a visitor or for purposes of employment or for persons of trade or business or any other purpose of a temporary nature and especially in circumstances where the Immigration Officer is satisfied that immigrant's request for such a permit is made in good faith.

Mr Speaker, the Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community when they met for their twenty-eighth regular meeting in July of this year in Barbados, urged that all Member States especially of those who have not removed the restrictions to facilitate the right to a free movement of skilled nationals within the Region that they should do so as soon as possible. In that respect under the regime for the

facilitation of travel, any CARICOM national who comes to the port of entry of any other Member particularly with a free movement of skills certificate or a CARICOM passport that CARICOM national should be granted six months definite stay with the right to work.

Mr Speaker, there are certain categories of persons who are entitled to eligibility for the free movement of skill certificate and these include graduates with a Bachelor's Degree, registered nurses, trained teachers, artist, musicians, sports persons and media workers as well. The Immigration authorities having seen the issuance of a number of certificates between 1997 and 2007 recognised that approximately 1,544 persons or she said CARICOM nationals have been issued with such skill certificates. A breakdown of this would include 639 males and 905 females, 1,412 graduates; non-graduates 46 artistes, 26 media workers, 22 sports persons, 38 musicians, 28 teachers as well as 3 registered nurses.

Mr Speaker, the decision to move in this direction must be recognised as part and parcel of the Member States' commitment to implement Chapter 3 of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas which calls for the free movement of

community nationals and since all Member States are committed to the movement of skilled community nationals on the basis of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, then it is only logical if not natural that Member States move in this direction.

Now, the question that was asked by the Honourable Member Mrs Deborah Backer prior to the second reading of this Bill or prior to my comments, it seems somewhat anticipatory in the sense that I felt that it is a matter that is more germane to the debate, but we have our Standing Orders, Members have the right to ask questions; I do not have a difficulty with that ... *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: If you objected to the question, I might have disallowed it, because there is a rule against anticipation, which did not occur to me when I approved the question.

Hon Clement J Rohee: Well, you know, Mr Speaker, this is a yuletide season *[Laughter]* and you know we are supposed to bring to each other glad tidings or great joy, so in that sense I was in a position to or I was not disposed to invoke that provision in the Standing Order, but my point is that there are very few occasions in the evolution of the single space of the Caribbean Community where all Member

States move together on a single issue and this has to do with the internal political dynamics of each Member State; it has to do with the constitutional procedures in each Member State and it has to do with a host of other issues, so that while Governments in the Member States might be committed and in particular reference to this matter that we are currently discussing for CARICOM nationals to be given indefinite stay for six months in each Member State, it is not unusual for Member States not to be proceeding in a manner where they are all moving at the same pace. The whole history of regional integration has moved in this way from since days of the Federation so that the information that I sought even before Mrs Backer came with her question whether there are other Member States in the Community who have passed legislation to ensure that this facility is there did not bring me the information that I wanted to present to this House, because I thought that it would have been useful for Members to know that it was not only Guyana that had moved in that direction, but since I did not have the information, Mrs Backer came with her question and the information was in any way provided. Mr Speaker, the point is that the government does not necessarily have to wait on another Member State or two other or three other Member

States before they move insofar as the implementation of free movement. We has this same experience with Cricket World Cup where Guyana moved to pass legislation consistent with the obligations that we would make to have the games hosted with our respective countries and not all the countries were moving at the same pace, but at the end of day there came a point when there was synergy across the Region in respect of the implementation of the decisions and passes of legislations. In that respect I think we have to realistic. Even with respect to the Caribbean Court of Justice, there is still a number of unsettled matters in some Member States. In respect of monetary union, there is still a debate going on in a number of Member States on this issue. So that one should not conclude that there is anything unusual. In any case, the history has shown that Guyana has one of the countries, even before we got into the government. This is a matter of history, this is a matter of fact, there is no point debating that Guyana for example in respect of the Declaration of National Holiday as CARICOM Day, Guyana was one of the first countries to do that. *[Interruption: 'Man Rohee why are you doing that?']* No, the point I am making, this question of relevancy seems to be invoked and I have to make the point since relevancy seems to be the issue

that is making the rounds now - it is the flavour of the day and you yourself, Mr Speaker, have set the pace on this matter and it seems as though it is coming back to haunt us. The point that I am making is let us not make a hue and cry; let us not make an issue out of the fact that the Member States are not moving in unison on this issue ... *[Interruption: 'Who is making an issue of it?']* ... No, I am being anticipatory. I am intelligently anticipating, this is what debate is all about. I have to try my best to disarm you. *[Interruption: 'You have to tell Mr Lall that.']* Mr Lall has already been disarmed; he has lodged his weapon at the Police Station. So he has been disarmed. That matter has already been dealt with.

Mr Speaker, if I might return to the subject for the purpose of relevancy. I think that the President of the Republic has committed himself to this matter; he came back and he made a public statement that he committed the nation to move in this direction ... *[Interruption: 'I expect you to comment on the rule of the events in Barbados.'* “Well you see, I suspected that that will come, but I will leave that for the debate.”]

So I want to commend this Amendment to the Immigration Act so as to facilitate the indefinite stay of CARICOM nationals in Guyana for six months ... [*Interruption: 'Man, how six months become indefinite' ... "Well that is the language"*] and I want to commend this to this Honourable House for consideration. I thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Member Mrs Deborah Backer

Mrs Deborah J Backer: Mr Speaker, could I apologise in advance for the husky nature of my voice, which is due to the festive season.

Sir, in the spirit of disarmament [*Laughter*] could I say that I have been disarmed by Minister Rohee and his anticipation being a typical male has been totally off the mark and in fact it is the intention of the PNCR-1G, who I stand to represent to also commend this Bill. My reason for asking and I was glad that the Minister as he said in this season of goodwill was kind enough to accept that Guyana firstly under the PNC

as it then was and we now see that the PPP is following our lead has been in the vanguard of Caribbean unity. So at least on that we agree, so there is no sinister reason for my question. I, like the Minister knew that Guyana was first to pass this and I am proud of it and I was trying to give him an opportunity to also be proud, but he misunderstood my question, Sir. There is no lash coming. I know that people are waiting for something. Sir, we unequivocally support this Bill; we are the first to pass and we hope of course that other sister CARICOM countries would follow. We know for example and Minister Rohee is right again - this must be the season - because Antigua has peculiar problems, because their Head of State and other Senior Officers have kept saying the thirty-three percent roughly of their population are foreigners and as such they are somewhat wary of an introduction of a Bill of this nature. But, Sir, while it is good that we are in front with such a forward-looking Bill, soon to be an Act, what we need to do and what I am glad about is that the Hon Minister Insanally is here and he will be speaking after me and I hope that when he speaks, he will anticipate what I expect him to indicate that in the same way we are in dialogue with Venezuela and the incidents we have had on our borders and we are exchanging letters that we are

also speaking to our Barbadian counterpart, to our Trinidadian counterpart and urging them to reciprocate if not necessarily in passing this legislation forthwith in the way that Guyanese tend to be treated in Barbados and in Trinidad, where at random it seems that Guyanese are excluded. This is not a criticism of the government, Minister Rohee. This is a fact and as a government you have an obligation and I am sure that you will accept to do everything that you could to make sure that citizens of Guyana are treated with the dignity that they deserve and indeed the dignity that we extend to all our CARICOM sister nationals.

So I, on behalf of the PNCR-1G, I am a bit under the weather, I would want very briefly in closing to say that we commend this Bill, we are one hundred percent ... If my Ramotar was in his seat and he could have replied, I would have said that we are 105 percent, because he knows about electoral engineering. *[Laughter]* But we are a mere one hundred percent behind you, but we would want some assurance from our Foreign Minister that efforts are being made to ensure that Guyanese citizens (as I say) are always treated with the dignity that we always extend and we support this Bill in its entirety. Thank you, Sir. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs

Hon S Rudolph Insanally: Mr Speaker, I am very pleased to speak in support of this Bill No. 28/2007 - Immigration (Amendment) (No.2) Bill 2007. There is precious little I can add to what had been said by my colleague Minister Rohee by way of introduction of the Amendment, but let me just say to the House that this Amendment is in keeping with the very spirit of CARICOM and with the letter of the Treaty of Chaguaramas on which the very Community is founded. I would go further to say that it reflects the fact that the Community is not only about the movement of goods and services, but of people who are the very essence of what the community is about. I think the Heads have already realised especially in the wake of the failure of the Federation that unless the people of the Region were fully behind the integration movement it would fail once again. Hence these initiatives to encourage travel within the Region, to encourage contact and communication among the countries

and peoples of the Region are to provide for a better understanding of what the integration effort is all about. So this is the very essence of this and they are meeting in July as Minister Rohee said. It was decided that they would expand and there are two aspects to this issue of movement as he rightly said:

- (i) The freedom of movement of skills; and
- (ii) The freedom of travel.

This particular Amendment addresses the second aspect. It does and I think Members of the House should be told that the actual decision of the Heads while they give this right to enter the traditional reservations would still apply that is to say subject to the rights of Member States to refuse undesirable persons and to prevent persons from becoming a charge to public funds. I thought I should make clear that assurance. The intent - the purpose - of this Amendment is to facilitate further travel and not leave it so much to our Immigration Officers at the port of entry.

So, Mr Speaker, I would encourage full support for this Amendment and if I may just in passing - in conclusion - address the two points raised by my colleague in front of me the Hon Deborah Backer:

- (i) As it relates to the question of other States signing on to this Agreement - Minister Rohee is absolutely right. I think what we can say, is the Heads did suggest a deadline by which it should be done, which is the end of the year. So I think Guyana as usual, we try to lead by example and insisting that reciprocity will follow in due course.

Let me finally assure you that this dialogue with our sister States is continuous. We raise it at every turn. I think the President is on record at every CARICOM meeting that we attend that there is need for respect and proper treatment of citizens. As usual some of them contend the principle of Peter paying for Paul in a way. There are some bad apples, but we refuse to accept that Guyanese are tarnished with just one brush and we ought to have our citizens respected wherever they go and we have gone further to insist that the CARICOM Secretariat be provided with a record by each Member State on a quarterly basis of all cases in which nationals are denied entry and the reasons for which that access was denied. So we hope in this way that this problem will die away, but while it does persist in some quarters and I have to say that.

The other thing is and again I would like to say publicly, very often these cases where refusals are imposed they are not, they are not brought directly to our attention in the foreign ministry, so we cannot take the governments to task. So I just mention that in passing, but I want to assure you that we are committed to preserving our rights within the CARICOM arrangement. Thank you. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Member Mr Khemraj Ramjattan

Mr Raphael GC Trotman: Mr Speaker, with your leave I will speak.

The Speaker: In his place?

Mr Raphael GC Trotman: Yes, please.

The Speaker: The Honourable Member Mr Trotman

Mr Raphael GC Trotman: Mr Speaker, quickly to say like my colleagues before me that we support wholeheartedly this Bill. We are pleased to know that despite all of the

nay-sayers about the Cricket World Cup that there are some benefits which still continue to have effect.

I do believe that this is a step in the right direction. However, as it is said before, it must be a step taken by all. To have Guyana being the first is commendable; to have Guyana take the step alone and do so alone is unfortunate and so we would have hoped that both Ministers of Government could have given us better assurances than just to speak about what if and hopefully and what the Heads have discussed. We would have preferred to know that like the Cricket World Cup Legislation, the drafters at CARICOM Secretariat would have been issuing this legislation throughout the Region and having commitments throughout the Region so that when we spoke this afternoon and enacted this legislation, we would have been able to say quite definitely that Antigua, Jamaica, Barbados, St Kitts and all the others are about to do on or before a cut-off date say 31 December or a date in March or April.

Mr Speaker, in my view there are two issues or principles which characterise international relations and more so Regional relations. They are:

- comity which I believe the Minister spoke of;
and

- reciprocity.

It is no good for us to say that we are part of a system of a Region calling itself CARICOM, where our citizens on a daily basis, quite apart from what happens in the East with Venezuela, are harassed, brutalised and subjected to disrespect. Even though the complaints are not made to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we all know that these things are taking place on a daily basis and must be stopped. Whether it is therefore that we grant these rights to our fellow Caribbean brothers and sisters, we do so because we are known for generosity and hospitality, but we would like to know that that generosity and hospitality is also extended to us and that is where the second principle of reciprocity comes into play. We cannot continue to make these steps alone, have the CARICOM Secretariat enact legislation for the holiday in July - the first Monday in July - and then hear the reports of Guyanese wherever they find themselves being unrepresented or being brutalised. We continue to raise this issue not only in the plenary, but also at Committee hoping that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will be more strident in

its actions to ensure that our Guyanese citizens - our brothers and sisters - are well taken care of.

With those few words, I would like to commend this Bill and take this opportunity as has been said before to extend to one and all Seasons Greetings. Thank you very much.
[Applause]

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Minister of Home Affairs

Hon Clement J Rohee: Mr Speaker, just to note a point or to follow up or to develop an observation that was made by Minister Insanally and for the benefit of the Honourable Members who raised this question of the problems that our nationals are confronted with from time to time at Grantley Adams Airport. Just a few months ago, the Guyana/Barbados Joint Commission was held in Georgetown and this matter was put on the Agenda by the Guyana Delegation of which Immigration was an integral part and it was fully ventilated. I believe a Press Conference was held

at the conclusion to that meeting to which the media was invited and the decisions arrived at were given full publicity. But the point I want to make here is that arising out of that Joint Commission meeting was the decision to address this matter by the Immigration Officials between the two countries meeting from time to time; one time in Barbados and another time in Guyana and also to exchange information as the situation evolves.

I simply want to conclude by making one point which I believe is very important on this matter and this is notwithstanding the difficulties which many of our nationals have experienced at Grantley Adams Airport and the fact that our Minister of Foreign Affairs has raised this issue, the President has raised this issue, I believe all those Officials who have interacted with the Bajan counterparts have made it known how upset we are about this practice. The fact of the matter is this has not held back our country as a nation. These events have not held back our country as a nation. In other words, our country - Guyana - has risen above these matters, while at the same time we continue to fight it; while at the same time we continue to oppose it and expose it; we have risen above these matters and it is because of the position we have taken that we could now bring to this House

a Bill of this nature to make Guyana the first to move in this direction. Were we to degenerate into tit for tat and that kind psychology, we would obviously not have moved in this direction, but Mr Speaker, we have to rise above these things while at the same time fighting and exposing it. Thank you very much and I wish to ask that the Bill be read a Second time. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

IN COMMITTEE

Clauses 1 and 2

Question put and agreed to.

Clauses 1 and 2, as printed, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

The Chairman: Honourable Members, as you know the typographical errors are normally corrected by the Clerk. There are some typographical errors if I can just mention them to you:

Clause 1 - After the word *Amendment* insert (*No. 2*)

That was unintentionally omitted.

Clause 2 (a) - That Clause 2 Subsection (a) amends Section 12 and if go to

subsection (a) in Section 12, the last words there are *six months* and it really should be *a period not exceeding three months*.

That is a result of a printer's error.

ASSEMBLY RESUMED

Bill reported without amendment, read the Third time and passed with corrections.

The Speaker: Honourable Members, we can now suspend for half an hour.

16:12H - SUSPENSION OF SITTING

16:55H - RESUMPTION OF SITTING

Honourable Members, we can now proceed with the next item on the Order Paper.

**4. POUNDS AND CERTAIN ENACTMENTS
(AMENDMENT) BILL 2007 - Bill No. 25/2007
published on 2007-11-15**

*A Bill intituled, an Act to amend
the Pounds Act, the Municipal and
District Councils Act, the Local
Government Act and Roads Act*

The Honourable Minister of Home Affairs

Hon Clement J Rohee: Mr Speaker, this Bill is long overdue and why is it long overdue, because for many years, the country both the urban and rural locations have been plagued by stray animals, roaming the streets, standing on bridges and found situated at places that result at great inconvenience to persons.

Just only a few weeks ago, we completed Road Safety Week and as we speak there is a zero tolerance campaign going on. Stray animals constitute a serious danger to persons who are

moving from one location to the other in our country. They do not only constitute a nuisance in terms of traffic; they also constitute a nuisance to person's property whereby animals freely invade other people's property, destroy perhaps their kitchen garden, destroy their crops; they go into community centre grounds, create situations there where these grounds cannot be used and so forth. So the main focus here is to address the question of stray animals and persons who are the owners of these animals, but because of the weakness in the current legislation and because of the meagre fines that are levied against these persons, the time has come when the administration is of the view and in fact not only administration, but many citizens are of the view that this matter needs to be addressed. It is in that context that this Bill is before this Honourable House.

First of all, the Bill amends the Pounds Act to increase the fees received by a person, who takes a stray animal to the pound and the fees paid by a person for the release of his impounded animal. That is the first aspect of this Amendment.

The Amendment also increases the penalties whereby anyone who releases or attempts to release any stray taken for the

purpose of being impounded on the way to the pound. In other words, a stray animal is being taken to a pound; a person intervenes, releases or attempts to release the animal that is on the way to be impounded and the law has a very small penalty for such an offence. It is like resisting arrest. *[Laughter]* I thought I should make that pun to make those who do not understand this part of the Amendment understand it.

Mr Speaker, in addition to a person intervening to prevent the animal from being impounded, there is also an increase in damages - a person who may damage or destroy a pound. It is not unusual that you will find an individual who when they find that the animal has been impounded, they would seek to destroy the pound that is the infrastructure to release the animal.

Mr Speaker, there is also a penalty if this person seeks to rescue or attempts to rescue an impounded stray. That is to say the stray is already in the pound. The first example I gave is where the stray is in transit (to use the Honourable Member's word) to the pound - the stray is in transit to the pound and someone seeks to resist arrest of the stray. There

is situation where the stray is already impounded and someone seeks to release or to rescue that stray.

Mr Speaker, I do not know why the Honourable Members find this thing humorous. I do not know why they found such humour in it. This is not the Scrap Metals Bill issue.

Mr Speaker, the Bill also seeks to impose harsher penalties against a pound keeper, who may seek to hire out the impounded animal. That happens, a stray animal may be impounded; someone just mentioned donkeys or a horse or a cow. *[Interruption: 'Or a pig.' "No, no, we are coming to that just now"]*

Now the pound keeper for one reason or the other seeks to hire out surreptitiously, clandestinely, illegally or might seek to use or employ the stray animal or any stray that is impounded for any reason or the other.

Further, the Bill also seeks to address the question whereby stray animals are taken out of pounds wrongfully without the matter being addressed in the court without a trial.

Finally, the Amended Bill seeks to impose harsher penalties in cases where a pound keeper suffers any stray while impounded to be ill-used or injured. There may very well

have situations where a pound keeper for one reason or the other allows or suffers a stray that is impounded to be ill-used or injured and that ought not to happen.

Mr Speaker, there is also stricter penalties in cases where somehow or the other an unclaimed stray animal is sold without due process being observed. And then the penalty where the pound keeper fails to keep accounts of money used, received and paid out. That is one aspect of the legislation that we have before us - increases in the penalties for all of these.

