

39th Sitting June 1987

THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
OFFICIAL REPORTS

[VOLUME 11]

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE FIRST SESSION (1987) OF THE NATIONAL
ASSEMBLY OF THE FIFTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF
THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA

39th Sitting 14:00 hrs Wednesday, 1987-06-10

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (74)

Speaker (1)

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

Members of the Government - People's National Congress (62)

Ministers in the Cabinet (10)

Prime Minister (1)

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

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

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

Other Vice-Presidents and Deputy Prime Ministers (2)

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

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

Other Deputy Prime Ministers (2)

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

Cde. R.H.O. Corbin, M.P.,
Deputy Prime Minister, Public Utilities (Absent - on leave

Senior Ministers (4)

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

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

Cde. S. Prashad, M.P.,
Minister of Manpower and Housing

*Cde. W.S. Murray, C.C.H., M.P.,
Minister of Trade and Tourism

Other Ministers (14)

Senior Ministers (7)

Cde. J.R. Thomas, M.P.,
Minister of Regional Development

Cde. Dr. R.A. Van West-Charles, M.P.,
Minister of Medical Education, Environment and
Food Policy

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

*Non-elected Member

- *Cde. Dr. P.L. McKenzie, A.A., M.P.,
Senior Minister in the Ministry of Agriculture
- *Cde. D.M.A. Bernard, M.P.,
Minister in the Ministry of Education (Absent - on leave)
- *Cde. J.R. Kransburg, M.P.,
Minister of Communications and Works (Absent - on leave)
- *Cde. Dr. N.E. Blackman, M.P.,
Minister in the Ministry of Health

Ministers (5)

- Cde. Urmia E.H. Johnson, M.P.,
Minister within the Ministry of National
Mobilisation
- Cde. C.G. Sharma, A.A., J.P., M.P.,
Minister within the Office of the President
- Cde. D. Sawh, M.P.,
Minister of Forestry (Absent - on leave)
- *Cde. V.V. Parvatan, M.P.,
Minister in the Ministry of Agriculture
- Cde. J.T. Kisson, M.P.,
Minister in the Ministry of Medical
Education, Environment and Food Policy

Ministers of State (2)

- *Cde. Dr. Faith A. Harding, M.P.,
Minister of State within the Ministry of
Planning and Development
- Cde. Stella Odie-Ali, M.P.,
Minister of State in the Ministry of
Home Affairs

Parliamentary Secretaries (2)

- *Cde. Jean M.G. Persico, A.A., M.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary, Education
- *Cde. L.E. Scotland, M.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary, Office of the
Prime Minister

Government Chief Whip (1)

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

Other Members (23)

- Cde. Agnes W. Bend-Kirton, M.P.
- Cde. A.K. Habibulla, M.P.
- Cde. E.H.A. Fowler, M.P.
- Cde. Joyce Gill-Mingo, M.P.
- Cde. M. Ally, M.P.
- Cde. Elaine B. Davidson, M.P.
- Cde. H. Doobay, M.P.
- Cde. Joyce M. Munroe, J.P., M.P.
- Cde. Edwina Melville, M.P. (Absent)
- Cde. Anna Ally, M.P.
- Cde. L. Arthur, M.P.
- Cde. J.R.L. Bovell-Drakes, M.P.
- Cde. N. Calistro, M.P.
- Cde. F.M. Cumberbatch, M.P.
- Cde. M.I. Deen, M.P. (Absent - on leave)

*Non-elected Member

Cde. Cyrilda A. DeJesus, M.P.
Cde. Edith Deygo, M.P.
Cde. Clarice A. Edwards, M.P.
Cde. C.L. Geddes, M.P. (Absent - on leave)
Cde. G. Marshall, M.P.
Cde. B. Persaud, M.P.
Cde. E.W. Trotman, M.P.
Cde. K. Sankar, M.S., M.P. (Absent - on leave)
Members from the National Congress of Local Democratic Organs (2)

Cde. Ross I. Semple, M.P.
(One Vacancy)
Members from the Regional Democratic Councils (10)
Cde. Nellie R. Charles, M.P. (Region No. 7 - Cuyuni/Mazaruni)
Cde. R. Bishop, M.S., M.P. (Region No. 4 - Demerara/Mahaica) (Absent - on leave)
Cde. Bhagmates Latchminarayan, M.P. (Region No. 5 - Mahaica/Berbice) (Absent)
Cde. Y. Khan, M.P. (Region No. 2 - Pomeroon/Supenaam)
Cde. Enid E. Abrahams, M.S., J.P., M.P. (Region No. 3 - Essequibo
Islands/West Demerara)
Cde. I. Ally, M.P. (Region No. 6 - East Berbice/Corentyne)

Cde. B.L. Domingo, M.P. (Region No. 1 - Barima/Waini)
Cde. S.I. McGarrell, M.P. (Region No. 8 - Potaro/Siparuni) (Absent - on leave)
Cde. M. Stephens, M.P. (Region No. 9 - Upper Takutu/Upper
Essequibo) (Absent)
Cde. Joycelyn Thom-Lindie, M.P. (Region No. 10 - Upper Demerara/Berbice)

Members of the Minority (11)

(i) People's Progressive Party (8)

Minority Leader (1)

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

Deputy Speaker (1)

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

Other Members (6)

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

(ii) United Force (2)

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

(iii) Working People's Alliance (1)

Mr. E. Kwayana, M.P.

OFFICERS

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

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

14:05 hrs

Oath

The Speaker: Comrades and hon. Members, I have been informed that Cde. Leroy Evans Scotland was appointed a Parliamentary Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister, with effect from the 1st June, 1987. Cde. Scotland is not an elected Member of the National Assembly but, by virtue of holding the office of Parliamentary Secretary, he has become a Member of the Assembly. He cannot, however, vote in the Assembly.