As the Pounds Act currently stands, it does not authorise the impounding of stray animals found on a public road or a bridge. If you examine the current Pounds Act, it does not give the authority of impounding of stray animals found on a public road or a bridge and since this is so, the Amendment to Section 6 of the Pounds Act remove this restriction and not the Bill provides that animals found straying anywhere, be it roads, bridges, public land or public places that they may be seize and impounded by any police officer or constable or any person authorised by the Chief Executive Officer of a RDC.

Mr Speaker, I come to one of the more interesting part of this piece of legislation which is the section dealing with the destruction of pigs. Now I have to recognise that this is highly sensitive matter that has cultural, historical, geographic and many other implications and therefore in drafting and in considering, giving the drafting instructions to the AG's Chambers, it was necessary for us to craft legislation; it was necessary for us to give utmost and due consideration to all the peculiarities that surrounds the husbandry of pigs.

In this regard if you look at the section dealing with the destruction of pigs, Section 7 (1), it states:

The owner or person in possession or control of any private land or premises, the owner may without prejudice to his right of any civil action destroy a pig straying or found on the land or premises subject to the following conditions

(a) *The owner shall notify in writing the owner of the pig and the police of the damage done to the land or premises.*

So you just do not run and destroy the pig. The first thing your have to do is notify in writing the owner of the pig and the police of the damage done to the land or premises. That is the first safeguarding aspect of this legislation.

Secondly, the police shall notify in writing - the police now having received the complaint from the owner of the damage land or the premises, the police now in turn shall notify in writing the owner of the pig of the damage done by the pig to the land or premises. *[Interruption: 'Before or after?' 'Before - all of this is before.]* Then the owner on being informed by the police of the step taken by the police may if the pig is found or strayed on his land or premises destroy the pig and shall return the carcass to the owner of the pig. In other words, after having done these steps, you then destroy the pig and hand over the carcass to the owner of the pig.

Mr Speaker, it is said at PART 2 that the police officer or constable or any person authorised in writing by the Commissioner of Police may destroy a pig found on any public premises, public land or public place and hand over the carcass of the owner of the pig where the owner can be identified. So I think what we have sought to do is to make this process very transparent, very orderly, very systematic so

that everything that is taken into consideration in respect of the pig, the owner of the pig as well as the owner of the land or premises that was destroyed.

Mr Speaker, in order to address the question of public roads and bridges, a further amendment was required at PART 3, we find that this falls under the Municipal and District Councils Act and therefore this Act is to be amended and because there are implications for the Local Government Act, there are certain amendments proposed for the Local Government Act as well.

Mr Speaker, as reflected in the Explanatory Memorandum, the position is quite straightforward. I should also point out that in the Principal Act, it states that the Minister may from time to time by Order establish pounds in those parts of Guyana, which to him seems fit, but all pounds already established shall continue to be kept subject to this Act unless the Minister at any time otherwise directs.

Mr Speaker, in the subsidiary legislation where the Pounds Order established under Section 2 was made, there is a Schedule which indicates where pounds currently exist. We have a total of forty-one pounds across the country and it is true as the Honourable Member said, even though she said it

in a rather joking or jocular manner that some of these pounds are a mere two pieces of wood put together. We at the Ministry of Home Affairs, because of most of the pounds are to be found police stations, we have made an inventory of where these pounds are and the conditions of these and we coincide with the Honourable Member's observation that clearly there is need to rehabilitate most of these pounds.

In addition to that in moving around the country, there are certain places where they do not have police stations but police outposts and residents for example at Mocha where we visited and there is a serious stray animal problem in that village requested that consideration be given to a establishment of a pound at Mocha notwithstanding the fact that there is no full-fledge police station there. Cabinet has asked that consideration be given by the Ministry of Home Affairs to also take into consideration the possibility of establishing pounds at some locations where there is no police station, but where there are police outposts. And as the Act says the Minister could establish pounds anywhere as he deems fit for pounds to be established.

Mr Speaker, in the discussion for preparation for budget, these matters were taken under advisement and we hope that

the Minister at the Ministry of Finance will give consideration to the request for increase funds in order to rehabilitate many of these pounds where they exist currently and for resources to be made available for establishment of some pounds at some locations for example where there are police outposts and based on consultation like myself and the Honourable Minister of Local Government might have in respect of locations where there is either no police station or no police outpost, but where it is felt that there is need for a pound of a police station or a police district.

So Mr Speaker, we want to submit this Bill to this Honourable House for positive consideration. We believe it will contribute to a host of other issues, governance, road safety, security, good neighbourly relations among persons living in villages and so forth and we therefore wish to commend this Bill to the House. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Member Mrs Backer;

Mrs Deborah J Backer: Mr Speaker, if I can start with the Pounds Act, the original Pounds Chapter 71:04 is 141 years old having been enacted in July of 1866 and looking at this National Assembly, Sir, I dare say that it is older than all of us. I, however, may be subject to correction. *[Laughter]*

Mr Speaker, this Act - the Pounds Act - and that is the Act I am dealing with firstly was amended on five occasions; the last amendment being by Act No. 14/1988 entitled the Law Reform Miscellaneous (Amendment) Act and sorry if I may say so, I think that was a much more elegant way if you want to amend various Acts to call it a Law Reform Miscellaneous (Amendment) Act rather than Pounds and Certain Other Enactments (Amendment) Bill or Act as this will become.

Mr Speaker, in essence the amendment - I am going to the 1988 one before I come to the one and the House will see why shortly. The 1988 amendment was three-fold:

- (i) To increase fines;
- (ii) To include five more animals in the category of animals that could be impounded and just as we are into animals today, if anyone wants to know that addition includes colts, fillies, buffaloes, kids and pigs; and

The third purpose of the 1988 Act which I would want to suggest was quite important was the deletion of the original Section 7 and Section of the 1866 Act dealt with destroying swine on premises. They call it swine then; we call it pigs now. So in 1988, the then government deleted the section that dealt with destroying pigs and by doing that put pigs on the same footing ... [*Interruption: 'hoofing' "Not hoofing ... on the same footing as all other animals if they were found on private property"*] And there must have been a reason for that. In fact, I was so fascinated by this Pounds Act that I tried to some research in the Library. I was somewhat unsuccessful, but I have been advised by people who were around then, not in 1866, but in 1988 that the reason was that people who owned pigs were adversely affected by this law that existed since 1866, whereas, in other words if they had sheep, goats and pigs and all of them ran unto a neighbouring place owned by someone, the neighbour could kill the pigs, but he could not kill the goats and sheep and in 1988 that section was removed. No, you could not kill any; you had to take all of them to the pound and you were taken through the journey from being caught in transit and to the pounds by Minister Rohee with all his infrastructure, so I would not worry about that. We all know

what happened in transit and as they got there people tried to take them out, put them in, misused them, abused them, hire them and fire them. So that was the nature of the amendment in 1988.

Now the Amendment to the Pounds Act that is before us today, the reasons for the Amendment are two-fold:

- (i) To increase fines and I want to say that while some of them seem a little high at times and so on, we have no quarrel in essence with them and we would support them and we are glad that in some of them magistrates are given a discretion where it says not less than ten not more than twenty; but
- (ii) The second purpose of this Act is that pigs have once again been sent back to the 1866 position, because we have taken our pigs 141 years, where they can now be destroyed if found on ... [*Interruption: 'Not on the bridge.'*] ... on property.

Unless anyone feels that I am making this story up, Section 7 of the 1866 Act says this;

The owner or person in possession of any private premises or land may destroy all swine

...

which means pigs

... straying or trespassing on any public premises or land may be destroyed by any public officer and in either case the bodies of all swine belong so destroyed belong to the destroyers.

Well, what is the government now trying to do? They do not want to give it to the destroyers, but in fact the destroyers will end up getting it, because listen to this procedure. I am sitting in my hammock at Lusignan and five pigs run in from Buxton [*Laughter*] The House immediately sees how ridiculous this is, even people on the PPP/C side. I now have to notify in writing the owner of pig, but I am afraid to go to Buxton. So what do I do? I have nobody to write to. Now that it is Christmas perhaps I would write Santa Clause, but if it is other times of the year, who will I write. Then they say that I have to write the owner of the pig and then the police and then the police shall notify the owner of the pig. [*Interruption: 'What will the pig do in the interim?'*] Well

we do not know. We do not know in the meantime if the pig is being fed; is being abused; is being roasted or what? But we are not finished yet, the owner now from Lusignan on being informed of this by the police may if the pig is found on the land destroy the pig . So basically you are saying to destroy this pig, this pig has to come twice. That is what the Act is saying, but these pigs are not marked, how are you going to know? They have to be the same pigs. The Act contemplates if this pig comes back, you kill it. But, Sir, what is going to happen? It is a very practical thing, the pig comes on your land; you are going to kill it. This section is horrendously difficult to implement. You cannot implement something like this; writing letters to and fro about the movement of pigs. Then how are you destroying the pig and I am very serious about this?

Is the Guyana Society for the Prevention of Cruelty of Animals have they been consulted? I spoke to senior people in the City of Georgetown who deals with this area and they are unaware of the fact that pigs have been singled out for special treatment. I am very happy that the Minister has an opportunity to reply at the end, because the question that I would want to ask either the Honourable Minister or I would wish an answer from the Honourable Minister, I see he has

picked up his pen or anybody else; is a pig more dangerous than any other animal? Is a pig more dangerous than a wild buffalo? You see it says pigs; it did not tell you that piglets are exempted, so most probably piglets are caught here too. There are goats and sheep, what is to peculiar about a pig? Is it because a pig is ugly? Is it because it is the most prevalent of strays? I do not think so. The Minister told us about pigs; you do not see pigs straying as much as donkeys, sheep, cows and buffaloes. Pigs do not end to stray particularly in Georgetown. You can drive for says in Georgetown and do not see a pig. I mean you may see other forms, if you understand what I mean, Sir. *[Laughter]* They talk about road pigs and road horses, but you would not see an authentic pig for weeks in Georgetown, but once you come out your street, you will see horses, dogs, cows, sheep and buffaloes. Why this pounding of pigs? Why this slaughter of pigs? Are they so ferocious that we do not have people who could capture them and put them in pounds? I do not think they are. The Minister spoke about infrastructure for pounds so it means that they would be secure if they go in the pounds? Are they more expensive to feed than other animals in the pound? No, because pigs eat anything. I noticed Minister Rohee danced very nicely

around the issue; I know this is the season for dancing, but the reality is there is a certain group of people who tend to mind the pigs and we must not shy away from that. On the other hand, there are certain types of people, who for religious or other reasons want nothing to do with pigs. I respect that; we respect that on this side, but one has to respect everyone's preference, everyone's taste' everyone's culture and everyone rights. I could find nothing so far in what the Honourable Minister Rohee has said, where we can find it possible to support a re-enactment, because in fact the Explanatory Note, while I would not say is dishonest; the Explanatory Note is not as frank as it ought to be. It is misleading, because it gives the impression that ... this is the Explanatory Note of the Bill, it speaks about a new Section 7 is inserted, which provides for the destruction of pigs, but as I said it is not a new section; it was there in 1866 and it remained there until 1988, when the previous government removed it' had it deleted in an amendment in 1988 and now we come to put it back.

In closing, Sir, as I said and I would say again, we have no problem with the increase in fines, not only to the Pounds Acts, but to the other Acts referred to by the other Honourable Minister namely the Municipal and District

Councils Act, the Local Government Act and the Roads Act, but we have so far been keeping our minds open; we have so far heard nothing advanced as to why pigs should be placed in this almost double jeopardy where they can be slaughtered willy-nilly, because I said the section about writing is unworkable and as such we have great difficulty in supporting the re-enactment of a section that is in fact 141 years old. Thank you, Sir. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Minister of Transport and Hydraulics

Hon BH Robeson Benn: Mr Speaker, I would like to accord with the Honourable Minister and Member Rohee with respect to the necessity for upgrading the Pounds Act by way of these amendments.

I think we had a situation for quite a while and Minister Rohee did make reference to the issue of cattle on roads, where we have had the safety of persons on the roads imperilled by the fact that wandering cattle of all kinds are on

the roads and you either have to take sudden evasive actions or in fact, we also have people who have been killed on coming into contact with people with pigs and other animals on the roads.

There is issue of congestion, because it affects parking in areas around the markets. Also there is the question of the protection of the stock, the actual animals themselves, because they form a significant part, cows particularly of the road-kill that we see on our roads. So there are issues of protecting the cattle themselves, too.

Generally I would say that until we had the zero tolerance campaign from the Ministry of Home Affairs and the putting in place of the traffic lights too that at point we could not really distinguish which class of animals on the road whether it is mankind or the cattle were behaving better on the roads. Human kind may have a better position at the present time, but despite all the mirth we have heard in the House this afternoon, this is indeed a very serious matter. I think, at one in point in time in the absence of having realistic fines and deterrence in the legislation, whether the only thing one could rue was the absence of any good rustlers around, but

generally of course as we know rustlers create great social and other problems and would only add to lawlessness.

We had the issue of the protection of drainage. The fact of the matter is that with wandering cattle attempting to get grass and other sustenance along the roadside, on the canals we have had damage to the verges and a gradual entrailing of canals. These days we do not see or there has not been an experience of recent times of a lot of grass cutting that some of us may have grown up with in the villages; much of the cattle have been turn loose to graze. As the Minister previously mentioned, we have had the result of all of these cattle going around and doing all kinds of damage including to damage to the drainage, and particularly at this time, we have a heightened sense as to the overall question of drainage.

The increases in fines will lead to a situation where there will be better husbandry of cattle and of animals and I think this is particularly important. Generally it is thought that when you have an increase in the prices of beef and milk - very good prices - that cattle are better taken care of and the issue of wandering animals is not one of course that is unique to us. I think the Municipal Cooperation of Delhi was surprised at

some point two years ago when they had an increase, the pounding fee increased to 3,000 rupees ... they had a great surfeit of stray animals being brought in to the pounds. In Jamaica just a year ago, in Manchester the police were being required to accompanied the pound keepers - the stray catchers - on exercise to bring the cattle in, because it was felt at a time when people were not paying enough attention to cattle, they were still getting fairly upset when the strays were being brought in.

I would like to make one point and that is the overall issue of improved husbandry. We have a situation where though in spite of grazing lands being made available to cooperatives, cattle farmers and others have not been occupying some of these grazing lands and we not had maybe proper development, because of this problem of our dairy and beef industry. To some extent, it has impeded the development of the dairy and beef industry. In many cases, if you look at the cattle in the streets, you may think that they are stressed out or ill. I do not think that we optimised the production of beef or milk; there is poor calving in the absence of good husbandry, people are not paying enough attention, because the cattle are wandering and are opened to all kinds of dangers on the streets.

The issue of the fees being too low of course meant that the legislation - the Act - and the whole issue of dealing with the question of wandering cattle was that the enforcers of the legislation, the judicial system was being held in ridicule by the whole situation and the fact that we are now bringing in realistic fines and fees will make people pay more attention as to what ought to be done with respect to the valuable cattle that they own.

The issue of wandering cattle has health implications and we know that there are issues of foot and mouth disease; foot rot, BSE also called mad cow disease, there are issues with respect to the general health of the population and the general health of cattle themselves when they wander and intermingle all over the place. And so any situation which brings about greater control of the animals wandering along the streets and creating both safety and health problems as I point out would lead to an improved situation with overall of public health.

The question was raised just now by the Honourable Member Mrs Backer with respect to the issue of pigs wandering or roaming in people's yards have been destroyed and if they so do on the second equation, after having been identified and

maybe after there have been exchange of letters between the owners of the pigs and the police being notified. Let me say that historically the issue of the destruction of pigs (swines) in the old days basically relates to their habit of rooting, the habit of digging up, the habit of maybe of getting in latrines and garbage particularly in swampy areas and the problems we know of the transmission, which still exists as far as I as I am advised and I aware of *Taenia Solium* - it is called the pig tape worm. The fact there is a system of notification, the fact that in the communities, in the NDCs and the villages with the cooperation and the intervention of the officers and others, I am certain there will be sufficient knowledge for people to know owns what pigs, whose pigs are wandering that the agricultural and other field assistants would be able to relate to the farmers in the areas to be able to advise so that there will be sufficient knowledge ... *[Noisy Interruption]* Mrs Backer, your husky voice may in fact be a perverse of the foot and mouth disease. I want you to take care. I would like to say that there is written now in this legislation sufficient approaches to be able to notify all concerned with respect so that there is adequate notification as to who may own as to who may take action with respect to wandering pigs and I think that this allows for sufficient protection in

the legislation given the fact that our villages are still small; given the fact that the NDCs are fairly well supervised and have sufficient information going through the villages that there is more than sufficient information out there for this matter to be adequately handled. I do not think that anyone would attempt to off-hand or out of hand try to kill any animal out there. So I think that the amendments to the legislation as proposed by the Minister are adequate. I think that we have had a long time; the time is overdue. I would like to ask all the Members in the House to support the legislation, because it is in the interest of all and I do not think that there is any intent ... and let me say that Guyanese of all kinds raise pigs in this country. Guyanese of all races raise cows, goats or whatever in this country; there may be particular preferences in certain blocks or areas of the country, but the fact of the matter is that Guyanese of all races raise pigs and other types of cattle.

Mr Speaker, I think that this needs a much better and improved situation; one that we could look forward to for having better order in the countryside and reducing social tensions in the villages and also that it may give the space in future to deal with the animals that we have. With that, Mr

Speaker, I would like to ask both sides of the House to wholeheartedly support this Bill. I thank you. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member.

The Honourable Member Mrs Holder

Mrs Sheila VA Holder: Mr Speaker, as I listened to the two Honourable Ministers of the government speak on the issue of the Bill before the House this afternoon it struck me that neither one of them dealt with the fundamental problem of strays on our streets. I want to advance the proposal that the way to deal with this problem requires that the administration provides as a matter of urgency land upon which livestock owners can properly conduct their business.

Mr Speaker, we are also aware of the problem of strays in our villages and on the streets and therefore it is necessary to take corrective action to prevent this. I saw during the World Cup Cricket occasion that efforts were made to contain the problem. Why have we allowed the problem to resurface after the conclusion of World Cup Cricket? I have not heard

an explanation provided for that, but I would posit that if indeed the problem was attended to effectively for World Cup Cricket, why aren't those measures being applied to contain the problem.

Mr Speaker, I actually lived on a farm for many years. I am in fact married to a livestock scientist and therefore I will in no way be associated with the proposal contained in this Bill to licensed policemen to arbitrarily shoot pigs. Mr Speaker, I am really quite appalled with the Minister of Home Affairs, who has responsibility for the Guyana Police Force and who is fully aware of how, over the last few years, many members of the force have been held with a great deal of disregard because of the manner they have treated homo sapiens ... as pigs. Today, we come to this House to hear that the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs is willing to give permission to the Guyana Police Force to shoot pigs. I find that reprehensible and I will not support it. *[Applause]*

I believe that the Honourable Minister should be aware that there are animal rights activists in this country, who will be quite appalled by the proposal in the legislation before the House this evening and I want to urge him to take steps to remove it.

Mr Speaker, it is fortunate for the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs that he has the capacity to exhibit such stewardship as he has exhibited during the presentation of the Honourable Member Mrs Backer, because had he not, I regret to say, the results may not have been as honourable as this House would have liked.

Mr Speaker, we are fully aware of the difficulties property owners have experienced with stray animals destroying their crops. I am fully aware of that problem. I am aware of the contention that develops when strays get on to till the land and create havoc, but I dare say that the problem has not been properly addressed in this legislation.

Mr Speaker, I have no difficulty with the fines, because I believe that some degree of flexibility needs to exist and the message needs to be advanced that livestock owners have a responsibility not to allow their animals to destroy crops and to create havoc in other areas. I do not want to side either with the livestock owners or necessarily with the victims with those creatures which create mischief, but I believe that the administration has the duty to put in place measures, to introduce policies that would fundamentally rid the society of such a nuisance problem. It is not beyond the capacity of

the administration to deal with this problem in a more humane manner than those proposed in the legislation.

Mr Speaker, there are international standards that are also applicable in this situation here and we cannot simply give licence to people to kill animals. Where are we going as a society if we make into law a proposal that so stipulates. It is unacceptable that we should give licence to be it property owners or members of the discipline forces to kill animals. Killing should not be dealt with in such a manner and I wish to persuade this Honourable House not to embrace that which is proposed in this legislation that will give such permission.

The point was made before by the Honourable Member Mrs Backer, and I believe that it was referred to by the Minister proposing the Bill as well as his colleague, but the target aimed in this legislation is indeed troubling. We are a society that is ultra-sensitive to ethnic issues and I am convinced that this will become one. Why are we choosing to go in this direction knowing full well that we are dealing with a hot potato? Why are we courting problems when we have no need to do so? We already exist in a society replete with problems that are not being solved. Why should we deliberately set out to create another one?

Mr Speaker, in the circumstances, I am forced to urge my colleagues in the Alliance For Change to propose that the Minister should delete that offensive clause referred to by the Honourable Member Mrs Backer before we give our support to this Bill. I thank you. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Member Mr Seeraj

No epithets, Honourable Members

Mr Dharamkumar Seeraj: Mr Speaker, like the Minister of Home Affairs, I also feel that this Amendment is long overdue. After numerous consultations throughout the country year after year, crops farmers as well as other livestock farmers have been calling for reasonable behaviour among all livestock owners - reasonable, responsible, matured behaviour - and events especially on the roadways give one cause to lament the fact that measures were not taken to address the issue of strays on our roadways, irresponsible behaviour by livestock owners that resulted in

damages to crops and in some cases bankruptcy of some crop farmers.

Mr Speaker, I still remember today, with the same pain, six months after an incident that occurred in May when a young man, who was recently married, left in the morning to go to work on his motor cycle and collided with ... (I do not think this Bill has *donkey*), but I will use the word *ass* on the road and he died in June. The tragedy here is that he was the only son of the parents and further it was the only son of the family on the father's side. So we saw a situation where that son Udraj would no longer be there to carry on.

In 2004, I witnessed an incident on No. 19 Road, where the General Manager of the Rice Board barely survived a collision with cows on that road. In April of this year the General Manager of the MMA/ADA Scheme again narrowly escaped ... his vehicle of less than one year old was damaged beyond repair. And only last Monday night, 10 December at the No. 40 Belle Vue Road, an incident occurred that demonstrated the recklessness of some owners of livestock that strayed on the roadway, when a minibus transporting innocent passengers to Georgetown ended up in a canal after colliding with some animals on the road. When the driver

attempted to take the brand of that animal the owner attacked him resulting in the driver suffering injuries to his arm. The owner then cut out the brand on that animal so that the driver could not identify the animal. So Mr Speaker, I think that the changes that are being proposed will bring about some more responsible behaviour on behalf of some livestock owners. People are not unreasonable, in the aftermath of the 2006 floods. I know of crop farmers on the right bank of the Abary River, who willingly give up their lands so that people could move animals over from the left bank to the right bank of the river to save them from the heavily flooded conditions on the left bank. But what happened after that, livestock owners believed that now it is their God-given right to keep their animals there and to destroy the infrastructure with no respect and no regard for zoning. It is not that lands are not available; it is not that the administration does not have zoning policies in place, but it is because of irresponsible behaviour of people who take the law into their own hands resulting in this kind of behaviour. They refused to do that - to take their cows to the prescribed zone - the Honourable Member Ms Jennifer Wade will agree with me about some of these difficulties encountered by crops farmers and other crops farmers in these areas ... reckless, lawless behaviour.

The areas are there for livestock, but they want all the livestock next to their homes, thus destroying the infrastructure and also destroying the crops.

Mr Speaker, we cannot let the situation continue without intervention. There were some lines of thinking that will allow this problem to work itself out between crops farmers and livestock farmers, but this will not work. Only a couple of months ago, because of the conflict between livestock farmers and crops farmers, a farmer lost his life in a most brutal way when he was beheaded by people who represented livestock interest. The situation was so serious that one rice farmer reported that he was carrying some mangoes for his employees and cattle farmers perceived him to be taking poisonous mangoes into his rice fields. The next day he went back to his fields and all the water from his rice field was let out the day before he *shied* manure in that field ... he lost all that investment. So the administration needs to take into hand a problem that is out of hand and this is one of the ways that the administration is seeking to address this problem and hope that cattle farmers and other livestock farmers will display more reasonable, responsible and mature behaviour and to have concerns for their neighbours, because

the crops will not move; livestock move and destroy the crops.

Mr Speaker, I listened to some of the comments made by some of the speakers before me and I also during the process of speaking with other people would like to report to you that some farmers have concerns as to how in the case of the insertion of Section 7, how will you know the owners of pigs? Reference was made by the Honourable Mrs Backer about the 1866 Act and now we are bringing that back, but the Minister went at pains to explain this point that was conveniently left out by some members. Before you can take the action to move towards destroying the pigs, there is a number of things that you have to do and this is caused by crops farmers themselves and household owners and residents that how is it first you will know who the pigs belong to? If you are in a rural community, it is likely that you will know, but there is a number of other farmers or rearers of pigs. How do you know which one it is? You will have to serve all of them letters, then you will have to notify the police, then the police will have to notify the owners. So there can be some difficulties here, but I submit to you, Sir, that these measures were found necessary to ensure that

people do not go just like that and destroy any pig found either in their residential areas or in their crops areas.

Mr Speaker, I heard reference being made to the rearing of pigs by one section of our population and the Hon Minister Benn, mentioned that pigs are reared by all sections of Guyanese. Mr Speaker, that might very well be a perception based on historical occurrences. I do not hear any reference made to any particular studies being done to show that any segment of the Guyanese population is significantly rearing more pigs than others. Pig rearing is a commercial enterprise, just as poultry, cattle, sheep and goats. Mr Speaker, I found it difficult to accept in the absence of reference to any particular study done to show that any section of the Guyanese population rears more pigs than others.

The addition of Section 7 was made in view of the fact that we all know and appreciate how difficult it can be to apprehend and transport a pig to the pound. Mr Speaker, you are young enough to remember events at fun days and gymkhanas where a particular event is called greasy pig. Now, the organisers of these events do not grease the pig because a lot of people love pork; they grease the pig

unlike greasing a sheep or a goat, because a pig is very difficult to catch and in some cases, if not most cases, the pig escapes and the organisers of these fun-day activities get away with not paying that price. It is in recognition of the fact that it is downright difficult to catch or even to lead pigs to the pound that this aspect of this Amendment would have come into being, because wherever you go anyone who suffers from damages caused by pigs will tell you how difficult it is to apprehend a pig.

So Mr Speaker, the Amendment that is being proposed here is to take measures, as I mentioned earlier to bring about responsible behaviour of some farming neighbours with respect to their counterpart farmers and to take into consideration the damages that can be caused by pigs not only to infrastructure, but also to crops and residents.

Mr Speaker, I have no difficulty in commending this Bill that seeks to amend a number of existing Acts to the House to ensure that we can seek to bring responsible behaviour on behalf of some errant livestock owners. I thank you.
[Applause]

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Minister of Home Affairs to reply

Hon Clement J Rohee: Mr Speaker, I listened very attentively to the Honourable Members who spoke on this Bill and two things were very clear:

- (i) Save and except for my colleagues Mr Dharamkumar Seeraj and Minister Benn who spoke from a different perspective, all the others who spoke have a woeful lack of understanding of pig rearing. That is one thing that came out very clearly and I will explain to you why I said that.
- (ii) The second point that came out very clearly in this debate as short as it is, is the lack of understanding of the economic context in which we must see what this Bill is proposing to do from a strategic perspective.

Mr Speaker, we were told that we are going back in time - the time rock, James Verene - going back in the time machine. But Mr Speaker, as everyone knows laws are not cast in concrete; every civilisation, every generation looks at the evolution of the society, looks at the evolution of the

practices whether economic, commercial, legal and so forth and they seek to fashion the arrangements in which the society is organised, the legal basis on which the infrastructure is built, on laws which may have their roots in the past, other countries experiences and in the future or the vision of the leaders of the country. And I think that is the approach we have to take in that respect.

What I found contradictory in the Honourable Member Mrs Backer's presentation ... She said, she had no problem with the increase of the fines, but in the final analysis, even though she found some high and some low or some in the middle ...

[Interruption]

The Speaker: Somebody's cell phone is ringing on the table or something ...

Hon Clement J Rohee: It is my security cell phone, Mr Speaker. *[Laughter]*

The Speaker: Can the Speaker and Members of Parliament have access to those, Mr Minister?

Hon Clement J Rohee: Mr Speaker, what I find contradictory with the Honourable Member Mrs Backer's element of her contribution was that she said she found no

difficulty with the fines notwithstanding the fact they may have variations in the levels. But in the same breadth she said that it is difficult because of Annandale and Buxton to find the owner of the pigs. Now how do you reconcile - I am trying to negotiate in my understanding ... how do you reconcile the support for the increase in the fines? But the difficulty is finding the owner of the pigs. [*Interruption: 'The killing of the pigs' "Alright, I am coming to the killing just now"*] The question of the owner of the pig is critical in this process. Someone mentioned *en passant* the question of branding and those who are aware of dealing and rearing with pigs would know that pigs are not usually branded. And so the question of ownership of the pig is critical to implementation of the rules that are laid down in this piece of legislation. I do not understand, the Honourable Member is saying, I do not know if she is saying this as a whimsical piece of folly, but she is saying that the destroyers will end up getting the carcass, notwithstanding the clarity with which the legislation speaks to this matter. How on earth will the person who destroys the pig end up getting the carcass, when the legislation says that the carcass will go back to the owner of the pig. Mr Speaker, I want to respectfully submit that the Annandale/Buxton analogy was

totally misplaced. I understand what the Honourable Member was seeking to present to us, but I do not think that this was placed in the proper context. Let me make this point, it is precisely because we took into consideration the customs and morals of persons who live in villages or who live in nearby villages in respect of pig rearing that we have in the Bill so carefully formulated ...*[Interruption: 'That cannot work.']* We have to make it work ... the steps that must be taken before the pig is destroyed. Now the Honourable Member Mrs Holder jumped straight away - live and direct to the question of the killing of the pigs. She did not even take into consideration the process. The question of notification, the role of the police, the role of the owner of the property that was damaged, the role of the owner, so what happen to those two mitigating stages? She just threw them out of the window without even giving those two mitigating stages one iota of consideration; she made a quantum leap from the destruction to killing. Mr Speaker, this is unbelievable, but it just goes to show the mindset

Mr Speaker, this is a programme and what does it say?

AGRICULTURE MONTH

THE RIGHT TO FOOD AND REALITY IN GUYANA

Swine Consultation Session

9 o'clock, 27 October

Guyana School of Agriculture, Mon Repos

The two Ministries - the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Home Affairs ... [*Noisy Interruption*]

The Speaker: Honourable Members, You are getting a bit rowdy. Please, I do not want any cross talking; please let us conduct this debate with some dignity.

Hon Clement J Rohee: Mr Speaker, the programme was organised by the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Agriculture, approximately one hundred pig rearers attended this activity from across the country for a full day consultation on this matter. It was given publicity in the media, because we felt due to the very sensitive issues, we did not have to come to this Honourable House to learn about the sensitivities with respect to this legislation linked to the destruction of pigs. We live with the masses; we walk with the them; we understand them and it is precisely because we felt it necessary to consult, not to dictate, not to come here and pass legislation and impose it upon the people; we talk about good governance; we talk about a consultative process.

This is a manifestation of the extent to which this administration intends to go with respect of having the views of the swine farmers. So we had a full day consultation with these persons. Mr Speaker, it proved to be very successful ... *[Noisy Interruption]*

The Speaker: Honourable Members, we really cannot proceed in this way. I do not want to call names. The Honourable Members know who are interrupting and disturbing the debate. Honourable Members, this is the second time I am appealing to you. Please allow the debate to proceed in an orderly manner to conclusion. Thank you very much.

Hon Clement J Rohee: Thank you Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, the farmers were unanimous in support of the Bill, which was discussed with them. *[Interruption: 'What part of Region 4?]* Apparently, Mr Speaker, we are either having optical delusions or hearing problems and so like in A, B, C that is why I put forward this programme, where I said, this programme was held at the Guyana School of Agriculture at Mon Repos. The Honourable Member is asking what part of Region 4; if he does not know where Mon Repos is in his

own Region; well maybe the Honourable Member Mr Corbin might as well revisit the list of candidates.

Mr Speaker, all the persons that were present at this consultation were unanimous in their views that the Bill is something that should be support - they were unanimous on it.

Mr Speaker, there is also the other side to this issue, where there have been widespread condemnation by many around Guyana in respect of the lethargy and the almost do-nothing approach by the administration to this issue. People out there - I understand and I want to respectfully believe that the Honourable Members of the Opposition have supporters out there. They claim that they have forty percent of the electorate. I do not know if that is the kind of view of the AFC in the representation in the House. The point I want to make is that the PNCR-1G obviously have supporters out there, who know precisely about this problem and therefore if they know about the problem, the question is what does the administration do to address it or is it that they want us to do nothing and then to come back and use a political argument to say, this thing is happening and we are not doing anything.

Mr Speaker, there has been a call for action. Many persons who have suffered losses that came up in the consultations because of the destruction of the pigs said, what about compensation ... they asked about compensation. They want to know who is going to compensate them for their losses, because the owner of the pig after being destroyed is going to get back the carcass and he is not going to get any compensation for the damage which the pig caused to his farm or whatever the case may be. And so when we talk about rights as the Honourable Member Mrs Holder was seeking to introduce, we have to have a balance in these rights. The Honourable Member said that animal rights activist will oppose this legislation, because of the quantum leap she made to the shooting of the pigs. I do not have any problems with animal rights activists; in the same way I have no difficulty with environmental rights activists, but in society you have to balance these rights and obligations as well; so it is not only a question of rights, it is also obligations. The people who have the right to own these straying animals, they must also have the obligation to ensure that these animals - pigs or otherwise - are kept in a state that does not disturb the peace and tranquillity and the economic activity of someone else who have equal rights to be able to

do so. *[Applause]* So when we talk about rights, let us also speak about obligations and let us look at both factors, all the parties that are involved. Then to make, if I may, (I hope the word *ridiculous*) is not un-parliamentary.

The Speaker: It is.

Hon Clement J Rohee: Well let me withdraw it. *Absurd* - the absurdity of the argument went to such an extent where the Honourable Member Mrs Holder said, she does not want to take sides with the pig rearer or the person who suffers losses. Mr Speaker, we make laws in this Honourable House and laws not only must be balanced, but it must come down on the side of one or the other. So how can we be neutral? How can we have neutrality in the dispensation of the of justice, when you have a person owning a pig that has destroyed another man's property and only one side gets justice in respect to this matter. Mr Speaker, I and the Administration - we on this side of the House, of course, we have taken into consideration the ethnic sensitivities in respect to this matter. Anyone who is born and grown in Guyana and walked the villages and the streets of this country, and who have mixed with farmers, would know that there are sensitivities on this question. That is precisely why we made that section - treating with the destruction of pigs - in such

a way, because you could see clearly any impartial person, when he reads that section of the Bill would recognise that here is an Administration that is seeking to tread carefully here precisely because of the sensitivities and the peculiarities that is related to this particular aspect of animal husbandry in this country. You could see it. The Honourable Member said, I was dancing, but I was not dancing. I was simply reflecting what the Bill is proposing.

Mr Speaker, I am happy that my colleague the Honourable Member Mr Seeraj made the point in a very graphic way how difficult it is to catch a pig. It is not easy. Try throwing a lasso around a pig and see what is going to happen. *[Interruption: 'You are creating offence.']* My dear, I see, your colleague the Honourable Member Mr Corbin decides to go on a little distant journey for three seconds when you made that comment about creating offence to catch. So we will run around with paling staves and hammers, creating fences wherever these pigs are. *[Laughter]* Could you imagine how impossible that is? And we will run around with couple bags of nails also ... *[Interruption: 'Oh boy!' Mr Corbin coughs ... " Thank you Mr Corbin, I think that cough is a good symbol"]*

Mr Speaker, the Honourable Member asked why we did not keep in place what we had for Cricket World Cup. Oh boy, here we go

again. Mr Speaker, I do not think that anyone on this side of the House has a look at the issue from a myopic point of view. I cannot speak for anyone on that side of the House, but everyone would recognise that what we put in place for Cricket World Cup was a short-term measure, but we cannot live only on short-term measures. The country, the administration, you yourselves in debates from time to time whether it is in budget or otherwise, you said that we must have a vision; you said that we must have some strategy; you said that we must have some plan; therefore you cannot just stick to short-term remedies and holler Cricket World Cup. You have to bring legislation and put legislation in place to deal with these matters from a short, medium and long term perspective and that is what we are seeking to do here.

Mr Speaker, the final point that I would like to make is this -the economics of this thing. Guyana is basically an agricultural country. Some people say that because it is an agricultural country, we must allow thing to go any way; allow the cows to stray; allow the pigs to roam; allow the sheep to graze wherever they want to graze; we have problems between rice farmers and cattle rearers and so forth. Being an agricultural country with the humblest respect does not mean that we must have a lawless society. There are many countries in Europe whose economic base is built on agriculture. There are many States in America

and many provinces in Canada; places in Australia that practice good agricultural best practice measures. When we go to those countries, we admire what they have; when we go to those countries, we asked why we cannot do this? But when we come to Guyana it is totally different picture. Mr Speaker, if we are seeking to introduce value-added production, down-stream processing, agro-processing, if we are seeking to diversify our economy, obviously we have to move to things like producing ham, bacon and exporting pork. Therefore for us to be able to participate in the CARICOM market, are we going to have pigs and animals running around the place without paying attention to health issues? Minister Benn raised the question, sanitary and phyto-sanitary measures are very critical to ensuring that. Why are we seeking so hard to ensure that foot and mouth disease never returns to Guyana, because if it does, it makes it difficult for us to export our beef to CARICOM? In the same way if there are pigs roaming all over the place; in the same if there are pigs wallowing all over, going into people's latrines and so on and the people from CARICOM and the health inspectors come here and they see these things, what are they going to say? *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Yes, Honourable Member

Mr Raphael GC Trotman: On a point of order, Mr Speaker ... on the occasion of the merriment that we have here this afternoon,

the irrelevance of this debate from the Minister, I wish to quote from Standing Order No. 44 (1) that the question be now put. The debate now ends *[Noisy Interruption]* 24:51

The Speaker: Honourable Members, is there a seconder please?