Before Cde. Scotland can take part in the proceedings of the Assembly, he has to make and subscribe the oath. As Cde. Scotland is present, the oath will now be administered.

The oath of office was administered to and made and subscribed by Cde. Leroy Evans Scotland.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER
Congratulations to Cde. Scotland

The Speaker: Comrades and hon. Members, I am sure you would like me, on your behalf, to congratulate Cde. Scotland on his appointment. We welcome him to the Assembly and we extend our best wishes to him.

Leave to Members

The Speaker: Leave has been granted to Cdes. Shahabuddeen, Corbin, Bernard, Kranenburg, Sawh and Sankar for today's sitting and to Cde. Geddes to the 24th June, 1987.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS etc.

The following papers were laid:

- (1) (a) Annual Report of the Office of the President for the year 1986.
- (b) Annual Report of the Ministry of Housing for the year 1986.
The Prime Minister.
- (2) (i) Court of Appeal (Amendment) Rules 1986 (No. 2) made under section 40 of the Court of Appeal Act, Chapter 3:01, on 30th May, 1986, and published in the Gazette on 31st May, 1986.
- (ii) Rules of the High Court (Amendment) Rules 1986 (No. 3) made under section 67 of the High Court Act Chapter 3:02, on 30th May, 1986, and published in the Gazette on 31st May, 1986.
- (iii) Rules of the High Court (Amendment) Rules 1987 (No.1) made under section 67 of the High Court Act, Chapter 3:02, on 11th May, 1987, and published in the Gazette on 16th May, 1987.
The Minister of Regional Development, on behalf of the Vice-President, First Deputy Prime Minister and Attorney General.

- (3) Annual Report of the Ministry of Education and Social Development for the year 1986.
The Vice-President, Education and Social Development and Deputy Prime Minister,
- (4) External Loans Order 1987 (No. 28), made under section 3 (7) of the External Loans Act, Chapter 74:08, on 7th May, 1987, and published in the Gazette on 9th May, 1987.
The Minister of Finance,

QUESTIONS TO MINISTERS

Action of Guyana's Representative(s) in U.N. Organs

Mr. Kwayana: Mr. Speaker, I beg to ask the Minister of Foreign Affairs

Question No. 62 standing in my name on the Order Paper, namely:

- (i) Has the Government of Guyana's representative in the United Nations Council for Namibia at any time failed to act, in relation to the future of Namibia, in accordance with the views and tactics of SWAPO?
- (ii) Will the Minister give the assurance that he will instruct Guyana's representative or representatives in U.N. organs to advance the self-determination of Namibia by acting in accordance with the wishes of that country's recognised representative, namely the SWAPO?

The Minister of Foreign Affairs (Cde. Jackson): Cde. Speaker,

- (i) In keeping with the policies of the Government, Guyana's representatives on the United Nations Council for Namibia have always worked closely with SWAPO in the work of the Council, taking full account of the views and tactics of SWAPO.
- (ii) Guyana's representatives to the United Nations and other multilateral organs are under standing instructions to advance the self-determination and indeed the independence of Namibia, as SWAPO, the sole and authentic representative of the people of Namibia, wishes. Guyana sees her efforts as supportive of those of SWAPO.

Sale of Articles to Mr. Neil Chan

Mr. Kwayana: Mr. Speaker, I beg to ask the Minister of Finance

Question No. 63 standing in my name on the Order Paper, namely:

- (i) How many sales of articles seized by Customs have been made to Mr. Neil Chan between 1983 and 1985 inclusive?
- (ii) What is the total value of the articles sold to Mr. Neil Chan during 1983 to 1985?
- (iii) What is the total amount paid by Mr. Neil Chan for all the articles bought?
- (iv) In the numerous sales to Mr. Neil Chan has the Comptroller of Customs acted under Ministerial direction?
- (v) Will the Minister consult the Government's legal advisers about the legality of sales to Mr. Neil Chan?

The Minister of Finance (Cde. Greenidge): Cde. Speaker, -

- (i) Between 1983 and 1985 110 sales of seized goods were made to Bel Park Agencies.
- (ii) The total assessed value of the articles sold amounted to \$1,127,753.44.
- (iii) The amount paid for those goods was \$1,409,691.79.
- (iv) The Comptroller acted in accordance with the provisions of the Customs Act, Chapter 82:01, section 226.
- (v) If there is any reasonable ground for believing that the procedures infringe the law I will be prepared as usual to seek the Attorney General's advice.

The Minority Leader (Cde. Dr. Jagan): Will the Minister say whether, on occasions like these, when goods are seized by the Customs, the opportunity is taken to open the sales to tender so that you can get the highest bidder to purchase the items.

Cde. Greenidge: The Question, as I understand it, refers to the disposal of specific articles. The one that is now being put by the Minority Leader relates to normal practice. As far as the answer is concerned, section 226 of the Act does provide the Comptroller with devices that he can use for disposal of these goods.

14:25 hrs

- (ii) The present school ratios are as follows:
- (a) Nursery School: 1 teacher to 18 pupils
 - (b) Primary Schools: 1 teacher to 31 pupils
 - (c) Secondary Schools: 1 teacher to 22 students
 - (d) Technical Institutes: 1 teacher to 24 students
- (iii) The Minister is aware of a shortage of trained and qualified teachers in certain areas.
- (iv) The Ministry recognises that the best performance will be realised from teachers who are attracted to the service, who are comfortable and who are activated to produce. To achieve this end, the Ministry has taken steps to attract and retain teachers and to provide training and up-grading on an on-going basis.

The strategies employed for recruiting and retaining an adequate number of qualified teachers include:

1. Embarking on improved recruitment techniques

The Ministry in its attempt to attract qualified School Leavers and University Graduates has organised for:

- (a) Talks on Teaching as a Career, with students of the Fifth and Sixth Forms of Secondary Schools, as part of a Career Guidance Programme;
- (b) Radio talks on 'Teaching as a Career' by the Chief Education Officer and other senior professionals;
- (c) Discussions on radio, involving past and present teachers;
- (d) Appearance of Ministry Officials and parents discussing aspects of 'Teaching as a Career' on the 'Night Ride' Radio Programme.

2. Providing attractive promotional opportunities

Greater opportunities now exist for more teachers to be appointed to senior positions in the system within a shorter period than in the past.

- (a) An additional 258 positions have been created for Heads of Departments for the areas, Mathematics and Science, Language Arts, Social Studies and Business Education. The Departments are in addition to the traditional Home Economics, Agriculture Science and Industrial Arts Departments.
- (b) New criteria for promotion have been worked out. These criteria emphasise quality of performance rather than seniority. In addition, the number of years of experience needed by teachers to allow them to become eligible for promotion to senior positions has been reduced.
- (c) A Cadet Scheme is soon to be established to allow for the earlier promotion of enterprising, effective and outstanding teachers.
- (d) There has been the rationalisation of promotional opportunities for teachers of technical/vocational subject areas.

3. Improving the Work Conditions

- (a) A Buildings Unit has been established within this Ministry and a carefully structured programme of improving the physical conditions of schools is being carried out.
- (b) Arrangements have been made for acting teachers to be recruited and paid in their respective regions. This has significantly reduced the waiting time for salaries.
- (c) A new system of supervision which includes an Inspectorate Team has been introduced. This new system will provide necessary guidance and support for teachers by facilitating their use of appropriate strategies and methods for maximal efficiency and effectiveness.

Up-grading of Teachers

In addition to retaining those who are qualified, efforts are made to increase the number of teachers who are qualified to teach as well as upgrade the skills of those teachers who would have been trained some time in the past.

- (a) In collaboration with the Guyana Teachers' Union, this Ministry has embarked upon a Hinterland Teacher-Training Programme.

It is designed to up-grade teachers of the hinterland areas who would not have had the opportunity for improving their qualifications and later allow them to undergo training with other students of our Teacher-Training Institutions.

By August of this year, 55 of these students should qualify to join the ranks of trained teachers serving in the hinterland.

- (b) This Ministry and the Guyana Teachers' Union are working together in conducting up-grading programmes for acting teachers in other parts of the country.
- (c) Of great significance to the Ministry's efforts of up-grading all teachers is the establishment of the National Centre for Education Resource Development. Here teachers meet, exchange ideas and acquire resource material through the many workshops/seminars conducted at this Centre.
- (d) Seminars/Workshops are also organised, on a regular basis, in the Regions to develop skills related to the effective teaching of the various subjects in the Curriculum.

Cde. Dr. Jagan rose.

The Speaker: There is no Supplementary. This is a written reply.

Cde. Basir.

Pound Fees

Cde. Basir: Cde. Speaker, I beg to ask the Senior Minister in the Ministry of Agriculture Question No. 68 standing in my name on the Order Paper, namely:

- (i) Is it true that after his 3 cows had been seized a farmer in Plantation Hope, East Coast Demerara, was required to pay \$160, a sum considerably in excess of the statutory fee per animal, to the pound to secure their release?
- (ii) If true, will the Minister say whether he will take steps to ensure that such malpractices cease?

The Senior Minister in the Ministry of Agriculture (Cde. Dr. McKenzie):
The management at Hope Coconut Industries Limited has no knowledge of the alleged incident.

Persons sent Overseas by N.I.S.

Cde. Belgrave: Cde. Speaker, I wish to ask the Minister in the Ministry of Health Question No. 69 standing in my name on the Order Paper, namely:

Will the Minister furnish information as to the number of persons sent overseas by National Insurance Scheme during 1986 for treatment, the names of the countries to which they were sent, the period of their sojourn in each, and the total cost to the Scheme?

The Minister of Finance (Cde. Greenidge): Cde. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister in the Ministry of Health I wish to give the following answer:

The Speaker: Why are these Answers not written and circulated?

Cde. Greenidge: I was under the impression that the Answer to this one had been sent to the Assembly.

The Speaker: I have not received it.

Cde. Greenidge: The Answer to the Question was written quite a while ago.

The Speaker: Go ahead and read it.

Cde. Greenidge: The first question refers to the number of persons sent abroad for medical treatment.

- (1) During 1986, twenty-seven (27) insured persons were granted permission to proceed abroad for medical treatment at the expense of the National Insurance Board.

The second part refers to

Countries visited and duration

Of this number fifteen of those persons have so far returned and submitted claims for reimbursement. The countries in which they received medical treatment and the duration of their stay are given below:

<u>Country</u>	<u>No. of Persons</u>	<u>No. of Days</u>
United States of America	7	125*
United Kingdom	5	85
Canada	1	18
Jamaica	1	10
Barbados	1	not yet available

In the case of the United States of America the submissions are not complete and in the case of Barbados the person has not yet submitted a claim for reimbursement.

The total amount reimbursed for 1986 is \$146,916.60

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14:25 - 14:35 hrs

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

The following Bills were introduced and read the First time:

- (1) Rice Factories (Amendment) Bill 1987 - Bill No. 3/1987
- (2) Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute
Bill 1987 - Bill No. 4/1987

[The Senior Minister in the Ministry of Agriculture.]