Mrs Sheila VA Holder: I moved to second the motion.

The Speaker: Honourable Members, a motion has been moved and I am now required by Standing Order No. 44 (1) to put it without debate.

Question -

That the question be now put

Question put and negatived.

Proceed Hon Member Mr Rohee

Hon Clement J Rohee: Mr Speaker, I think the Honourable Member must recognise that sometimes when you move these

things, you must look down the road to the future. This is just a point to note.

I want to continue by saying that Guyana if it wants to have quality exports of not only rice, bauxite, timber; we are pursuing a policy of diversification of agriculture. In seeking to diversify agriculture we have to ensure that the cows, the pigs and all animals for example even our poultry are managed in such a way that any time health inspectors come and we argue for exports to go to CARICOM, we do not have any problem. That is the strategic economic issue that is behind the Pounds Bill. The problem is that when we look at it from a perspective point of view and we put these strategic issues on the table, people get very upset about it. They do not want to hear these things. I believe that this country will benefit in the long term; all the stakeholders will benefit in the long run from this piece of legislation that we are seeking to have adopted in this Honourable House. And so Mr Speaker, with those few words, I therefore move that this Bill be read a Second time. *[Applause]*

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time

IN COMMITTEE

The Chairman: Are there any amendments going to be proposed, Honourable Members?

Since there are no amendments going to be proposed I will put the clauses together.

Clauses, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 of PARTS 1 and 2

Question put and agreed to.

Clauses 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 of PARTS 1 and 2, as printed, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

PART 3 Section 3; PART 4, Section 4 and PART 5,

Section 5

Question put and agreed to

PART 3 Section 3; PART 4 Section 4 and PART 5 Section 5, as printed, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill

ASSEMBLY RESUMED

Bill reported to the Assembly without amendment, read the Third time and passed as printed.

The Speaker: Honourable Members, that completes consideration of this matter.

Honourable Members, the next matter as listed is a motion to be moved by the Honourable Prime Minister, but the matter immediately after that is a very short motion and I am asking for you to allow me to deal with that first so that we can get it out of the way.

(iii) COMMITTEES' BUSINESS

MOTIONS

5. ADOPTION OF REPORT OF THE STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE

BE IT RESOLVED:

That the Report of the Standing Orders Committee on the motions for the amendment to Standing Order No. 54 be adopted.

The Honourable Minister of Health

Hon Dr Leslie S Ramsammy: Mr Speaker, earlier today, you presented to the House the Report of the Standing Orders Committee on a Motion moved by Minister Rohee on 21 January reviewed Standing Order No. 54 and on a Motion moved by the

Honourable Member Mr Trotman on 24 May, the National Assembly referred Standing Order No. 10 for review by the Standing Orders Committee. These were considered, the Standing Orders Committee made a recommendation to amend Standing Order No. 54 and I, today, ask the National Assembly to adopt the Report of the Standing Orders Committee.

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Member Mr Murray

Mr Winston S Murray: Mr Speaker, as the Report of the Standing Orders Committee shows, the People's National Congress Reform-One Guyana does not support the Amendment of Standing Order No. 54 and I wish to crave your indulgence to explain the position of the PNCR-1G on this matter.

Mr Speaker, what support of the Report on this particular matter would in effect mean is that there would be an abridgement of time between the First reading of a Bill in the National Assembly and its Second reading from seven days to six days. We do not believe that this is at all in any way helpful to the process of parliamentary oversight. In fact, without any problem in its

operation the Standing Orders that preceded the ones we now have in force provided for a seven-day period between the First and Second readings of the Bill and we cannot understand the logic behind the need to abridge this time.

Sir, all along we hear statements being made about the increase role given to Parliament, about increasing the oversight responsibilities of the National Assembly. Very often, Sir, many of us do not see the Official Gazette on the day of its publication; we will be lucky if we see it one week after its publication, so even with a seven-day period, there is inherent in the seven-day period by itself some difficulty in accessing the information, but we have lived with it as a tradition that we have grown accustomed to and have accepted it as the basis on which we must operate and function.

But what we are being asked to here, Sir, and I would like to hear the real explanation for the need to abridge this time by one day. I have hear it said that Parliament meets on a Thursday and unless we make it six days between the first and the second Readings, we will discommode for remove the possibility of a Bill being introduce on one Thursday and not being allowed to be read for a Second time on the following Thursday. But Sir, we know that Parliament could meet on any day of the week, as today we are meeting on a Friday and I believe that one of the reasons why we

are meeting today rather than yesterday is indeed to satisfy this very seven-day requirement. And so what is wrong with that? If we meet on a Thursday of one week, we allow seven days for the digestion of the Bill as presented and very often they are complicated Bills that come to the National Assembly and seven days one should hardly attempt to begrudge the National Assembly, certainly the Opposition Members of the National Assembly a period of seven days for proper consideration of that Bill, to research thoroughly and to come prepared for a debate after seven days. I do not understand; I cannot see any reasonable logic behind shifting the seven-day period - pulling it back by one day. If anything, it should have been extended as a concession to allow opposition more time to apply their minds to legislation that is being considered to be brought for debate to the House.

Sir, we want to go on record as very strenuously objecting to the introduction of time between the First reading of a Bill and its Second reading. We will take this beyond the halls of this Parliament as demonstration of the Government speaking though one side of its mouth about enhancing the role of Parliament, about increasing the oversight responsibilities of the National Assembly and then doing things that are abrogating that possibility or removing it or diminishing it in very tangible ways.

And so, Mr Speaker, we will not support this Report, because we do not support the abridgement of time between the First and Second readings of a Bill. Thank you, Sir. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Member Mr Trotman

Mr Raphael GC Trotman: Mr Speaker, as already stated in the Committee, the Alliance For Change cannot support the proposal. We take a slightly different view to that of the PNCR-1G. We believe that a government, yes, should have the right to abridge time, but however, that provision has already been made in the Standing Orders. The framers of these Standing Orders contemplated a situation, where should government need to rush legislation through the House before the seven days; they are permitted to do so. If I may, with your leave quote the words:

Unless the Assembly on motion made and question put agreed to proceed with the Bill at an earlier date.

The point being that the power is already in the hands of the government to abridge the time and I agree with Mr Murray that if we have seven days and seven days were carved out of a thinking that said that we were moving into a new dispensation where we would have better management of our business, where MPs would have an idea of what is coming with seven days notice rather than three; why is it that we have to move from seven to six? We appreciate that the exigencies of the situation may require from time to time that time be shortened or even lengthened, but we have not found or have not been told of any good and sufficient reasons why something that was agreed upon by consensus not so long ago and accepted as being the new modern way to go is suddenly being changed simply because we are told it is a right which is vested in the government. That right has already been catered for and we, in the absence of any good and sufficient reason as already pointed out in your presence as you chaired that meeting, to the Hon Member Dr Ramsammy, we cannot support this Amendment from seven to six days, but accept the right that the government has to shorten time and we are prepared provided that the request is good and proper and the exigencies of the situation demand it and to support the abridgement whenever the opportunity comes. Thank you, Mr Speaker. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Minister of Health

Hon Dr Leslie S Ramsammy: Mr Speaker, this proposed amendment has been thoroughly discussed at the Standing Order Committee and Mr Murray also knew some history of this, because we have also discussed this in a previous Select Committee. At the time, we, at least on the government's side, I am not going to speak on behalf of anybody else, when we change three days to seven days, it was with the intent that we can go from one Thursday to the next Thursday. Many members even from the Opposition always talked about let us have some order on how we meet, so that if we start going from one Thursday to Friday and then you change it, there is no standing day, so for those members who need to schedule their time, this creates some difficulty. That is one of the reasons.

In terms of what the Honourable Member Mr Trotman is talking about, you know when we do this; when we asked for the suspension of Standing Orders, we are accused of being reckless, of abandoning the principle of consultation and so on. These are

the reasons why we move to preserve what we want, to be at least able to go from one Thursday to the next.

Mr Speaker, I therefore move again that the Report of the Standing Order Committee be adopted by the National Assembly.

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

Question put and agreed to

Motion carried

6. AMENDMENT TO STANDING ORDER NO. 54

WHEREAS Standing Order No. 54 provides that an interval of not less than seven (7) days must elapse between the First and Second Readings of a Bill;

AND WHEREAS a sitting of the National Assembly is generally held on a Thursday;

AND WHEREAS the stipulation of seven (7) days does not allow for the Second reading of the Bill on the following Thursday;

AND WHEREAS it is desirable that Standing Order No. 54 be amended to allow for a Bill, read a First time on a Thursday to be read a Second time on the following Thursday;

BE IT RESOLVED:

That in accordance with Standing Order No. 110 this National Assembly refers this motion to amend Standing Order No. 54 to the Standing Orders Committee for further consideration with a view to effect the desired amendment.

Hon Dr Leslie S Ramsammy: Mr Speaker, I would like to move that Standing Order No. 54 be amended as outlined in the Report of the Standing Order Committee.

Question put and agreed to.

Motion carried.

[In accordance with the Report of the Standing Orders Committee the Assembly amended the Resolved Clause to read as follows:

RESOLVED that -

Standing Order No. 54 be amended to provide an interval of not less than six (6) days between the First and Second Reading of a Bill, unless the Assembly, on motion made and question put, agree to proceed with the Bill at an earlier date.]

7. AMENDMENT TO STANDING ORDERS NO. 10

WHEREAS the hours of Parliament are prescribed by Standing Order No. 10 of the Standing Orders of the National Assembly to be 2.00 p.m. to 10.00 p.m. with suspension at 4.00 p.m. and 7.00 p.m. respectively;

AND WHEREAS Members of the National Assembly have expressed varying views on the times for sittings of the Assembly with some Members favouring the commencement of sessions at an earlier time whilst other appear to prefer the strict observance of the prescribed times;

AND WHEREAS it would be desirable for a compromise to be found so as to allow for the hours of sitting to be varied from time to time by the Parliamentary Management Committee depending on the business to be disposed of;

BE IT RESOLVED:

That the Standing Orders Committee examines the issue of the times at which the Assembly shall meet including, the right of the Speaker to suspend the Standing Orders to allow the time to be abridged or varied and to report to the National Assembly its findings and recommendations within three months.

The Speaker: Honourable Member Mr Trotman, at the last meeting of the Standing Orders Committee, you indicated that you wanted to withdraw your motion. I therefore, call on you to withdraw the motion.

Mr Raphael GC Trotman: Mr Speaker, having regard to the discussions which ensued in the Committee, I hereby seek your leave to withdraw the motion in my name.

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member, the Motion is hereby withdrawn.

[Motion Withdrawn]

Honourable Members we can now move to the next Motion on the Order Paper, marking Dr Cheddi Jagan's entry into Parliament. The Honour Prime Minister and Minister of Public Works and Communication will move the Motion, but before you start Honourable Member, according to the Standing Orders, we are required to suspend at this time for one hour. I will take the view of Members that we suspend at 7.30 pm. Is that acceptable? Hopefully we can get in two speakers by that time and then we will suspend for half-an-hour.

Mr Winston S Murray: For half an hour, Sir?

The Speaker: Well the time according to the Standing Orders, we are required to suspend for one hour at seven o'clock and so I am recommending that we suspend at 7.30 pm for half an hour so that we can get through with our business. Hopefully we can conclude two members by 7.30pm.

(iii) GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MOTION

8. MARKING OF DR CHEDI JAGAN'S ENTRY INTO PARLIAMENT

WHEREAS the First Session of the Fourth Legislative Council of the then British Guiana was opened on December 18, 1947;

AND WHEREAS Dr Cheddi Jagan at the age of 29 was administered the oath as a Member of the Legislature on the said day, having won the seat for Central Demerara (Buxton to Kitty) at the November, 1947 elections;

AND WHEREAS Dr Jagan's victory at the polls was unprecedented as it was the first occasion on which a militant representative of the working class secured a seat in the colonial Legislative Council;

AND WHEREAS his entry into the Legislative Council began a long illustrious career as a dedicated Parliamentarian extending for a period of 45 years until 1992 when he became ineligible to remain seated on being elected the Executive President of Guyana;

AND WHEREAS he created his unique trade mark as a political leader, a trade unionist, a Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and subsequently, President of the nation;

AND WHEREAS Dr C Jagan was never deterred in the early days when almost every question he asked and every motion he tabled was left unanswered or defeated, nor did he ever stop believing that Parliament was the forum for the battle of ideas and representation;

AND WHEREAS his career as a Parliamentarian was marked by his persistent and unrelenting struggle for the working people of the then British Guiana, for universal suffrage, for independence from British colonial rule, for fair and equitable trade relations, for the end to colonial and imperialist rule globally and in the post-independence period for democracy;

AND WHEREAS on becoming President at his inaugural speech to the new Parliament he called on Parliament to become a truly deliberative forum;

BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly gives due recognition to this outstanding Guyanese who was the longest serving Member of the National Assembly on this anniversary of his entrance to the Legislative 60 years ago;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly agrees to pay tribute to Dr Cheddi Jagan as the longest serving Parliamentarian by the preparation of a special Edition of the Hansard containing a collection of the speeches spanning his tenure in the National Assembly for display in the Library of the National Assembly.

The Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Public Works and Communications

Hon Samuel AA Hinds: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, it is a privilege and an honour for me to lead the debate in this House to make the 60th Anniversary of Dr Jagan entering the Legislature of our country - at that time the Legislative Council of British Guiana on 18th December, 1947.

I am pleased that we in this House - all parties in this House - have been able to reach accord on a reworded Motion which can be supported by all the parties in the House.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Dr Jagan's victory winning the Buxton to Kitty Constituency in 1947, was an event that signalled many things to come. Cheddi won the seat at the young age of twenty-nine years, just over four years after his return to British Guiana from his studies in the USA.

This victory certainly demanded notice and indicated changes to come, when a young man of twenty-nine would defeat Mr John D'Aguiar representing the traditional business interest in an election that was till based on a limited franchise.

British Guiana was about to change. The working people of British Guiana, the descendants of slaves and indentured workers were being awakened to the opportunities and the possibilities of participation in the politics in our country; the possibility of gaining independence, the call to nationhood.

Cheddi's victory in 1947 would have benefited from the formation of the Political Affairs Committee (PAC) a year earlier and that victory would have heartened Cheddi and his comrades and the launching of the people's political party less than three years later.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, we should not allow the location of the constituency won by Cheddi to go unnoticed - Buxton to Kitty. Cheddi won his first seat on votes from Buxton and Buxton was ever dear to him - to the People's Progressive Party and the PPP/C. We know that the Buxton/Kitty Constituency included a number of villages of varied make-up and it was always Cheddi's intention to base his political activity on winning the support of all the people of Guyana whatever their race, whatever their economic standing. He believed that he had a message which would appeal to everyone.

The 1947 Election and Cheddi's participation was significant as it ignited the interest of a number of young Guyanese in politics. I have heard it said that so it was with a young teacher listening to Cheddi at a campaign meeting in Perseverance and that young teacher was Sydney King of Buxton as he was known then, who would become an active campaigner for Cheddi, and later a Minister of Works in the 1953 PPP Government.

And it was the 1953 Election that first got me aware of the PPP and Cheddi and Forbes, at the time when I was just over nine years old and in Mahaicony where I lived, I would admit from all appearances, my family members voted for the local boy - the local dispenser doctor Eric Phillips, but at the same time I could see that they were intrigued by these two young men Cheddi and Forbes, who would seem to be daring to take on the British. They were intrigued by them and they wondered whether they would survive. They probably believed that the British would not allow them to survive and they, like many Guyanese played safe. They knew the local man much better. So that is when I got to learn of politics and of Cheddi and Forbes at the time and of the PPP and I would have never imagined that after so many years, I would have been associated and would have worked with Cheddi.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, politics is necessarily competing and often adversarial and it might not be reasonable to expect praises to be lauded from persons in other parties. However, on this occasion, in the eleventh year of the passing of Dr Jagan, I think that the majority of Guyanese are ready to recognise him as an outstanding Guyanese and concede that he was always a nationalist. For us on this side of the House, for us of the PPP and the PPP/C, we would maintain that Cheddi was the

first nationalist - the Father of the Nation. *[Applause]* And it need not have been so.

Indeed, Cheddi has been so identified with Guyana and the struggles of Guyana; we hardly ever noticed that Cheddi was a first-generation Guyanese. He would have grown up in a family - an atmosphere mainly of immigrants, new arrivals or recent arrivals to Guyana and we know that it often takes a number of generations before families that have moved to a new place fully arrive in the new country. Now that many of us have relatives with children born in the USA and Canada, we know of the many inhibitions of becoming steeped in the new country and we know too of the expectations of links and strings within the immigrant community to keep one within the immigrant community. And so I think, first of all, we should wonder how it is that he so readily and quickly became a man of British Guiana - a man of the place of his birth. I think Cheddi himself sometimes wondered as to where he would have gotten his bit of rebellious streak. And so Hari Narine Ramkarran, on delivering the eulogy at his cremation wondered what was in the air that he breathed as a child at Port Mourant that made him such a nationalist.

We of the PPP and the PPP/C would argue that when we think of what Cheddi had to endure from about 1962 to 1968 and then from 1968 unto 1992, if Cheddi was not the nationalist he was; if

he did not put Guyana before himself and his party and his supporters, he could not resist calls to actions which might well have seen the break up and partition of our country. And for this, I think, we have all right to recognise him. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Cheddi had to spend much of his life in protest and many may want to describe him as a protestor, but I and we of the PPP/C see Cheddi primarily as one who wanted to see our country grow and develop and most of all ourselves - we Guyanese. Growth and development of people and country was the focus of Cheddi's 1957 and 1968 governments. We made tremendous progress during those years.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the people also think of Cheddi as one who was, maybe, forever seeking assistance, debt relief and so on, but I think the case could be made and the case should be made that Cheddi wanted us Guyanese to be leaders in developing our country. That was his desire. For some unexplained reason I recall having this feeling way back in 1962 at the time of that very contentious budget - the Kaldor's Budget of 1962 - maybe because I was nineteen years old then and was caught up with Guyanese building Guyana. I thought that that was a move for us to start building our country, to invest in our

country from some of our own revenues. I would say that maybe I was disappointed at the reaction at that time.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I think that no one would deny the efforts that Cheddi always made to have in his party and in the leadership of his party and in government people from all regions of Guyana, all religious backgrounds and all races. We could look at his first governments, but I think I can speak of when there was prospects of the People's progressive Party returning to government in 1992 and his attempts again to stretch his arms and encircle as many Guyanese that would work with him, neither party dominating the other nor no one dominating the other.