1987-06-10

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

16:44 - 16:50 hrs

16:44 hrs

On Resumption --

NO CONFIDENCE IN GOVERNMENT'S MINING POLICY

"Be it resolved that this Assembly has no confidence in the Government's mining policy, including its policy on precious metals."
/Mr. Kwayana./

Mr. Kwayana: Mr. Speaker, the mining policy of Government at this time is naturally very important. One cannot, in my own position, discuss all aspects of the mining policy in the time at my disposal, nor would I perhaps wish to do so, but there are certain special issues that need to be confronted. There is the general issue of the control of one's resources among which, in the case of Guyana, mineral resources are an important group as in several developing countries. We have then the first choice to be made, or the first balance to be struck between external interests and national interests, and then within the national interests. I would want to recommend an interest between the very small and valuable operators and the more wealthy or better endowed in terms of material capacity.

General statements may also have to be made. As we know, the question of sovereignty weighs very heavily with us. A rather new book by Dr. Waldron, who is the head of the Geology and Mines Commission, includes concern with growth. It is called "Options for Developing Countries in Mining Development". It is written by Grantley "Waldron" and Raj Kumar. The passage I want to draw attention to is:

"... true expressions of sovereignty will only be achieved by the appropriateness of the fiscal and other measures which determine whether a deposit is commercially exploitable and the return to the investor and the State which would arise as a consequence of its exploitation."

Without any comment on that I would say it is a contribution to the whole discussion of sovereignty. What this scientist is saying is that sovereignty is not a thing in itself; it has certain ways of expressing itself and that it expresses itself partly in a fiscal regime. I think this is a very welcome and sobering contribution to the whole discussion of the development of natural resources in general. It has always been, and we have said it in this Assembly, with orderliness of that development, the fact that it is rooted in some kind of order which we call "legality" and which in some places they call "socialist legality" and in other places "rule of law". We have, of course, been arguing against

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16:44 - 16:50 hrs

decisions which are not well thought out in advance. One has to look at the Investment Code of 1979. I do not know if there is a new edition. I am sure the Government speakers will inform me on that and on other declarations of policy that have been made from time to time.

I cannot start this discussion without referring to the Chappell fiasco. The Agreement signed on July 4, 1985, involved the Nassau group in regard to promoting the development of the vast underutilised resources of Guyana through the medium of tax haven jurisdiction. Other passages, for example on page 2, paragraph 4, make it clear that mining was a consideration.

Mr. Kwayana continues

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NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

17:00 - 17:10 hrs

17:00 hrs

Before I get into the meat, the real day-to-day policy issues, I want to comment on the fact that earlier this year we passed a Resolution on the question of business with firms that participate in the economies of South Africa and Namibia and you will remember the assurances that were given by the Government speakers, which I as Mover of the Motion and others on this side accepted. Our proposals had been different and our proposals had borne in mind the fact that developing countries, committed as they might be even in Africa and the front-line states, do have these moments when they have no choice. Obviously I am not recommending that we should search for this moment. The Motion, as originally tabled, tried to provide against an emergency and exigency when the Government might come to the Assembly and say, "This cannot be avoided" or "If we were to avoid it, these would be the consequences."

The Motion was passed in the form that it was passed and I have no alternative but to be very vigilant on the question of firms dealing with Guyana's economy because what can take place unintentionally is that we merge our mineral industry with that of South Africa or Namibia unwittingly. It would be very bad to do it consciously. It would perhaps be more unforgivable to do it without knowing.

I refer to the news in the Chronicle that a British petroleum firm - I think it is London and Scottish and Dickman Hill Proprietors - is to be involved in this country's petroleum mining. Subject to correction, which will have to be well documented, that is the position because my information is that Dickman Hill Proprietors is an Australian firm with four subsidiaries in South Africa, Inter-mounting Mining and others, one of them engaged in uranium. Dickman Hill has been published in our newspaper as one of the firms that is going to be engaged - or partnered or some such thing - in the search for petroleum. These facts are relevant because since last year we committed ourselves to accelerating the search for petroleum and it was almost inevitable that some firm or the other with links in South Africa would be involved. This is what has taken place.

Let us now turn to the policy issues within Guyana almost exclusively. When this Motion was first moved, one of the items to be urged was the price of gold. That was soon after corrected by the new rate but, after that new rate, other developments have taken place rendering the new rate less attractive than it was at the time when it was made. It is our opinion that perhaps there should be re-consideration of the rate. In fact, at a very recent Face-the-Nation programme

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17:00 - 17:10 hrs

which I heard on a tape and which had nothing to do with the moving of this Motion - it was moved some time last year - the Commissioner of Mines and Geology did say it was under review. Having said that, I have no doubt it will give rise to responses from those who mine gold, if we understand these things at all. However, he said it and it is the same point I am urging that there should be a review, an upward review, in favour of those who win gold within Guyana.

We are willing to defend those owners of dredges, who seem to be somewhere in the middle of the two poles of technology, against any disadvantages they might suffer as Guyanese from the effects of high-powered, highly mechanised mining. We also have to defend those in the interior who have the status of employee. We have written to the Minister concerned - in this case, the Minister of Labour - drawing attention to the need, now that mining is on the up-swing, now that most Government statements about the future have to do with mining. What are the conditions of work for those who hold the status of employee within the mining concerns which may have this status? As we know, some of them do not. The tributors have a kind of collectivism and it is on those tributors that I want to place quite a lot of faith in this argument here this afternoon. The price of gold is guaranteed to these middle-sized operators with middle technology. Here, too, I stand to be corrected.

Then, they have the task of distribution of earnings within their little economy, be it one, two or three dredges. To what extent is this price guaranteed to them by the Guyana Gold Board and the Government passed on, in the re-distribution that takes place among people and miners, divers and other workers within these enterprises far away from home, behind God's back as we say, exposed to all the ravages of weather and to this new intruder, malaria? To what extent is their future guaranteed by all the employers? I have no doubt that some employers would guarantee their future. To what extent is the National Insurance Scheme firmly implanted in these enterprises? To what extent is there medical care for some of the ailments that might arise in the course of mining, things that used to arise a few years ago and that ^{have} arise fairly recently. I understand there is no decompression chamber in any hospital in the country. This would hardly affect the category called "owner" directly. Some have suggested that the Bartica Hospital should be outfitted to serve the needs of miners. Some have argued against that and said "Use the Georgetown Hospital." All of this would depend

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17:00 - 17:10 hrs

our air communications, which, again, are a vital part of our mining policy. While Guyana Airways Corporation is panting for breath, there can be no happy vision about the development in mining. It is the main communication link. Other people are finding other communication links.

Another important issue is the question of diamonds. Gold has been controlled. There is a Gold Board and some people say there is no Diamond Board. Why? Is there no attempt to bring diamonds into the official economy? The whole thing is quite mysterious to some of us. Diamonds are called "precious stones" and no doubt many of them are very precious indeed, but the State seems quite willing to let them take their own head and those who operate claims may also take their own head. Our information is that there are legitimate and non-legitimate traders, those who will export formally and those who will export clandestinely, in other words, they scout the diamonds out.

Mr. Kwayana continues

1987-06-10

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

17:20 - 17:30 hrs

17:20 hrs

Now, miners were very indignant when they heard a Government person say that Nine Miles will no longer be worked by pick and shovel, that it cannot be worked by pick and shovel, that it must come under mechanisation. The fear is that all the concessions will be handed over to some highly mechanised firm or individual who can convince the Geology and Mines Commission that it has the capacity to develop it on mechanised lines. I have been requested to challenge that view and to say that the only reason why this view has become current is because the recent operators knew that they were operating illegally and did not make the usual preparations on the ground, but wanted to rush activities. I think there was one fatality.

When I drew this to the attention of the miners they said that there were many fatalities in diving in years past and that has not put an end to diving. These people who are men of the earth - one might almost call them "mineral peasants" - who are not mechanised or highly mechanised at all, must have a special place in the mining activities of Guyana and at Nine Miles. They claim that Nine Miles is far from the situation where it can only be worked by highly mechanised operations and that it can, in fact, be worked by pick and shovel. These are people who have gone there and worked and have succeeded in most cases. They are very disturbed by the report. It is more than a report, because it was said at official level that pick and shovel will be excluded.

Finally, the tributors. They are accused of not selling gold to the Gold Board. There are many people today who have claims and cannot work them. The hon. Minister of Finance had to call the other day on the banks to pay attention to the applications by miners, if I understood correctly what was reported. I don't know that he has the power to do anything beyond that. I can be corrected, if necessary. I thought he was asking the banks to facilitate banking and that this would mean that people without any capital would get some accommodation from the Development Bank at least and perhaps from the lending banks as well. A document which I happened to see, from persons who are attempting to put a team together to get some gold in a place where they think it is, lays down that if they satisfy the lenders, the lenders will lend them 40 per cent and they must find 60 per cent of the outlay.

The Speaker: Mr. Kwayana, I would like to facilitate you within the limits of the rules.

Cde. Respu Daman Persaud: I wish to move that the speaker be given 15 minutes more.

The Speaker: He has had 45 minutes already.

Mr. Kwayana: Mr. Speaker, I apologise

The Speaker: You are entitled.

Cde

Reeru Daman Persaud: I wish to move that the speaker be given ten minutes to conclude his speech.

Cde. Basir: I beg to second that.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. Kwayana: Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to the majority for withholding their vote.

Most of us can see no future at all for these pioneers. I want to stress the fact that many senior miners have told us that no gold at all has been found in the interior without the aid of pork-knockers. They are the advance guard of anything that has been discovered and therefore there should be arrangements for this class of miner. Therefore, I have to support very strongly the pleadings of the late hon. Joseph Eleazar, his pleas for the pioneers - that no development in mining should smit them out. In fact, there should be concrete measures to make it possible for them to operate in the interior.

It has been said against them that they do not sell gold, or all their gold, to the Gold Board. I want to say quite frankly, and without any venom at all, that I do not know who in Guyana is selling all his gold to the Gold Board. This is a country which, over the last century, was returning over 100,000 ounces of gold per annum in some cases. Now we are calling 14,000 ounces a record. We have heard of some high level operators with multiple dredges who have not yet won the title of Best Miner of the Year. Ordinary pork-knockers have drawn this to my attention. How is it that these persons have all this mechanisation at their disposal and have not yet won one prize? I know nothing from first hand but from the miners when I ask them how they expect to be facilitated if there is a Gold Board and they are not selling to the Gold Board. They point to the shops. Many of them claim to be selling to the shops. They say that they need something in the place of the old shop system which used to supply them with their goods on the spot so that they could carry on their prospecting, or whatever activity they were engaged in, without any fear of starvation.

These are some of the measures that need to be introduced openly because I think that we are in some ways in a parallel situation to the days of Eleazar. The technicians now are Guyanese and know much more about the world than the technicians in those days who were not even Guyanese to begin with. Nevertheless, there is this great fear that in this quest for high-powered, highly mechanised mining, the place of the small miner, the smaller miner and the smallest miner in

the economy might be neglected.

Of course, there have been governmental statements on this point. Officials have called on miners to get themselves in order and mechanise, fit in with the times. But how? How is the miner who knows the bush inside out, knows all the skills about pork-knocking, going to fit in with the times unless there is a bundle of governmental measures known to be available to him?