I think that he earned our respect and our recognition in establishing the civic component in looking for and personally meeting many persons who had been outside of politics and others who had been in politics and been in the opposing party; he looked for people who would work with himself and his party to bring the possibility of a new beginning and to turn a new leaf in the history of our country. And for that, too, and for this innovation of a civic component taking new people into responsible, important positions in his government, I think, we owe him a lot of recognition and appreciation for that.

I recall that as we talked about persons who may be attracted to work with us and who would come to government with us, how happy Cheddi was when Jeffrey Fraser accepted to run with us and be ready to come into Parliament. This was significant; because Jeffrey Fraser said some time in talking that there might have been a time when Cheddi and his father neither of them saw a good bone in the other. I think that this was one of the features and characteristic of Cheddi that we certainly should appreciate his readiness and willingness to work with people with whom he may have differed and differed very intensely his readiness to establish new relationships for the good of Guyana.

And for these reasons, Mr Speaker, I think the Resolved Clauses can attract the support of all of us in Parliament, to give due recognition to this outstanding Guyanese, who was the longest serving member of the National Assembly, on the anniversary of his entrance to the Legislature sixty years ago.

And further, as an act of tribute to Dr Cheddi Jagan, that a special edition of the Hansard containing a collection of his speeches spanning his tenure in the National Assembly be prepared and be displayed in the Library of the National Assembly so that it could be there and so that it could inspire the new Members of the Assembly from time to time and inspire others, students who may

come to this Assembly to learn about what has happened, what people have said in this Assembly over the years.

So Mr Speaker, I again state that it is a privilege and an honour for me, one that I would have never expected to have had to lead this debate, to mark the Sixtieth Anniversary of Dr Jagan's entry into the Legislature of our country and I move the Motion.

[Applause]

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Prime Minister

The Honourable Member Mr Robert Corbin

Mr Robert HO Corbin: Mr Speaker, the Guyanese writer David Dabydeen in 1998 wrote:

You were born of cane not as the planters hope -

barefooted, beggarly of mine, but hugely wise,

a soul blown high by the incensed breath

of a conquered slave.

*Cane made you a vision of mankind,
so let the empty-handed, toothless, blind,
the endless poor, the desperate, the folk;
those whom we spurn, debauchered, trade,
come for anew they will find.*

*What is most healing in mankind - your hands
forever opened giving fatherly
your ceaseless heart, your mind's nobility.*

Mr Speaker, he was writing as many authors and poets did tributes to the late Cheddi Bharat Jagan whose participation in this National Assembly for over forty-five years we recognise today on the sixtieth anniversary of such an occasion and I am pleased as a Member of this Parliament, Leader of the Opposition and one who has had the opportunity to spend some thirty-five years during that period around this Parliament to be associated with this Motion this afternoon and in support of it. *[Applause]*

Indeed, Mr Speaker, had I been a singer I might have sung a song *Oh, How I Wish This Evening ... [Interruption]*

The Speaker: Mr Corbin, I think you have some talent in that regard.

Mr Robert HO Corbin: No, my late brother, Sir.

The Speaker: Well it runs in the family.

Mr Robert HO Corbin: Oh, how I wish that the manner in which the consensus was arrived at for this Motion here today in this Parliament could herald a new beginning in the political life in this country that we can always sit and discuss matters for the future of Guyana. *[Applause]* I am pleased to report that the initiative which we embarked upon to find a Motion that was acceptable to us all in this House and I hope it is to my other colleagues. It was arrived at without much fuss and I think it is fitting on this particular occasion that this Motion is being passed without the historical rancour and conflict.

Indeed, after fifty-four years of universal adult suffrage almost fifty-five years of mass party politics in Guyana and some forty-one years of political independence, I regret that Guyana today cannot boast of having its political act together. It is true that Guyana remains to some extent politically polarised with continuous political conflict - and that is not necessarily a bad thing if it is done constructively - in some cases ethnic divisions

and with some sections of our population still feeling alienated from the mainstream of economic and social activity.

Mr Speaker, I believe that historically our villages and their development exemplified the resilience of our ancestors despite the history of slavery and indentureship, their ability to overcome adversity, the fact that they overcame the harsh conditions of slavery and within a very short time were able to purchase villages and establish communities around Guyana that our Indian brothers and sisters in this country who despite the harsh conditions of indentureship and the exploited nature of the relationship between the plantocracy and the workers were able to venture within days at the end of their indentureship period to build up strong agricultural foundations in our society.

And indeed, our Indigenous Amerindians demonstrated historically that notwithstanding the difficulties which they faced with the arrival of the European invaders that they, too, despite driven further hinterland, were able to survive.

I believe that all of us in this House ought to be convinced that Guyana as a country has no where to go and no realistic chance of survival and revitalisation without peace, reconciliation and harmony; a peace I believe that is based on justice and the recognition of the rights and aspirations of all Guyana, whatever

their ethnic or racial origins, whatever their social backgrounds and religious beliefs, that these should be respected, protected and enforced since they are the foundations of a stable society.

Indeed, I think it is the late Martin Luther King who made one of those memorable quotations, one that I have in my office about true peace being not merely the absence of tension, but the presence of justice.

The question which we face today on this historic occasion is whether we have the vision and the will to find permanent solutions instead of bandied answers to the problems we faced in Guyana. And lest Members think that I am somehow straying from this historic moment, these thoughts flew into my mind as I considered what I should say on an occasion such as this when we honour a son of our soil, who has indeed embraced some of those very ideas of making this country a place that we can all be proud of, a country in which those tensions can be removed, where peace and harmony will exist and in which there could indeed be social justice for all.

Indeed, Dr Cheddi Jagan made a significant contribution to this country which no sane person, I believe, can deny. The speaker before me attempted to field some historical high points of his contribution and I have no doubt that we will hear a lot more of it.

We know that he astounded many, not only by coming to this Parliament, but in fact growing up in those conditions which are earlier described among the challenges of the post-indentureship period from parents who had to face those harsh exploitative relationships that I described earlier. And according to his own writing, his mother had the opportunity to attend school; his father according to him had just about four years or there about and had to leave to work in the cane fields, yet out of those circumstances, he was not only to rise above adversity, but indeed rise to significant heights academically attending Queens College, Howard University from 1936 to 1938, North Western University Dental School and not like many at the time thinking of those *green pastures of the north*, not forgetting his roots and the conditions in which he grew up in being able to come back to Guyana to make a contribution to the development of the country. And so I believe that it is all well-known, his political and trade union activities over the years, which I believe are well documented.

And to put in context my introductory remarks I look for a few of his quotations to put in my presentation and I quote one of them in which he stated:

In multi-ethnic societies like Guyana, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, it is necessary to fight

against racist ideology and racist stereotypes which were created and fostered by the capitalist colonist ruling class and later exploited by self-serving politicians. It must be recognised that whatever our racial origin, we have a common heritage. Our forefathers regardless of ethnic, religious and cultural differences watered the sugar cane with their blood, sweat and tears.

And the second one which I think puts my presentation in proper context is one in which he stated, and this is some time in the 1960s:

The four cornerstones in our present needs:

- *racial harmony;*
- *national unity;*
- *national independence; and*
- *peace and progress.*

Without racial harmony there can be no national unity and without national unity there can be no national independence and without national independence there can no progress.

Mr Speaker, it is clear that in identifying this occasion to recognise the contribution of a son of the soil, who rose to distinction from the son of a cane farmer to the President of the Republic of Guyana that we ought to use this occasion to reflect a bit upon how much further we need to go to make Guyana a place that we can all be proud of and to make some resolutions that we must find new ways to discuss how we can strengthen our efforts and work together to speak about an act to remove every instance of injustice in our villages and in our communities. For it is only by respecting each other, speaking with each other and acting together that we can succeed in our efforts to remove all the instances of social, political and economic injustice. I want to assure this House and Members on the other side of this House that the PNCR-1G has always been prepared and is still willing and prepared to sit down and discuss the concerns of many of our peoples in this country so that we can use this occasion in a positive way to take this country forward. *[Applause]*

Not so long ago, lest it might be assumed that I am having these thoughts only today, I think it was in 2004, shortly after I assumed the leadership of the People's National Congress Reform, I emphasized then, and I still do, that national cohesion in our country has to include taking seriously on board and addressing the concerns of every ethnic or interest group in this country and

we must be prepared to discuss these issues frankly with each other. I said then, and I repeat, that we must be willing and prepared to address the concerns of every Guyanese of African origin equally as we must be prepared to discuss the concerns of Guyanese of Indian origin or the concerns of Amerindians and the Guyanese of Chinese or Portuguese origin. Consequently we must purposely address the Amerindian land issue just as we should address the African issue of reparation and claims of ancestral lands. We must also take on board issues raised by the Indian community and their serious concerns about security. I still hold those views today and I hold them not because I was the originator, but because it was quite clear from the utterances of the late leader of the PPP Dr Cheddi Jagan from the quotations that I referred to made several decades ago that these issues were also of concern to him.

In fact, as late as 1992 if I might illustrate that these concerns remained with him throughout his life. He stated:

I give my solemn pledge that my government will never discriminate against any person or persons on the ground of race, religion or political creed that the essential freedoms will be preserved and we will respect the rights of all.

So I mentioned these to say that my concerns are not unique and if we are paying due recognition to one who has made a contribution to this Parliament, to Guyana, to the World Socialist Movement, to ideological discussions in this country and the raising of the consciousness of the working class of Guyana, it will not be sufficient just to mark this occasion in a nominal way, but to really move beyond that and explore the ideals which motivated the person whom we recognise today.

And so I urge that as we commemorate this occasion, we end the vicious cycle of recrimination. I say so because today we need to keep our discussions, and I particularly crafted my words, to keep these discussions at a certain level deserving of the occasion. It is true that in my thirty-five years in this Parliament we have had our high points and low points at all levels and on both sides of the House and I want to reflect on those final moments in the Parliament - a Parliament that, despite our vigorous debates, serious disagreements, we have always managed to have healthy exchanges in the corridors and in the tea room and to respect each other's opinions even though we vigorously sometimes disagreed with each other, even though sometimes in the hustings in the various communities, in the various campaigns, we carried on very strenuous activities pursuing our own beliefs and views, we were still able to enter the halls of this Chamber

with civility and to discuss those issues which affected the people of Guyana in a very responsible manner.

And so today, I want to urge that if we are thinking about moving Guyana forward, the vicious cycle needs to be broken. I recall in 1964, I am not trying to go back in history, one can go back to the PNC speaking about what happened to the seven years before and by 1992 the PPP was speaking of the twenty-eight years of the PNC. I suppose if that cycle continues by 2011, the PNCR-1G might be talking about the bad years of the PPP/C, but the point I am making is that certainly Guyana has to break that cycle, where we need to look forward recognising the contributions of all to the development of this country and giving tribute where tribute is due. For cohesion to be achieved, we therefore have to close the chapter of the past not forgetting it, but learning from our past experiences, mistakes and successes. No single person in history has only good deeds; no single personality in politics in Guyana and elsewhere would have activities that cannot be subject to some criticism, but I believe it behoves us who objectively look at history to make an assessment of the overall contributions made by those persons to arrive at a basic conclusion as to whether that contribution contributed positively to the development of this country.

And I am pleased to acknowledge this afternoon, Mr Speaker, that one cannot deny the fact that Dr Cheddi Jagan made a positive contribution to the political, economic and social development of this country. *[Applause]*

And therefore I say, let us honour our past leaders; Dr Cheddi Jagan today and we will find others as the days go by and we must recognise them; recognising those contributions in a very positive way to bring a measure of understanding and healing in our country so that one day we might reflect on the significant contributions of your own late father Mr Boysie Ramkarran who entertained us so regularly in this House. It is a pity in those days we only had the Hansard; now we have computer with voices and cameras, so I am afraid that much of Guyana lost out from some of the lighter moments when he had such a wit in every situation to break the monotony with humour; and so there are many who contributed not to this Parliament but to Guyana. The co-leader of the PPP, who the mover of the Motion recognised the late Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham, who together with Cheddi worked in the very early days to break that cycle of colonial domination; to awaken the consciousness of the working people of this country and to let them recognise that the colonial powers were not here to stay, but that with proper and effective mass organisation, we would take this country from a

colony to political independence. I believe that if such an approach is adopted, where we give credit where it is due, we will make a significant contribution to healing and genuine reconciliation and I believe that for the sake of our youths and the future of our country, it is the only way forward to close some of the conflictual pages of the past and work resolutely for a bright and glorious future to bequeath a rich legacy to our future generations.

Mr Speaker, I conclude by referring to another poem, as I said, this is a nostalgic moment not for the routine conflict, we have unanimity on this matter by William Abbinettes and this is what he wrote:

*His Excellency Dr Cheddi Jagan, his sterling
struggles and performances identified the man*

*He fought for the suburban class the best way he
can*

Opposing elements he did not ban

He was undoubtedly the best

He had passed all the national test

He was leader filled with zest

Certainly he surpassed the rest

A true hero of this nation

He was indeed a most committed champion

*Faithful to the working class struggles he
remained*

*For that reason international respect he had
gained*

His view of democracy he maintained

He fought ardently for it to be regained

And he ended by saying:

Our national hero has now fallen

His works and struggles will never be forgotten

*He gave his whole life for those who were down
trodden*

A nation is aggrieved his expiration so sudden

I think this is a fitting tribute by Mr William Abbinettes ... and so as we reflect on this motion, which gives due recognition to this outstanding Guyanese and a long-standing Member of this

Parliament I urge that his speeches be properly prepared and chronicled in a special edition of the Hansard. And that the best tribute we can pay on this occasion is to use this occasion as the beginning of a new chapter in which we display the kind of determination, which we displayed in arriving at such a consensus Motion and that together we will objectively look at the future ensuring that in all that we do Guyana's interest comes first.

Mr Speaker, it gives me great pleasure in supporting the Motion.
Thank you. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

We will suspend for half an hour.

19:45H - SUSPENSION OF SITTING

20:25H - RESUMPTION OF SITTING

The Honourable Member Mr Ramotar

Mr Donald R Ramotar: Mr Speaker, I also wish to express great pleasure in participating in this discussion today on the Motion before us.

I had said once before when we were discussing a motion to honour Hubert Nathaniel Critchlow and the centenary of the Guyana Labour Union, it was a proud moment for me to be doing that because I recall the song of Dave Martin when he asked where are your heroes Caribbean and we were beginning to recognise our heroes in this country.

Today, the Motion which marks the Sixtieth Anniversary of Dr Jagan's entry into the Parliament it is very important from the point of view of our own history, because I believe that that period was the period when we can very well describe the beginning of the modern history of our country. And Dr Jagan was a product of his time; he came at a time when the working people of this country needed political leadership. Workers had already been organising themselves to defend their economic interests and their economic gains and they had made considerable strides in organising themselves to defend their welfare in the formation of trade unions. If you will recall, Sir, that in the late 1930s or from the middle to the end of the 1930s, there was a flurry of formation of trade unions in the country,

which reflected that the working people had reached a stage to try to defend and to advance their economic interest.

Indeed, there was a Professor WM McMillan, who described the situation in the Caribbean at that time and he had said that any study of the socio economics of the West Indies is necessarily a study of poverty and workers all over were trying to defend their interest. There was such a wave at that point in time that the Moen Commission was established; actually it was the Royal Commission headed by Lord Moen to investigate the social and economic conditions in Barbados, British Guiana, British Honduras, Jamaica, the Leeward Islands, Trinidad and Tobago, the Windward Islands and matters connected therewith and to make recommendations. That was set up in 1938 as a response to the uprising within our region by working people to defend their cause.

The Report produced was so devastating that the British did not publish it when it actually came out in 1939. You will recall at that time the Second World War had started and I do not think that they wanted to give this to the propaganda machinery of the Germans at that point in time. As a result that Report was not released until 1945, but that Report showed how much the working people began to influence the politics of our region. It was on the basis of the recommendations of that Commission

that the franchise was relaxed somewhat in which case workers had a possibility for the first time in participating in elections - when the qualifications to vote was lowered if you were earning \$10 or more per month and for a candidate \$100 per month. That is why, I think, Dr Jagan was able to win the elections, because of those qualifications that had changed conditions that allowed a lot of ordinary people to participate in the elections.

Dr Jagan was a complex man, but there were also some things that ran throughout his political and public life. He first put out a Manifesto in 1947 in contesting those elections and he stated in that Manifesto what he thought a candidate should possess to be a representative of the people in the Legislative Council and he set out four things there:

- (i) to have full awareness of working conditions and problems;
- (ii) thorough knowledge of theory and practice of comparative governments with special emphasis on labour legislation;
- (iii) open and continuous identification with labourers, their grievances and aspirations; and
- (iv) sincerity and honesty of purpose.

And I would say that these four things ran like a red thread throughout his political career and he never, never forgot them.

In his Manifesto of 1947, he spoke about the need for constitutional change; the need to develop agriculture, education, housing, medical service and labour legislation. He was probably the first in the National Assembly to call for:

- a forty-hour work week without any loss of pay;
- a minimum wage law for all working people;
- portal to portal pay in certain industries for example sugar, bauxite and timber;
- two weeks annual leave with pay;
- time and a half pay for overtime and double time for Sundays and Holidays;
- equal pay for equal work - a very early advocate for women's equality;
- improvement of working conditions as regards health and safety.

All of these things did not exist in those times.

These were demands that he was making on behalf of the working people of our country and he fulfilled his promise by tabling every single one in the National Assembly, but unfortunately they were all defeated. But that did not disturb him and that is what, I believe, developed his character for his struggles ahead and one of his contemporaries who witnessed his performance in the early period in the National Assembly, Ashton

Chase wrote in the book, the History of Trade Union in Guyana made this description of the early period of Dr Jagan in Parliament and I quote what he said:

In Dr Jagan the workers found an outstanding champion of their rights. The sovereignty of the Legislative Council was rudely shaken by his vigorous advocacy to the cause of workers. He had a passion for statistics and that stayed throughout his life as well. He used these in espousing forceful arguments to expose reaction and to lay bare before the workers the vicious systems that exploited them. At sitting after sitting he assaulted the vaunting privileges of the capitalist. On many occasions single-handedly, but nevertheless most heroically and in spite of and inspiringly he fought for the workers' rights.

I think that is what endeared him very much to the Guyanese workers and that is what gathered around him and the Political Affairs Committee that he had founded with others, Ashton Chase, Hubbard and Mrs Jagan. I think surrounding him was a galaxy of brilliant people or probably the most brilliant people of that time including Sydney King, Ramkarran, Martin Carter and there were others who were not so well known like Frank Van

Sertima, who was President and founder of the Transport Workers' Union and a Vice-Chairman of the PPP. There were also people like John Ivan Edwards, another Transport Workers' Union official who died tragically in Barbados by drowning; Evo Sendercote; George Robertson; Herby Thomas and in 1949 on his return from studying law in the United Kingdom, Forbes Burnham, also joined the movement then. From the very beginning they put independence on their banners and they fought for that continuously.