Having taken up so much of the valuable time of the Assembly, ^a I am, rather self-critical person; I can recognise these things - I merely want to say that I began by saying we are hoping that the Government is settling on some less haphazard policy in the area of mining than in the past. We hope that the Chappells are something of the past and will not re-appear, that mining policy will be looked at with an eye to the future, that valuable long-term capital resources will not be frittered away for current needs, that the new locations where heavy mining activities take place will no longer have the status, when that is over, of a remote location but will be available for normal human development, that something needs to be done about diamond prices and other incentives, something needs to be done, as a high government official has admitted, about the price of gold, all of these being incentives towards getting precious minerals into the field of official transactions.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud continues

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What I would like to anticipate this afternoon is a clear enunciation of Government's policy. Again I must express the concern of those of us on this side of the Assembly to be treated with the courtesy that any Member of Parliament deserves. Why is it that the Government has not circulated the Agreements in full to us so that they can be studied? I don't want to throw red herrings into the debate but when there was a border problem we gave our support. We are deeply concerned. We may have our differences but, so far as our natural resources^{and} our sovereignty are concerned, you can count on our support. That has been the principled position of the People's Progressive Party in those days when the Government was very concerned about joint development. But even if there is joint development, one would like to know in clear terms, without any ambiguity, what these Agreements are, to what extent the foreigners will benefit and to what extent the Guyanese will benefit. I think that those are pertinent questions. One is compelled to ask: Is there a reversal of policy with respect to ownership and control of our natural resources?

In seconding the Motion I thought of raising those questions which are relevant and pertinent so that answers should be forthcoming. There is concern, deep concern, country-wide, and there must be concern in a matter like this. The Government owes it not only to the Parliament, but to the nation to fully inform us as to what is taking place in these areas. With those areas of enquiry, concern and a reiteration of our policy with respect to sovereignty, ownership and control, I want to second the Motion moved by Mr. Eusi Kwayana.

Cde. Nokta: Cde. Speaker, I shall not be very long. There are just a few points I would like to make in relation to policy because while we are thinking about protecting the local miners and pork-knockers, we have to think about the Amerindians also, those who are living in the interior in reservations.

In accordance with the Amerindian Ordinance, these people are supposed to have areas delineated for them. They are given rights to live there and to extract whatever is there for their own benefit. We have to examine this factor and ensure that when claims are given the reservations are not included. The poor Amerindians cannot afford to buy dredges and have to use the pick-axe. They have become the servants of these people who own dredges, because they have to sell their labour and they get very little in return. This is the only

practical thing to do in the interior. It is happening right now in the Rupumuni, in the Pakaraima Mountains and in the Mazaruni District. Because of the poor air service provided by the Government, persons who are in the gold business have to trek across the border to sell their gold and to buy rations. The Government's plane service is virtually dead. There is no food going into the Mazaruni and into Amerindians and pork-knockers have to go over the border for food. In other words, the poor service of Guyana Airways Corporation encourages people to sell their goods and their minerals across the border.

The Government should also address itself to the question of Government officials being buyers of gold. The Gold Board has given permits to individuals to purchase gold. As we understand it, and from reports coming in, these people have their own private claims. One has to ask: How can a person have a private claim and at the same time have the authority to buy gold on behalf of the Government? Something can go wrong because who will differentiate between the gold?

On the question of expatriates, we know of expatriates operating in the Barama River, but we also have large local companies, like GUYMINE, operating in the Marudi Mountains. What policy governs the operations of GUYMINE in the Marudi Mountains?

I should like the Minister to address his mind to these questions because they touch on policy and also on the protection of indigenous people.

Mr. M.F. Singh: Mr. Speaker, I am going to be very short. The Motion is that this Assembly has no confidence in the Government's mining policy, including the policy on precious metals. I must confess that I have no great knowledge of Government's mining policy so I cannot make any pronouncement about having no confidence in it.

What I can say, and what I will say, is that as a Buxtonian I know that Buxton was built by the pork-knockers. My mother told me how her father's shop used to finance the pork-knockers from Buxton. They would go into the gold and diamond fields in the Mazaruni. They would come back with their gold and that brought Buxton up from the low level it was experiencing to a very high level.

Therefore, I want to express my concern about preserving the rights of the small pork-knockers to continue the tremendous work they did to build the place I know, particularly Buxton, and, indeed, to build other areas in the country as they have done in the past. We must not sell our birthright. We must preserve our integrity, our sovereignty, and not give it away. My concern is for the small miners, the pork-knockers. We must look at them and make sure there is no

derogation from the rights which they enjoyed in the old days when, by sweat and blood, they used their skills in order to build this country and to build villages like Buxton. That is my concern and that is why I want to hear what is Government's policy on this matter. I will not make any pronouncement on the Motion.

Cde. Basir: Cde. Speaker, unfortunately I do not wear gold but I would like to say that Government's policy on mining ought to be tied up. The fact is that the main transport road, the Bartica-Potaro Road, used to be the ingress road into the gold mining areas/about which my colleagues have been speaking . That road is badly kept and it affects transportation.

I want to make the point that it is necessary to have legislation whereby not only the local pioneers but also foreigners make certain that the infrastructure is put in. I remember in the early '50s the Guyana Consolidated Goldfields Limited had a dredging operation. All they have left for us is a big canal as wide as this Parliament Building and as long as the distance from here to Parika. All the gold is out of this country.

I further say that the Government should establish a Commission, whether it is a policy or not, to determine whether claim holders should have a 51 per cent involvement in the total amount of gold coming out of these gold claims. There should also be, as I have said, a development base, for which Mr. Kwiyama has made a significant point here. If the gold mining area creates employment and creates enough foreign currency reserves, then that area must be developed in some way or the other.