One of the problems that obstructed us very often as a nation had to do with race relations as the Honourable Leader of the Opposition pointed out. I want to say that I believe that that was probably one of the most painful periods in Dr Jagan's history and if you look at a book that was recently put out, of his correspondence between 1953 and 1965, where they have all the correspondence between himself and Mr Forbes Burnham. You will see the efforts that were being made to try to heal that gap that unfortunately developed in 1955 with the split.

However, I can testify to the fact that one thing that remained with Dr Jagan throughout his life was the faith that the people of Guyana could be united on common positions. I can testify to the fact that I heard him over and over in discussions, lectures, speeches to party cadres urging us never to underestimate the

racial problem in our country, but also never to overestimate it. I believe this period from 1947 to 1955, when the people of this country had a unity that was never seen before, and I say never since then as well, had encouraged him and had sealed in his mind that this was possible once again and he fought for that throughout his life. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, we can also see in both periods of time that Dr Jagan had been in government, he was also forced to be very, very practical. He was forced to seek alliance and he sought alliance with all kinds of forces in the interest of this country and that is what marked the national leadership in him.

In the period 1957 to 1964, he did seek alliance with the local and even the foreign capitalist to try to develop Guyana. You will recall in that period, it was the PPP Government that established the first industrial estate at Ruimveldt, not because he recognised that the private sector had a role to play, but he also recognised that by so doing he was also strengthening the working class both quantitatively and qualitatively as well for future struggles ahead of them.

Later on in the period of 1992 to 1997, the last period of his life, he also sought to do the same in trying to establish more industrial workers in places like Eccles and Coldingen, where he

established other industrial estates and seeking alliance all the time in his work. He also had a very strong social policy. and was extremely strong particularly in education and health, where he established the University of Guyana; he was such a practical man that he did not wait to establish buildings on the campus but he started it at Queens College, because he was always in a hurry to move things forward and after three in the afternoon Queens College was turned into a University.

Under the PPP Government at that time a lot was achieved in health like the eradication of malaria; housing improved and the workers had many other benefits. Children of the ordinary working people who would not have had an opportunity for tertiary education had that as well. And of course Parliament was also an arena of struggle for him.

If one examines all or most of his presentations here in the National Assembly either in government or in the opposition , one would see that he hardly ever made a speech without proposing solutions to the problems that he was dealing with. I think, everyone of his speeches that you will look at, you will find that he was proposing the way forward.

He also saw Parliament as a forum to bring some unity and understanding in our society. In his first and last speeches to

this National Assembly after he became President, he emphasized the need for the committee systems to work. He was very, very strong on the need to build consensus and spoke very firmly on that and I can also attest to the fact that he was not only doing that by making a presentation and a speech that I know privately he was speaking to many of our Members right here in the National Assembly, some who are still here, urging them to move forward with the Committee systems, Select Committees and so forth to have consensus on many important measures.

He also cleared this building to make it a building only for the business of Parliament. Up to 1992, there were several other offices here, but he made this building dedicated to Parliament so that it would have the physical accommodation to improve the quality of its work. In this National Assembly, what also came out of Dr Jagan throughout his life was a strong internationalist position and the same passion he felt for the Guyanese working people, that same passion he had for the international working class, that same passion he had for oppressed people during his lifetime, he expressed his opinion on every single important international event on Vietnam, South Africa, Palestine, Angela Davis and many other fighters, revolutionaries who have been jailed at the time.

He recognised that he would not be able to accomplish all that he wanted to accomplish in his lifetime and in order to try to achieve some of them, he proposed a new approach in his New Global Human Order seeking in that way to maximise the benefits for the Guyanese people in its relationship with the powerful countries of the world. And what essentially he was trying to do was to tell them in the New Global Human Order that the North and the South are united in one and whatever affects us in the South is bound to affect the North. And it was also in their interest to try to help movements like the one that he had started in order to ensure that we get better benefits, and eradicate poverty with the help of those who had some of these things already. In many cases, Sir, probably emphasis would have changed some time, but generally the PPP/Civic Government has been pursuing similar policies as had been laid down by Dr Jagan himself.

Mr Speaker, as I said, I think Dr Jagan was a product of his time, of the history, of the need of the time for someone of his character to emerge to advance the cause for working people and to advance the cause for his country.

I believe, always in his quest to build consensus and to build unity that these are some of the characteristic features that we can take from his work to move ahead and to carry this country forward and I want in particular to support the last Resolved

Clause which calls for a special Hansard to have his speeches, because I believe it will be a great example to young aspiring leaders of our country to see the quality of the man and the standard that he has set for the Guyanese people. I thank you for your attention. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Member Mr Ramjattan

Mr Khemraj Ramjattan: Mr Speaker, it gives me tremendously great honour and privilege to speak on a man, a President, a politician, Parliamentarian and really a man of all seasons, to celebrate the fact of his very long and enduring term as a Parliamentarian and the tremendously great work that he did in the deliberations here, in the debates, in the formulation of those proposals he wanted to see implemented so that our Guyana could be made all the more beautiful.

When as a young man he came on the scene it was obvious that there was need to be confrontational with the colonialist, and when he came in the forties after studying at the Universities and coming back as a dentist, it was required that at least a fearless

leader of all the peoples of Guyana be established so that at least out of that voice - at that stage it was largely his - although we had lots more after him and after the forties, it was necessary ... Guyana was not the nice place then and so you had to have a fearless voice cropping up. Dr Jagan was fearless. There are Parliamentarians and politicians today that might very well feel that this attribute of fearlessness should not be emphasized, but I want to regard that as one of his greatest attributes. Notwithstanding the odds, he stood like a titan, like a giant, like a champion and ensured that at least the emergence of progressive democratic politics will be the order of the day and so it was since that time that Guyana must proudly say that here it is we had a son of the soil, one who came from extraordinarily humble beginnings and managed to rise to the greatest of heights, the President of the land.

Also at the level of his personal life, he was one that ensured that he was cautious and careless in not indulging in personal indiscretions. He led the examined life, regrettably that might not be the case that we follow exclusively these days and I would be urging that as part of his legacy, that which he lived, that we Parliamentarians ensure that we lead that kind of examined life too. Arrogance was something that I never found with him. As PYO leader, I also found that an extremely good attribute of his

was to compromise and I can recall that when I had an extraordinarily difficult time with the ideological position of that party, Comrade Cheddi indicated and I think it was to you, Mr Speaker, to allow the PYO to see what they can do on the ideological question. He did not simply adhere to a strictly uncompromising position and when it came to his positions and beliefs I knew how strong he was, but yes, because the times required some glasnost and perestroika, he indicated, yes young people in the PYO, you can go forward and do what you think is right. And we did what we felt was right and of course it epitomised this compromising attribute, something again, like I just mentioned, personal indiscretions just now, we would like to see more and more as part of the legacy of those who regard themselves as his legatees.

I also would not let this opportunity pass and not talk about the quality of the debates. It is very unfortunate that when I first became a Parliamentarian in this august body in 1992, I think it was in 1993 we got sworn in, that we did not see him in action, as it were, or at least see him in action more, but when I studied some of the Hansards especially very recently, especially his speech on the Venezuelan border issue that had come up some time, I do not know if it was in the 1980s - and he was giving the major pieces of research, the entire history ... It was almost all

the matters that I read him on when he was a Parliamentarian, the quality of the research he did, so that when he came here it was with extraordinarily well argued positions, well researched and to the extent that in a sense he became part of academia by virtue of what he said and did as a result. I suppose that if Universities had to give degrees to people by the quality of their researches and writings he would have gotten doctorates from very many Universities, because that was his quality.

Dr Jagan then must, in a sense, be given the recognition that this Motion seeks to give; the recognition for the fact that not only did he speak with the voices of the ordinary worker, but he lived the lives of the ordinary workers. He could have gone on to any part of the country, the back of Buxton, the heart of Linden and he will get the respect that hardly any other leader will get. He could go to his heartland in Port Mourant, Berbice and he would get that respect ... anywhere. It is because of a whole lot of attributes that made the character he was, the honesty, the integrity, the non-negotiable principles for sticking it out for the ordinary working class; and also he compromised as I mentioned when he had to. Donald just mentioned the fact that he had to compromise with big business sometimes and that was the reality of the times, that was what shaped him and that was what he really became, that very important person he was. The

pronouncements he made of what this institution should be, a deliberative forum ... I remember when he first came here as President, in his first speech he made it his duty to give especially the younger Parliamentarians a lecture - lesson - that this is the premier institution of the land and so whenever its decrees go out there, those decrees must be with the caution, the soundness and the principled nature so that everybody can respect them. How will that come about? It is by deliberation, understanding the other side's point of view, compromising on matters of details. If you cannot compromise on a principle, fine ... He used to lecture to us on that, but always be deliberative and deliberation means largely, and this is again something I want his legatees to understand about his legacy ... is that, yes, we have to at least be compromising.

As I indicated his personal life had that morality about it, a morality of the strength of the life he lived and it is with that kind of life that any human being lives that a humanism as a result emanates and it was that humanism of Dr Jagan that resonated even with persons that largely did not like lots of his policies. It was his humanism, and he had that, and that is why, when he was being taken to Port Mourant for his final resting place, lots of people at Buxton stopped that vehicle so that they could pay the last tributes to him. A lot of people felt that that was a glowing

tribute especially from persons whom we had thought might have disrespected him, but that is not so. It was his humanism that people loved and the simplicity in which he did things. As I mentioned, that simplicity also had with it a quality that was intellectual. The intellectual quality of Dr Jagan would emanate largely from those speeches that we would like to see now edited and presented here as a collection spanning his tenure in the National Assembly, for display in the library of this National Assembly. As the longest serving Parliamentarian, it shows his endurance; it shows the fact that he could speak on so many issues; as an internationalist he read widely. I was the beneficiary of some of the notes he used to make. When he gets an article that is very instructive from the Economist or the Newsweek, he would literally photocopy it and send it down to us in the PYO room. And from that you could see a whole host of things that resonated with him. It was not only economics or politics, good literature or a good little poem he would pass on to you. And for those reasons, it all then came into this one human being with so much humanism. I think it is only correct that we do give him the recognition, because he was an extraordinary man; he was one of our greatest sons, if not, the greatest son of the soil and for that I would support these two Resolved Clauses which state that this Assembly give due recognition to this outstanding

Guyanese and that indeed we pay tribute to him by the tenure.
Thank you very much. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Member Mr Moses Nagamootoo

Mr Moses V Nagamootoo: Mr Speaker, I rise to support this Motion moved by the Honourable Prime Minister and in so doing, I wish to refer to what perhaps was the cardinal point, source and fount of strength of the subject of the Motion Dr Cheddi Jagan and that was his roots.

He said after he was sworn in as President of Guyana, I am the son of sugar workers, who have not forgotten his roots. Many politicians like me have forgotten where they came from, but Jagan will never forget and you can be sure of that.

The Honourable Member Mr Donald Ramotar referred to the times in which Cheddi Jagan entered the political arena. In a particular context in which one has to periodise ... I was born in the same month of the same year, in which Dr Jagan won the elections of 1947, so I cannot speak on authority or personal

knowledge of what was at that time, but from research and history, we knew that Cheddi Jagan was a product of a particular history that circumstances of Guyana being a plantation economy, a post-slave, -indentured economy, where the majority of our people were derisively dubbed niggers and coolies though worthy of their place in the plantation as workers, they were still treated in the way that slaves and indentureds had been treated. And Dr Jagan came out in that historical context as a tribune of the people who wanted political leadership. So I referred thirty-five years ago, when we observed the twenty-fifth year of his entry to the Legislative Assembly. There was a poetry competition to mark the occasion and I recall entering the competition with one of the poems reproduced in the book called *For the Fighting Front, An Anthology*. In that poem I captured the sentiments of that period,

*Oppressed ... and the whiplash of poverty like salt
on the wound was a bitter bread of niggers and
coolies.*

*Theirs was a world of agony ruled by the tyranny
of greed, the blood-soaked empire of sweet sugar.*

*Their pain was born in the desert heat of the white
planters' paradise near the flourishing oasis of*

sturdy majestic sugar cane and magnificent mansions. Niggers and coolies were born in a sea, like so many frail boats lashed and tormented, tossed upon the tyrannical waves fated for the rocky shores of injustice or the deep beyond dug by the planters for every revolting arm and uplifted head,

But this was before the advent of Cheddi or of his resplendent stand to free the prow and peons of servitude.

Then the days were for the masters, days to own labour and furnaces and fabulous fortunes;

The toilers own the nights with their darkness, their fears and two bits liquor;

Nights were when their fettered dreams unleashed their fury exploding in the dark like the spasm of a nightmare while the thundering machines lay pinned to the cool clay of the earth;

*Came forty-seven then the titanic wave of
resistance and the workers' wrath petrified; their
venom recoiled, the planters hid their bestial
heads from the chopping blocks of red justice.*

*Good Marxist, you came like a meteorite lamb,
rejuvenated hope;*

*You, Cheddi, the workers' balm, sent shivering
fears down the spine of the exploiters.*

*Yes, Cheddi, you thought us to struggle, blaze the
path to freedom, planted in us the purest of
thoughts, the noblest of ideals.*

In the poetic way though I have not lived in that period, it was my imagination from the people whom I have come to be associated with, who recaptured what that period was and that is the historicity of a Cheddi Jagan to understand the nature, the character and what made the man, the man he was. I have been for many years in this Parliament from 1968 and more particularly from 1970 until 1992 as a journalist sitting over there working interchangeable with my colleagues Clinton Collymore and Kellawan Lall of the MIRROR and we had a ring-side view of

Cheddi Jagan's charismatic hold on this Parliament. When Cheddi Jagan came into the Parliament for a debate, the gallery would usually be full, not the ghostlike features that we see these days. Debates were lively, debates were fiery, debates were tempestuous. Cheddi Jagan held his own as a man who as a man who had an unenviable or I would say enviable command of facts and figures and when those could not supplement the points he would wish to make, he walked with his own placards, his charts that he would demonstrate visibly for all to understand the man's ideas and his message. He had that hold so that today as we say in poetic terms like the icing hanging on an old man's beard; Jagan's ideas would be hanging like these Swornsons lamps forever in this House and that is what we have come to this House with the Motion for, *[Applause]* to capture and preserve his ideas and to place them at the disposal of the generations to come that they would say, not that Jagan was a legendary hero as he has been and he is by his mere stature, but by the freshness of his ideas, the work of his vision and the strength of his moral conviction.

The Honourable Member Mr Khemraj Ramjattan spoke about sometimes Dr Jagan held on tenaciously to his views, it was like that that he was a man of conviction and he stood his ground, but he was never afraid. In fact, it was his part of the strength that

he was prepared to make compromise. And when I sat over there as a journalist, listening to him, he would always, as the Honourable Member Mr Ramotar said, point to solutions to the problems of the country, most remarkable of those solutions would be his call for national unity.

I refer to what he said in his speech to this Parliament - his first Address to the Ceremonial Opening of the First Session of the Sixth Parliament:

This is indeed an historic moment for me. It was forty-five years ago on 18 December 1947 that I took my seat for the first time in the Legislative Council.

We can all imagine Dr Jagan standing there and now saying these words.

That was one of the most exciting, enjoyable and productive periods of my life. I read almost every available report and put a lot of energy and seriousness into my legislative work and the battles were truly pitched. I had to face some of the most entrenched personalities representing the plantocracy and vested interest and my experience was that it needed more than mere

logic and enthusiasm to convince the powers that be of the day. The only way I could succeed, I told myself was to keep close to the people who had voted for me to champion their cause. It paid off. The PPP was formed in 1950 and in 1953 we won a decisive victory of eighteen out of twenty-four seats. This is also an historic moment for our nation and people. After my 1947 victory, I had said and now say again, we the people have won.

It is out of his affinity with the people, as I said, the people's tribune taking their aspirations, taking their dreams into the Legislative Assembly; taking the street to Parliament and Parliament to the street. Essentially the politics of protest, he had to have unwavering conviction, because the might that be in that period could not be convinced by a lone voice in the wilderness. Dr Jagan was not a dogmatic person; his ideas were not dogmatic; he would flex; he would adopt; he would change and he had espoused his own home-grown Marxism based on a model that hitherto had not been tested, I believe, in the world - a model that was based on Parliamentary democracy, multi-party, multi-class, multi-racial combination in a democracy that was guided by the ethical values of Marxism. That was the essence

of Dr Jagan's socialism - a socialism premised in the people; a socialism premised in all of the people in the plural society that we have and is know a name GUYANA. That was the originality of Dr Jagan that we could in fact build a society promoting the needs and aspirations of the working people while at the same time not leaving anyone behind. And that is why he adopted the partnership model. So apart from referring to the victory of 1953 in the Parliament, in his speech he had always, always I believe, up to the last breadth he must have drawn was decided on the issue that we must return to the 1953 when there was racial and working class unity in Guyana. And that is a legacy that we wish to pass down to the future generation when we put together in the Hansard the collection of his speeches, because his speeches have now become the guide to the nation for the road back we need to take, to take our country out of the perilous inter-racial problems, the problems of organisation and production, the problem of our own viability, we need to take Dr Jagan's word as the manifesto for a future Guyana based on racial, working class and unity of all of our people political and otherwise.

In that regard I would say that I welcome the remarks of the Honourable Leader of the Opposition in his contribution to this debate, in his contribution to the Motion that there is probably a

lucky day ahead for Guyana, when we could once again place Dr Jagan in his true perspective and all the other leaders in this country, who had fought with Dr Jagan, fought for his ideas that we can place those in proper perspective and we can bring about a formula for the unity of our country and for its progress with un-impeded agenda.

Mr Speaker, I also was privileged in this House while I sat on the reporters' bench to hear Dr Jagan's speaking to the real issues of the Guyanese people, whether it had to do with balance the budget; whether it had to do to cut taxes, whether it had to do to ease cost of living pressures on the working people and particularly mothers and babies, he would make strong advocacy to cut extravagance to avoid corruption, to be able to cut down on unnecessary expenditures. He had solutions that were real, solutions that were achievable and those are the things that we have to return to if we are to embrace what Dr Jagan stood for in this Parliament and in the life of our nation. *[Applause]*

I have what he said here when he went not only was he saying to our Guyanese people that we have to live within our means, because he was always concerned when he exhibited the charts in this august Assembly. He was always concerned about how to shift money for the social sectors; more money must go for health, education, water and housing. He was always saying that

the money wasted otherwise could be properly spent on the needs of the people.

And it is not for nothing that we want to preserve his speeches for posterity, not as a decoration in the Library, but it is for us to learn from them, to follow them and to be able to be guided by them. For many years this House had not produced the Hansard and is probably many of his great speeches have been lost to this nation. We have never had the privileges of coverage by cameras. We have hardly had adequate and properly working machines so that it would be difficult to even find many of his speeches and we would have said that would be a lost to our nation. So the mover of the Motion and those who support this Motion today are fulfilling a part of their duty to the future that is to recover what can be recovered before all is lost. And that is why I welcome the gesture of the opposition parties in this House that they support this Motion, because it is worth our while doing so in this House.