Cde. Parris continues

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18:00 hrs

There is no lack of information about the mineral resources. The exploration goes on every year. Indeed, at this very moment Dr. Walrond - and I pronounce it correctly - happens to be in New York working with a United Nations agency with a view to looking at a Minerals Promotion Document that is being pulled together with particular reference to gold, because we are taking what we have so far done and refining it. Even now you have the finishing touches being put to something that we will in fact bring to Parliament. Hopefully it will have a rather more informed discussion than this, indeed, a more informed discussion than the oil bill had, because that was a complex piece of legislation. My recollection is that he said that, with one exception, which for the reason of not causing confusion among the members of the Minority Party I will not mention here, all the rest never read the thing. He was the only one who read it and made sense, but the rest talk. Talk is cheap. We are going to be bringing a new mining law which is available now in draft, and it is being examined prior to presentation to the Assembly. That does not mean that there is no document. It means that we are pulling it together. There is an Investment Act that we are working on. There are rules and regulations. I could, if I were to be so indisciplined as to follow you in talking on this Motion, respond by telling you what the policy is. It is you who have got up. I have not been a politician for very long. I have been told that politics is the art of the possible and for me that means that if there is anybody who sets out to do something that they know is an unattainable act, and also he happens to be a politician with a lot of experience, then I must question the objective of what he is doing. It cannot be that he is hoping to attain the target. There is something else he is trying to get.

What is the target of this Motion? Is the Member hoping, with the arithmetic of this Assembly, to get this Assembly to turn around and tell itself, in terms of the Government benches, the majority, that it has no confidence in its own policy. Does he really think that could happen? They tried it with the last Motion. Someone said "Division" and every man jack said the same word. Do they expect that with the rehearsal which was imposed on them they will fail to do the same thing?

So, it cannot be true that the considered objective is to get the Motion passed. There must be another objective because I know that the Member has political experience and he knows that politics is the art of the possible. What could be his objective? There can only be one objective right now. It is to find a forum or platform for making comments without the basis fact so that he could get some kind of publicity that he is not otherwise getting.

He cannot tell me that his objective was to get this Motion passed. How was he going to do that? He could not do it because he commands neither the facts to appeal to anybody's intellect nor the oratory to appeal to anybody's emotions. He doesn't have the tools; he cannot do the work. If, therefore, the purpose of this Motion is to give himself a platform in the presence of the Press so that they could report that the P.P.P. showed great concern about pork-knockers - you cannot even get a representative for elections in 'them' areas. Certainly you are showing concern about pork-knockers.

Suddenly Feilden Singh remembers Buxton.

The Speaker: Cde. Parris, Mr. Feilden Singh, please.

Cde. Parris: Mr. Feilden Singh. He remembers Buxton and things like pork-knockers. I grew up there and he obviously can only say that because he grew up at Buxton. I am telling you. He is one of the honest men in here. The Buxtonians who have taken part in the debate so far and to whom reference has been made are Eleazar of 1926 vintage, Singh, who says. . and one Parris, who is now speaking. There are no other Buxtonians taking part. Be clear on that, If, therefore, there is a need to focus on Buxton, then it is Mr. Singh and I who have to talk because Mr. Eleazar is dead. But Mr. Singh has already agreed that he has nothing to say, so it leaves me alone talking about Buxton. But we want to talk about mining policy.

Cde. Speaker, I told you we will finish by 6.30. I may be much better than you think on that because it does appear to me that if my argument is right that the purpose of the Motion is not to get it passed - could not be to get it passed - because they have presented no facts. They have said, "Look, this is my understanding of the policy. These are the criteria which a good policy should have. Your policy, of which my understanding is at fault, falls down on criteria No. 1, criteria No. 2 and criteria No. 3, and for those reasons I move that your policy is no good."

What have we been told today? "I don't know what the policy is." "I am not sure what are the criteria, but you should think about it, think about the small fellow and really you must not put those fellows out of business. They must go down in history that no matter how technologically developed the industry becomes, the pork-knocker shall be in history." Of course, he will be in history, ⁱⁿ a book. The world of development does not allow the approach of the dinosaur and if one wishes to impose a mining policy, the very thing which led to the dinosaur's becoming extinct, I can assure you that extinction will apply not to the People's

National Congress but to him who was so foolish as to propose it.

In that regard, the People's National Congress Government cannot buy, no matter how much you want to romanticise, the notion that the winning of the mineral resources of this country should be fettered by some romantic notion, whether it is associated with Buxton or not, of how to win minerals from the soil. We are going into the 21st century. How can you come with that kind of thing? Clearly you are going to win points if you say that anybody who goes into the interior must build a town. Sure, we would like that to happen too, but there is a small matter of looking very carefully at the economics of the project and the balance of advantage of what you are going to get the man to give for what you are going to give him and you are not in a world in which you enjoy a majority such as we enjoy in this Assembly that says that, just as how this Motion cannot pass, we tell the fellow that he must give us this. He does not have to. So there are negotiations. But you can be assured that the strictures, through which you have attempted to go to remind us of our responsibility as a party and a Government, of sovereignty, of the fact that we must not allow people to carry away the stuff without getting an adequate recompense, that we have to protect the small man, that we must protect the Amerindians and, indeed, the people of the Corentyne, if they were to be involved, that we have to protect this body, that we will have to overhaul those who are employees. All those nice terms. You are not talking to somebody who does not know about that. You are preaching not only to the converted. You are talking to the high priest of the thing. It is we who came with those things in the Declaration of Sophia and long before. So, for you to jump now and say, "Have you considered?" Whom are you playing to? Which gallery? Most of the people have gone home. You are here so late. Have you considered?