I recall when Dr Jagan went to his first CARICOM Meeting as President of Guyana, it is the dearing of this man, the man who was true to his conviction, who had told us that we had to be lean and clean. He told CARICOM Heads these words:

We must set our face sternly against corruption and extravagance. We cannot have a Cadillac style living with donkey carts economies. Our leaders must set the example of democratic accountable clean and élan government and efficient governance.

So that his ideas he was using them as praxis for other countries in the Caribbean, because no man is an island entirely of his own. We are part of the main; we are part of the region. This is our region and what affects us as he used to say in another context dealing with investment and exploitation of the north on the south, when America sneezes, Latin America catches a cold. So that he saw governance as an important weapon not only for Guyana's development, but for the development of our region and that we have to sell the model of one country into another; a model that was based on accountability, clean, honest, democratic governance. And that I would say is one of the finest contributions that would have been made to this House by Dr Jagan and outside of this Parliament in his speeches.

I have heard previous speakers have said, there is not anything much one can say to add to the quality of this debate or to try to convince anyone who has any doubts as to the quality of Cheddi Jagan, who remains and would always be the most outstanding

statesman; the most outstanding revolutionary; the most outstanding democrat of our times in this country. And in celebrating his advent into Parliament sixty years ago, I believe that this House has redeemed a boon that can take us forward that we can use the weapon of unity that Jagan must be for us a symbol of unity and not division. We must grasp this opportunity today to be unanimous on recognising the finer quality of a decent Guyanese and a great patriot. Thank you.
[Applause]

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Member Mr Everall Franklin

Mr Everall N Franklin: Mr Speaker, no doubt there is unanimity of support on this Motion, because I believe we have to honour our own regardless on which side of the House, of the yard they stood. We have to honour own because if we do not do that it is impossible for other people to honour us as a people. And for too long we have neglected to honour our people who have contributed in so many different ways to the development of our country.

Mr Speaker, I also believe that it is not just a question of how long once served a community or an Assembly, I do believe that that quality, the passion that one brought to the job at hand is what is extremely important. And first of all, I remember Dr Cheddi Jagan for his passion; the passion that he brought to his work and what he believed in. It is a passion that we have not seen in recent times, that passion when somebody believes in something and wants to actually breathe it out on those who come closer.

I am happy that this Assembly could come up with a Motion that is not contentious.

I am also happy that we all seem to recognise that just like Dr Cheddi Jagan, there are others who are worthy of recognition and I do believe that over the course of time these would emerge and just like how we honour this great Guyanese Dr Cheddi Jagan, we must not forget also that we have citizens who have not been honoured for some time now. That is important. I think in the whole context of honouring those who have contributed to the society, we must not forget that many have contributed and are still contributing. There is no doubt that Dr Cheddi Jagan with his knowledge, with his passion is definitely worthy of this and other salutations. It is important that when we honour citizens not necessarily just our politicians that we find common ground so that we can all partake in a most noble cause. I would like to

say to the ruling PPP/C that when you describe Dr Jagan as the father of the nation, you must always remember that when you are planning a party, you have to invite all the children to plan this party. I hope you will remember that the next time you plan a party.

Mr Speaker, Dr Jagan, in his latter years, had been defined by his appeal for a new, more humane global order and allow me just to quote a little of the speech made by Dr Jagan on 1 May 1994 - it was a letter actually sent to the world leaders in 1994 and I would start from the second paragraph:

A renewed opportunity is now afforded to place the welfare of our peoples at the centre of national and international efforts. Our peoples have the right not only to political freedom, but also to the full development of their attributes. To this end, we should strive again as expressed in Article 1 Paragraph 3 of the Charter of the United Nations to achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character. Only then can sturdy and lasting foundations for international peace and security be established.

And he goes on to say:

We must resolve to reverse the gap which has been developing between the richest and poorest countries, the divisions between rich and poor in the industrialised societies in the north and in the developing and under-privileged societies in the south, as well as the distance in attainment between north and south which has been widening considerably since the 1980s.

Dr Jagan with the New Human Global Order that he promoted in his latter days ... well, I should say that he pronounced on it in the latter days of his life, was founded on the new International Economic Order of the 1970s, the just humane global order which was promoted by NGOs and agencies of the UN system, human development reports of UNDP, UNICEF, UN Conferences on the environment, there was a large plethora of similar thought on changing the way how we deal with each other on the international basis. To me what was unique about Dr Jagan was the time that he promoted a new human global order was not really a convenient time to do it, but he had the courage to stand up and say what he believed regardless of how the international community thought about it. Many third world countries stayed away, kept hands off or even associating themselves with this

policy. Even when you see a man of principle even if it hurts sometimes, you have to be big enough and stand up and take the pain. I would like to see some of that return to our country.

I also think that we look forward to the type of consensus that was arrived at in drafting and coming up with a final draft of this Motion to recognise a great Guyanese can be used not only to pay tribute to one of ours, but to actually promote the ideals that the person who we are paying tribute to today really believed in and I think that would be the best tribute to our fellow, late Parliamentarian, because it is no use paying tribute and setting up libraries when the essence is missed and I think we will all be richer for that.

A lot of reference was made to Dr Jagan's humble beginning and sometimes it sounded as if in spite of his humble beginnings, he has achieved so much. I would like to posit, because of his humble beginnings he stayed grounded; he stayed close to the people; he knew how to fight and I think a lot of that we have forgotten today. That grounding, that closeness, knowing; that feeling, being able to smell poverty, not just talk and write about it is important. I think we have forgotten that of late.

Therefore, without prolonging my stay on the floor, it is indeed an honour and a pleasure, but before I go, I would like to say that I

was probably seven years old when I met Dr Jagan in a working class community, Birmingham, England, it was not a pleasant experience, because my father took my last two shillings and six pence to put in Dr Jagan's collection box and I took three weeks to save two shillings and six pence.

However, I am now proud to support this Motion in giving recognition to a great Guyanese and I think it is only fitting and in a small way that we can pay tribute to him and I do hope that in the future, we will create this culture of saying thank you to ours, our own and as I said before, if we cannot thank and be proud of our own, expect to be disrespected everywhere. With that I support the Motion presented by the Government. Thank you, Mr Speaker. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Member Mr Raphael Trotman

Mr Raphael GC Trotman: Mr Speaker, I thank you for allowing me this brief intervention. I know that some (like Dr Ramsammy) may wonder why I am speaking, but I believe as the Leader of the Alliance for Change that it behoves me to place on

record our fullest support for this Motion. My own personal support, I cannot go back as far as the Leader of the Opposition, as my brother Moses did to a time when Dr Jagan first entered this Assembly in 1945. I can speak of some personal experiences; as a child I became very close to the extended family, and spend much time with the Alis, the Parsrams, the Fries and some of the Jagans and I would sometimes encounter Dr Jagan at LBI, when we went to play table tennis or lawn tennis. I remember one very interesting piece of dialogue in which one of his nephews asked him one afternoon, uncle Cheddi why don't you give up. That would have been sometime later in the late 1970s and his quiet response was, because the people need me to stay here and fight. At the age, I could not appreciate what those words really meant. Now that I have entered politics and as I have Mr Khemraj Ramjattan, Mrs Sheila Holder, we ourselves tried to establish a political movement, I can now appreciate those words even more.

Mr Speaker, like colleagues before me, I would like to see the day when we not exalt each other's leaders, but do so collectively. As I gaze across the room I see an empty space where I believe a portrait of Mr Hugh Desmond Hoyte should be hanging. This should not be the responsibility of the People's National Congress Reform -One Guyana; it should be the responsibility of the State

of Guyana led by the Parliament Office. I know that there are issues surrounding the Presidency of Mrs Jagan and I believe that in the decision of Justice of Appeal as she then was or Justice Claudette Singh, it was meant to be that a Bill would have been introduced into this House, I believe the Seventh Parliament or Eighth and that Bill would have been passed to ratify or legitimise as it were and validate (Mr Ramjattan reminds me) that era. I remember the Bill being tabled, but it was never proceeded with. It is time that we take cognisance of the past, because we cannot move forward into the future. I fast-forward today as I listened to a speech given by the Leader of the Opposition, which I believe he should be publicly complimented for *[Applause]* holding out the hand of friendship once again.

I stood outside of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with my colleague Mr Ramotar yesterday afternoon after we left a briefing given by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and a man literally stopped his vehicle, got out, came to us and said this is what I want to see; this is what the people of Guyana need to see. That is what we need to display and so when we exalt each other's leaders and heroes and ask for support, we are making small steps. I believe we need to go further. I ask that we consider little things. I passed up and down the East Bank and I noticed that Dr Ramcharran has recently had a hospital opened - the East

Demerara Hospital - name it after somebody and I wonder why is it we cannot recognise the work of some eminent medical practitioner in this country regardless of his or her ethnic or political persuasion. Why is it that as I drive by in Main Street, there is a big sign outside of the Walter Roth Museum that says Ministry of Culture and then in the bottom in little words Walter Roth Museum? Why is it, we cannot name our national stadium the National Stadium of Providence, the National Park, are we afraid to honour and recognise? Are we afraid to honour and recognise? After five years we have no national awards awarded. It is time that we take cognisance of what the people want. And so like Mr Franklin, I wait for the day when we can recognise the contribution of all our past leaders and has already been noted there are going to be some bad moments, because they are human and there are going to be some excellent moments as well. As was written in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, the evil that men do lives after them; the good is often turning with their bones. It is moment like this that we have to put paid to that adage and ensures that we remember the good and not allow the bad to take over and become dominant.

Mr Speaker, I would like to end with just a few words that I found and which I believe will sum up the contribution of Dr Jagan in this Assembly and outside of it and it is this:

The great men of earth are the shadow men, who having lived and died now live again and forever and through their undying thoughts thus living though their foot-falls are heard no more. Their voices are louder than the thunder and as are unceasing as the flow of tides and air. So they may not be with us any longer but we hear them echoing through these halls.

I thank you for your time, Mr Speaker. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Minister of Labour

Hon Manzoor Nadir: Mr Speaker, before I go into my brief presentation into this Motion, I just want to say to the last speaker, the Honourable Member Mr Trotman that the recognition of our national heroes and figures has begun. The next time he goes down Homestretch Avenue, travelling east, just look to your right and you will see the Walter Rodney Archives; not yet opened, but already named. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, I stand here on behalf of my party The United Force and on my own behalf to lend support to the Motion moved by the Honourable Prime Minister and so well defended by the Member Mr Moses Nagamootoo from the heart, factually and sincerely presented by the Members Khemraj Ramjattan and Donald Ramotar from the experiences and so statesmanly put by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Speaker, as an adversary based on ideology, my party and I several times had to use two examples when we spoke of the successes of two leaders in our country Cheddi Jagan and Forbes Burnham. One was giving young people the example that young persons who worked hard, who made the commitment early can achieve the highest positions in the land and in any profession they desire and these to young persons Cheddi Jagan and Forbes Burnham did epitomize this.

The other issue that we use for Dr Jagan and Mr Burnham was, when asked when I campaigned throughout the region how a people like Guyana industrious, lots of entrepreneurs supported people who supported communism and socialism and all that I had to say was if you fought for the right of sugar workers, you brought benefits to the workers if like my father did on the waterfront, you saw benefit from associated with the causes of these persons and it uplifted the lives of you and your family, you

would not be concerned about ideology, but you will be concerned about the welfare of your family. These were two examples that explained how we went for so long down the road we went.

I had the opportunity many times as Dr Jagan travelled through the region to meet with him and one had to admire two things about him and we have heard it over and over again this evening:

(i) Tenacity, knowing that he was on the right path and sticking to his guns.

I remember as we turn to the late 1980s, he was in St Lucia and we had a very long conversation among a few of us and he was kidding me about the party which I ended up leading and representing in the National Assembly.

(ii) Another example was after sitting twelve hours in negotiations (I think Leslie the Honourable Minister was there) at Freedom House with the Patriotic Coalition For Democracy, Dr Jagan listening to all of us and then summing up and we know what happened after that - the 1990 and 1991 elections being postponed till we had what

was sought in 1992 - conditions for all parties to participate in the elections.

Mr Speaker, my party paid tribute to Dr Jagan twice. When he died, the Executive of the party immediately called me and said, we must have our own way in memory of Dr Jagan. But the first time was 9 October 1992, when it became clear that The United Force because of the system at the time had the balance in terms of two seats in the National Assembly that were going to be crucial for the PPP/C to have a majority in the Parliament of 1992 and the Executive of The United Force said, let us go and offer those two seats to Dr Jagan unconditionally and so met at his home and we told him that he can count on the support of The United Force for the two seats that will give him and his party a comfortable majority in the National Assembly to lead this nation as the duly elected President and party in government.

[Applause]

Mr Speaker, those two instances show in spite of our differences over ideology the regard with which The United Force held Dr Jagan and it is with this pride, I have the honour to support the Motion moved by the Honourable Prime Minister. Thank you very much. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you very much Honourable Member

The Honourable Member Ms Gail Teixeira

Ms Gail Teixeira: Mr Speaker, it is with great pride and honour I rise to support this Motion and also to thank the Opposition for having allowed us to work together to reach a consensus Motion, because I believe that this is the culture of maturation in this House and a growing maturation of the political culture of Guyana. I think it is also an extremely special and fitting tribute to Cheddi that we accomplish this today, because this is the premise of many of his own personal beliefs of being able to find alliances, consensus and agreements on issues to be able to move forward. Maybe for those who are superstitious, he was the one guiding us through all our discussions. But I do believe that today is an extremely special and fitting tribute to Dr Jagan and in the Parliament itself.

Much have been said and I want to focus on what I thought were a number of issues that were threads that were repeated from the time he entered Parliament on December 1947 that wove itself through his thinking and his speeches and so on all the way to not only ... Oh, I am sorry did I do something, Mr Norton, you were signalling to me? Oh, I thought I jumped up ahead of you.

I am sorry ... So there is a number of threads that weave through all of his thinking and all of his speeches and in fact it is very interesting that after he has died that some of those things are coming to light today in this modern world.

I want to show you that I am sure they are available, but in the Cheddi Jagan Research Centre there is a lot of documents, speeches and writings of Cheddi on the electronic database and you can go and access some of those. I know the Parliament is moving towards that and so this is 18 December 1947 the debates of the Legislative Council of British Guiana and this is a copy of the proceedings and the discussions that took place. I am sorry; I am a history buff so I like playing with these kinds of papers and things like that, but it is very, very interesting to read. The 6 January 1948 debates on the Budget Estimates and of course you all know that this was under the colonial government and a couple of things were very interesting and at the end of that making, it was probably one of the longest speeches for a Member of Parliament in the House at that time, because Parliament was very much under the control of the middle class planters and Bookers people and so on and here was this twenty-nine year old upstart, a gorgeous looking man, I must say as a woman he was very, very good looking, very handsome and I think most of the women in this House would agree with me, but

when you read the issues that were raised about sugar that Guyana should not be dependent on one crop - on one economy - what you call it monoculture production. For example, when he spoke about Britain was coming out of the war and in a terrible state and so on and revenues were taken from the colonies to give to the British, because they did not have dollars, there was a dollar crisis and so all the colonies were asked to give money and in his speech he spoke about British Guiana having to give \$2 million; in those days (1947) that was a lot of money, that they would lose in revenue in order to support the British economy and so sometimes when we think about the strange 1947 - sixty years ago that the colonies were not on interesting terms of losing with their exports and getting low rates and all those kinds of things, they were actually giving money by taxation from our people here as poor people to the British to help reconstruct the British economy. We always refer to slavery, but there was a more modern day tithe that we paid as subjects of the British crown and I just thought that this was an interesting quib of Jagan and a typical Jagan quib that as he ended his long debate (as I said for a long time he spoke) he said that with those remarks I propose to take my seat, but before I do so, I would like to say that I observe that provision is made in the Estimates for contribution of \$600 for the Society for the Prevention to Cruelty to Animals. I wish that this Government would set up a Committee for the

prevention of cruelty to the working class people of British Guiana and that is the kind of typical Jagan's quib on the floor. This was also what a voter had to fill out to be registered - this four page document with lots of questions, not as simple as our house-to-house registration - Right, Mr Corbin. And of course, if you could not read and write, you could not vote and you had to have so many properties and so on. So these are nice historical things, but the interesting thing when you look at Dr Jagan as a Parliamentarian, as a Leader, a Trade Unionist or a President is the common thing. And so overriding everything is peace, world peace and so on and that has become even in this twenty-first century a greater preoccupation than those who just come out of the World War II and were suffering and were trying to reconstruct countries and that we are looking at a world in which world peace and unilateralism is more the order of the day.

The second point was always the concern and champion of the working people; their health, water, education, housing, labour rights, trade union rights.

The third one was to do with the economy and always advocating the diversification of agriculture and industrial development and so even in one of his speeches - in the same 1948 speech - he spoke about cooperatives and the importance of cooperatives in the agricultural production and development of British Guiana.

And then you have one of the threads that people have talked about in this House to do with unity, harmony and bringing people together. Again, as Mr Corbin correctly said in his speech that this was a concern and this is still a concern of modern day Guyana.

In fact, there are some interesting documents both historical and from the Parliament. For example, the whole proposal of critical of support - supporting Burnham particularly on what very progressive foreign policy positions of the government of the day and on which he supported Burnham on those things and of course, it was critical support and there are issues that he could not agree to. That was an initiative to try to have some kind of (what we would probably call) the agree-to-disagree kind of dialogue between the two leaders.

The second concept he brought up was the National Patriotic Front which again was an attempt to try to find a winner does not take all and to bring in other groups. This of course in some cases was laughed at and so on.

The third initiative was the patriotic coalition with people who are now no longer in politics and parties some of which are not no longer in existence, but the PCD lasted from January 1986 to 1991 and Minister Manzoor Nadir has referred to it. This was again an

attempt to find ways to bring people together, parties of different views and to try and find common platforms, what could you agree to and what could you live with, while there were things that you did not agree to and were they so critical that you could not work together without that.

The last issue of course was the PPP/C. The PPP/C is a concept that is certainly one that is unique in the world and there is no other alliance like this in government in practically any part of the world. It is not an alliance of political parties; it is an alliance of individuals with a party led by Prime Minister Samuel Hinds, who actually met Cheddi and Cheddi immediately liked him and they got on like two great champs. They had a very special liking, relationship and admiration for each other. That had not come out of any political struggle or anything like that, but the attempts to find unity are still our responsibility. Cheddi is dead, but it is our responsibility as the political leaders of today to be able to find solutions, tentative maybe, fragile, many times maybe will not last, break, metamorphozed and moved forward, but it is still our responsibility to try to find ways of building a harmonious and stable society for economic, social and political developments for the betterment of our people and all of us. But certainly that was a preoccupation and I know that in the days when there was a number of political parties that with the churches and

everybody else, we were always trying to make contact with them.