Let us be very serious about this matter of a mining policy. Let me say something to you that concerns you because I don't believe that we should allow a misleading of the people whom we are supposed to lead. We have a second track record or a pair of track records, in this Assembly. One man has said that any time he talks he must say his prayers. I knew a fellow of more recent vintage that any time he talks he is going to say "Chappell". So what happens? No matter what you are talking about he says "Chappell". If you are talking mining, he says "Chappell"; if you are talking arithmetic, he says "Chappell". If you are talking church, he says "Chappell" and that is one time he would get Mr. Singh to agree with him. [Laughter.]

I have tried to explain about Chappell. Mr. Greenidge has tried to explain

about Chappell and we thought we had done a good job explaining, but what has happened? In the same way that that person tells you that the name of the Commissioner of Geology and Mines is "Waldron" and the Chronicle, which is a state-owned paper, and certainly the New Nation -- Please don't call the man "Mr. Waldron". You can do a fellow the courtesy of spelling his name right. That is the first tenet of socialism. Call him by the name he gives himself. Don't give him another name. That is an abuse of the man. So call it right - "Walrond".

In the same way that you get this confusion with Walrond - you are told that we signed an agreement with Chappell. Nonsense! We have not. The July 4th, 1985, document was, as was indeed mentioned earlier in this same Assembly, a Memorandum of Understanding. There is a big difference between a Memorandum of Understanding and an Agreement. We understood that certain things would be looked at. We understood that Chappell said he was interested in that. If someone says he wants to look, what do you want us to tell him? "Don't look!" Looking is free. If looking was not free most of us would be locked up when we are walking down the road at a certain time of the day. So we said, "Look."

All that memorandum about the . . . industry, there is an insidious dishonesty because that is one time when I know that they have a copy of the Memorandum of Understanding. Why would a man who has a document which accurately describes something, as I was told, seek to tell you that that was an Agreement. If it was an Agreement, it was an Agreement to do what? If it turns out that the only thing is to look, then I think there is confusion of the real meaning of the term. It is a Memorandum of Understanding and it is so headed up. If you look at the Order Paper you will find it is so described in the Order Paper here. Mr. Kwayana chose to ask the Minister of Finance about the life insurance company -

"Has the Government of Guyana in the spirit of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Nassau Life Insurance Company signed on July 4, 1985 . . ."

Cde. Parris continues

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except for those who came into being after and had no parentage and they don't exist because you are going to find they are a new company, but it is an off-shoot of an old one which had a "king" of a thing with South Africa. Let us be realistic. Let us not get out the tar brush and look for the opportunity. Nobody can care more than this Government about the injustices, the harshness of apartheid. Our record is there for all to see. You don't need to beat this Government over the ears and tell it about South Africa. If the rest of the world had not stood up against South Africa, we in our usual fistical fashion would have stood alone. [Applause]

Let me say these words. All the issues raised about the problems of small miners, the need to worry about sovereignty, the need to be concerned about setting the right priorities, particularly for our wasting assets, the need to have people trained to get a square deal, all these are matters which have been addressed by the Government. I would go as far as saying this: there are a number of three available documents that are not secret that represent answers insofar as we have managed to deal with the complexities and problems too and various aspects of policies that we could have raised here. We are attempting to pull them all together but you must be very careful not to make the mistake of thinking that because a jig-saw puzzle has to be put together as a construction of connected pieces, the fact that you have not been presented as yet with the full set of pieces connected up means either that the pieces do not exist or that when they are put together we will find that they do not fit.

This Motion carries with it an assumption that you know what the policy is and, having examined it carefully and critically, you wish to say to us that it is inappropriate, haphazard, I think what I have heard simply indicates that enough homework has not been done. It may be that you have a point that more should be done on our side to apprise you, given that whatever you are doing so far has not allowed you to be as fully apprised as you need to be. It may be that is true, but in looking at that Motion you could not come to the conclusion that it could be passed, if it is based on wide conjecture, on grand-standing, in order to make people think you have them at heart. I would like to think you have them at heart, but don't do it that way. When you try to do it that way, you try to make out as though we don't have them at heart. That is what I would say in the first place.

I would say in relation to this Motion that I would advise all the comrades, including the Mover of the Motion, to withdraw it and with other things, which you find you cannot withdraw, don't put it in the first place.

Mr. Kwayana: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the hon. Minister on a very lamentable performance, a very bad performance. If that is what is representing the Government of Guyana, I lament it.

He started off by saying we have secret knowledge and then ended by saying, "We have not done enough to inform you" and by saying "You know it because we arranged for you to know." I shall certainly learn by heart the pronunciation of Mr. Walrond's name and I hope that my hon. Friend would learn not to say "happens to have wrote the Government" as he did in his presentation. I can overlook that, but he would not.

There is one thing that I want to correct. I really have no knowledge of anything going on in the bureaucracy about diamonds. I made it clear that I had a conversation with an interested citizen. I want to clarify one point due to our time limit. I note what he said about the pork-knockers appearing in the history books. It may be that they will do better than he. He may not appear in the history books.

He misunderstood me, or deliberately misrepresented me, when I quoted from Mr. Walrond's book about sovereignty. I said "We have seen sovereignty in one way - traditionally as colonials. Mr. Walrond in the passage which I quoted said we should have a fiscal aspect which would spell it out and I said this is a contribution to the discussion on sovereignty, not the Government policy. I do not think that Mr. Parris, apart from the fact that he wants to make this kind of play, could really misunderstand such clear expression of what I am saying. I was very careful not to say that that book is an expansion of Government's policy. Besides that, the sound of fury does not deserve any reply.

Motion put, and negatived.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved "That this Assembly do now adjourn to Wednesday, 17th June, 1987, at 14:00 hrs."

[The Minister of Regional Development.]

Adjourned accordingly at 18:27 hrs