The other issue was fair and equitable trade. That was mentioned in the Motion and we are seeing that coming more and more today with the struggle and the tension going on in the globalized economy. Also even with the recent experience with sugar on the world market and the recent enhanced partnership agreements, where we are battling and still struggling to find equitable and fair trade relations between developing and developed countries. And so these are threads that started in 1947 and 1948.

We then have the issue of internationalism and fighting for justice. I want to give you a couple of instances. I am talking about the early days even before the 1957 elections. The issue of apartheid in South Africa was a big issue for the PPP and for Dr Jagan; later on the Vietnam War and being opposed to the Vietnam War; being opposed to the blockade of Cuba and to do with Rhodesia as well at that time. Now in all these things, the fact was that all of us who believed in those struggles have been vindicated in the sense that the South Africans have removed apartheid, they have brought in their own government and they are building back a society on equality. The Vietnamese are trying to build back and Vietnam right now in the World Market

has a very interesting experiment that they are doing to elevate themselves. And of course Cuba, where Guyana was targeted and Jagan was targeted as a communist for being opposed to the blockade of Cuba; we are now seeing today that Canada was one of the first countries about twenty years ago to ignore the blockade on Cuba and to trade with Cuba; right now the European countries moved in that direction and in the last few months of this last year alone the issue of the blockade on Cuba has been debated in the US Senate, in the House of Representatives and the numbers are growing and the pressure is growing to lift the blockade. And so these were things that came from the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s that some issues are still with us.

Of course, an interesting one was the apology that was given by Slazenger, who was the political adviser to President John F Kennedy. He made an open, public apology to Dr Cheddi Jagan in 1991 for what had been done to him in the 1960s.

And so we then have the Human Global Order, which is an important initiative again relating to equitable trade.

And of course, the CARICOM Regional Development Fund was an idea he presented, when he became president.

One of the issues I want to raise which in the 1980s a number of scientists and economists were beginning to put out very

tentative articles and essays on the environment and on dealing with debt issues. I think this predates Breton Woods and those bodies. Dr Jagan got very enamoured with this and started to talk in the House and outside of the House about debt swaps for pristine countries, rain forests and environments and so on. People laughed at him and thought that he was crazy; you are going a bit off now Jagan, but we have seen in particular in 2006 and 2007 all the views now of doing carbon credits of poor countries particularly Guyana and other countries in this part of the hemisphere that have eco-systems that are relatively intact and are actually the lungs of the earth that the whole issue of dealing with compensating or calculating what is the value of that contribution and using it for sustainable development. I think that is why I am saying some of these things, because many of us are born into what we are, but not many people are born into see or to have an understanding of things to such a point that see it twenty/thirty/forty years down the line.

What I do want to say in the mood that we are in today is that despite whatever happens in this House, despite what happens outside of this House that Dr Jagan had a very big heart, a very big spirit, a very magnanimous soul and therefore one of the photographs I love very much and I was not here, I was not allowed by my family to go to the independence celebrations, I

was kind of too young then, but the biggest of the leaders and of Cheddi; the famous picture of Cheddi and Burnham hugging on the night of 26 May 1966 that despite whatever agreements and disagreements they had over the Constitution and how we came to independence that this was the night of our country when the Golden Arrowhead was raised. I believe that there are other instances of that with Cheddi in certain situations to be able to convey that there are times to rise above what is the moment and what is the immediate and expedient.

I think one person had said that we need to talk about the lessons, because Cheddi Jagan was all about education, all about teaching; he was a born teacher. Therefore he said when he got into the Parliament that the Parliament was the link between the Legislature and the people; that the Legislature was the people and the people was the Legislature and that he brought the two between each other. And that was taking the charts and everything into the streets to educate people in particular at budget time when he wanted to show what was going in the budget for things like education, health, military and stuff like that, but these are lessons for us as the generation of Members of Parliament that the House in never divorced from the people, that we are the elected persons of the people. We are here not because of our good looks or brains or how we dress or what we

do; we are here because we have received the mandate of the people; they have put their trust in us and therefore the lessons for some of the younger Parliamentarians of the level of tenacity that one has to stick with it - the *stickability* of politics - the *stickability* of being a Member of Parliament of not expecting fast returns and always being able to win the battle, but that the struggle demands patience and demands that you are able to keep on it; to keep on at it even when things seems to be difficult; to be able to place oneself at the struggle and again ego does not come first, it is service that comes first.

For those of us who worked with Dr Jagan and watched him in Parliament and I was very fortunate in the 1970s to sit in the gallery and watched the debates and some excellent debaters in this House. Mr Corbin referred to Mr Boysie Ramkarran whose wit was wonderful and enlightening and he could sting while he could make you laugh at your own self. I always remember the famous one that went on just prior to the death of Mr Teekah in this House, because I happened to be here that day when Boysie was teasing him about sly mongoose and singing the song under his breath. I do not know if Mr Corbin will remember that, but the issue of being principled of preparing yourself. Cheddi never came to Parliament with not being prepared that was impossible and in addition to that he always recycled paper long before the

fashion of recycling paper began; he was always reconverting paper and writing on the backs of paper. He always used to tell us at Freedom House ... this is thirty years ago, that we were troubling the trees; the more paper we wasted the more trees were being cut down and everyone thought that Cheddi got a little whacky now and again. All is now absolutely true and we are all trying to recycle and all trying to be conscious and stuff like that. But more importantly is to stay loyal to one self and to ones beliefs. Were he to be alive today, I think he would have been proud of the efforts that this Parliament has made; all of us and the last Parliaments over time and the ups and downs and the ins and outs and all the difficulties that we went through, but I think he would have been proud of what has been done to this Parliament that it is becoming more and more a truly deliberative forum. And who said that Parliament has to agree to everything, but if you had seen the British Parliament, they are like a bunch of fish mongers. We can be rowdy and noisy, but we are not a quarter as bad as the British House of Commons, but that is not to set us of that standard. But to say that the changes in Parliament - the Committee System - the fact that our Parliament is televised, that we have Hansards, although we would like to have them more on time, we are having them; motions and questions are being answered and that there is a forum of possibility for dialogue and reaching consensus from time to time

. And he would have been proud of the constitutional reforms and Parliamentary reforms that were brought in this House. Therefore I believe that this is the forum where we can find solutions, where we can find agreements, where we can edify each other on why we disagree with each other without getting into personal attacks and so on.

I believe that as a woman Parliamentarian, because I was then reminded when I wanted to come off the speakers' list that I was the only woman speaking and therefore in fairness to the women in this House and those who many have known him that he believes in women's equality; he was never sexist. I was never told as a woman or any of the women who was in the party at that time and it was only Janet as a woman in Parliament in the latter part and I think that Philomena was a senator in the 1953 period if I remember correctly in that there was nothing that we women could not do in terms of political work; there was no where that we could not go that it was said that we were women and therefore we should stay back. We were out there foot on foot with the men. And so the issues that were brought about removing the means test for the pensions, these were things that he actually said in 1948 when he debated in Parliament; he spoke about the means test; he spoke about universal adult suffrage and equality for men and women. Therefore we have seen the

fruition of these things coming out. In fact he was the first person in the House to raise those issues; he may not have been the first person in the entire country that spoke about it, but the first person to record them in the House.

Mr Speaker, Dr Jagan is the longest serving Parliamentarian. In his honour in this House and on the issue of Parliamentarianism that it is a service that we should be proud of as MPs to carry out and that we should not see it as a drain on us and a bore and stuff like that. What I am trying to say that by Dr Cheddi Jagan's example, it should be an example that the role of an MP and the function of an MP is a great Honour and it brings dignity to oneself and to ones party and maybe all of us may not feel that, we are only talking about Jagan, I think we must uphold the fact that the Parliament is one of the highest forums of the State and I therefore wish to support the Motion. I thank you. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

20:07H

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER No. 10 (1)

Hon Samuel AA Hinds: Mr Speaker, I would like to rely on Standing Order No. 10 (1) to move a motion so that we suspend Standing Order No. 10 (1) so that the Sitting may continue to the end of this debate.

Put and agreed to.

Motion carried.

The Speaker: The Honourable Member Mr Norton

Mr Aubrey C Norton: Mr Speaker, it is indeed a special pleasure for me to be associated with this Motion.

Mr Speaker, one week ago when I received the Motion and I read it, I worried with the dangers it portends, but we initiated a process, which resulted in consultation, which resulted in compromise and consensus and a Motion that we can all agree to. Therefore I want to state that it is important that we have achieved that compromise and consensus and that in itself is a

tribute to Dr Cheddi Jagan. *[Applause]* But we have to be careful that we do not compromise as a rarity, we should make it the general approach of the Parliament.

Mr Speaker, like those before me, I want to give a little of my own experience with Dr Jagan. I know Mr Corbin will know, but I do not know if the others will that I came from a house in which my father was a PPP; I came from a house from which my mother and aunt, who incidentally influenced me the most were PNC and my father's closest brother who lives in the same House was from The United Force. And so in large measure I grew up in a house where I used to see all the literature. I tell you this to make the point which I am now about to make. Mr Speaker, who Dr Jagan is to you might not be the same person to me; who Forbes Burnham is to me might not be the same person to you; who Peter D'Aguiar is to somebody who supported him, he will not necessarily be the same person to me and many will argue that Dr Walter Rodney made a significant contribution to Guyana, but we all will disagree as to the importance of that contribution. The point I want to make, Mr Speaker, is that we live in a society with a divided psyche. And when I first saw the Motion, the way it was structured, it would have contributed to an accentuation to that division and I am glad that we were able to transcend those problems and to arrive at a point where we can have a Motion

that we all can agree to. But the challenge that faces us is to transcend this divided-psyche and not only create a society, but create a political culture and approach that permits us to develop and that is only possible if we can as a rule make compromise and consensus and have them interwoven into the fabric of our political processes. Mr Speaker, I do not believe that it is a difficult challenge to overcome or to face. Once we develop the political will we will. In doing so, we need to build institutions that will allow us to transcend the narrow partisan politics and to operate in a more consensual fashion. And like Dr Jagan, as most people suggested I want to make a proposal. I want to propose that we establish a national mechanism to discuss and objectively assess the contributions made and make recommendations of all of those persons who have contributed significantly to our society and then we should proceed to honour them in a non-partisan way. Mr Speaker, I believe that will be a glowing tribute to Dr Jagan on this occasion of the 60th Anniversary of his entry into the Legislature.

Mr Speaker, I believe if we are to confront the challenges that face us, not only do we need institutions and mechanisms that transcend narrow partisan politics, but we also need to agree on the things that we will treat us as nationals and transcend the partisan politics. I believe that security of the State is one such

issue that we should treat in this way. We have the new challenge of climate change that will demand the involvement of all of our people. I believe that we should take it to the level of a national issue that transcends partisan politics and like I said before, I believe that we should place this whole issue of honouring people who have contributed to the development of this society outside the realms of partisan politics into that national framework characterised by compromise and consensus.

Mr Speaker, the same is true to me for the issue of national unity. I believe that if we are going to pay a tribute that is not mere words to Dr Jagan then the thing to do is for us to work out the modus vivendi, the modus operandi by which we will deal with the question of the development of national unity in the Guyanese society.

Mr Speaker, to achieve the things we are talking about will demand that we change in large measure our political culture. I believe that in all political cultures there are two dimensions - it is dichotomous. On one hand, there is the tendency to reconcile; on the other hand, the tendency towards tension and division. I do not believe that any society is totally in one direction. It shifts from position to position and therefore I do believe that we must take this opportunity to ensure that the balance shifts

towards reconciliation and attenuation of the tensions in our society.

Mr Speaker, I have earlier said that institutions are important. We must appear to want to deal with issues at a national level. It is in this context that I want to suggest that we can pay tribute to Dr Jagan and all those who would have contributed by agreeing to ensure that there is a State-funded centre of research on all Presidents that serve this country and I would say inclusive of Mrs Jagan regardless of what are the legal problems. Because a thorough understanding of this society will demand a thorough understanding of all our Presidents, all their strengths, all their weaknesses and proper assessments, then we can move forward.

And so many have spoken before and it is deep into a Friday evening and I do not want to become a burden on you and so I want to close this short presentation by saying, I do believe that all political leaders make contributions of different degrees; I do believe that all political leaders make mistakes; I do believe that all political parties have their strengths and weaknesses, but the task devolves on us to assess them properly and honour all and sundry based on the contributions they would have made. I believe if we can do that we will pay the best tribute to Dr Jagan on this occasion of the 60th Anniversary of his entry into the Legislature, thereby seeking to put Guyana on a path of

reconciliation and development that is based on justice and the involvement of all the Guyanese people thus giving each and every one a stake in the national cake. I thank you. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Public Works and Communications

Hon Samuel AA Hinds: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I think that today may well be a great day - a lucky day - for Guyana. I think we have gotten into a mood that would have pleased Dr Jagan; it would have warmed his heart. He was always one for unity; he was always one that looked for the reconciliation of the People's Progressive Party or the recovery of the unity of 1953 with the reconciliation of the People's Progressive Party and the PNCR, which started its days as the PPP Burnhamites. So today would have really warmed his heart

I recall the first Enmore Martyr's day 1993 after we had gotten into office and as was expected, he could not contain himself when it came for him to speak and he went over the political history and his history in Guyana from the 1940s right through, and then at the end he posed a question, why can't comrades

become comrades again, and one of my friends poked me in my rib and said, boy, like things changing already you are going to be losing out maybe to a Corbin or someone else. So he always looked towards unity and in today's meeting, we have achieved unity that has been maybe too rear.

I think we have put before ourselves today some significant question; politics is by necessity competitive even adversarial and how do we sense the boundaries to which we should go in our competition and in our advocacy for different positions - positions which we would hold dear. I hope that our earnest presentations here today would stay with us and guide us as we go forward and that we would realise our aspirations - the aspirations expressed here today.

I would like to add as I come to close that a thought came to me that the speeches of this sitting maybe they should be compiled and added to the speeches of his period in Parliament and I think it would be a good reflection going forward. And the proposal by the Honourable Member Mr Norton on the other side that maybe we should have a State-funded study of the Presidents we have had, their strengths, their weaknesses, their times, that might be something worth considering and following up.

So Mr Speaker, let me close by thanking all the Members who spoke, all the Members who did not speak for allowing others to speak for them and hoping that today would really be a lucky day for our country; a day when we would have made a turn for the better and a day when we could have the unity and the harmony in our nation that would be the good conditions for growth and development that may even challenge those countries of Asia who have become famous for rapid growth and development. This would truly be a fitting tribute to the Hon Dr Cheddi Jagan. I thank you. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member.

Question put and agreed to.

Motion carried

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

Honourable Prime Minister before I invite you to move the adjournment, I would like to take this opportunity to wish all Members and their families a happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

I would like to thank Members of the National for their co-operation during this year. We started meeting just about a year ago and I think we have done extremely good work. I suspect that we are going to meet before the end of the year, but I think that this is a good time to say this now that the festive season is upon us and to say that I would like to thank Members as usual for their very, very excellent cooperation in getting our work. I would like to thank Members and I think the nation should thank Members for their excellent preparations and the contributions they have made to the debates, which have enlivened the Parliament and enlightened the population and I hope that this work continues during the next year.

I would like also to thank the Members of the Press, the Parliament Staff, the Hansard staff - Shanta, who diligently sits there every day unnoticed. She is noticed by me if not by Members. I would like to thank the Clerk and the Deputy Clerk and all the Office Assistants who you see and the large numbers of Parliament staff who you do not see and who work very

diligently to keep the wheels of this Institution turning. I would like to thank the technicians and everybody else.

Mr Corbin, I see you are anxious to get up.

Mr Robert HO Corbin: Mr Speaker, I would like to thank you for those kind words and wishes for the season and to reciprocate those greetings to you, your family, to the staff of the Parliament, the Press, my colleagues on this side and on the Government's side of the House on this very significant occasion of the Christian festival of Christmas, which I think has evolved to more than that, to a national recognition of a time for sharing, a time for goodwill, a time for peace and harmony in our society.

As I said earlier today where I was with some senior citizens in the Plaisance area, let us not forget the reason for the season that this season is significant for mankind and I trust that in the spirit of the season, we will not only enjoy, be merry and share what we have among ourselves, but that we remember the poor, the needy in our society and that we can continue to give service to them so that Guyana as a whole would be a better place. Merry Christmas and I hope that I would have the opportunity again to wish you all a happy New Year as well. Thank you. *[Applause]*

Mr Raphael GC Trotman: Mr Speaker, may I join in the sentiments expressed firstly by yourself and followed by Mr Corbin in extending on behalf of myself, my family and behalf of all Members of the Alliance For Change, season's greetings to each and every one of you here and I would like to single out the staff of the Assembly, those persons who keep this place rolling late into the night very busy and I hope and trust that the new year will see a new form of enhanced cooperation, we can work together.

It is regrettable that some of us would not be here and we are told that there may be or likely to be a sitting on the 27 December. I know that the Prime Minister has indicated that he will be out of the jurisdiction and has asked me to defer a Motion on GPL that I have tabled so that he may speak on it and I have graciously done so for two reasons; most importantly because he is not going to be here; also because he is the subject Minister and of course because it is his birthday on that day – 27 December. So that is the least that I could have done and I trust that he will enjoy the festive season and I hope will, but let us as Mr Corbin has said remember those who are less fortunate at this particular time. Thank you, Mr Speaker. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: The Honourable Member Mr Franklin

Mr Overall N Franklin: Mr Speaker, I would like to wish especially the women of Parliament a very merry Christmas, *[Applause]* the Speaker, the staff of Parliament, all the hardworking security personnel in this period of Christmas for fathers in particular it is a very stressful time especially for our kinds. It has indeed been a pleasure to work with fellow MPs and I hope that the spirit of Christmas can be transferred into the New Year and indeed the entire Ninth Parliament so that we may achieve what I think our mandate is to do good for the people of Guyana. Merry Christmas to all! *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Works and Communications

Hon Samuel AA Hinds: Mr Speaker, I too join in extending seasons greetings to all of use here, yourself and those who work in Parliament, Honourable Members.

I would also like to extend greetings to particularly our Muslim brothers and sisters on the coming festival of Eid-UI-Adha, I think on 20 December.

Let me thank Mr Trotman for accepting my request to postpone the debate on GPL beyond the next sitting. I would like to move the Motion that the House be adjourned not a day between now and Christmas or Eid-UI-Adha, but until the 27 December, which happens to be also the birthday of one Raphael Trotman. *[Applause]* So I hope that all Honourable Members would receive some token from him on his own behalf and even on my behalf in my absence. *[Laughter]* So, until the 27 December the House is adjourned.

The Speaker: Honourable Members, it is regretted that we were unable to have some extra festivities today for the Christmas Season, but having had advanced knowledge that the Sitting on the 27th will be much shorter than the sitting today and having had advanced knowledge that it is the birthday of two distinguished Members of the National Assembly, we fixed the festivities for 27 December. And those Members who have the ability to sing, I know Mr Corbin falls into that category, please polish your voices, those possibilities will exist on that day. Thank you very much.

The House is so adjourned.

Adjourned accordingly at 22:32h