

**THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
OFFICIAL REPORT**

[VOLUME 7]

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

40th Sitting

2 p.m.

Wednesday, 7th August, 1974

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Speaker

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

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

Prime Minister (1)

The Hon. L.F.S. Burnham, O.E.,
Prime Minister

(Absent – on leave)

Deputy Prime Minister (1)

Dr. the Hon. P.A. Reid,
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of
National Development

Senior Ministers (8)

The Hon. H.D. Hoyte, S.C.,
Minister of Economic Development

*The Hon. S.S. Ramphal, S.C.,
Minister of Foreign Affairs and Justice (Absent)

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

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

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

*The Hon. K.F.S. King,
Minister of Economic Development

*The Hon. S. S. Naraine, A.A.,
Minister of Works and Housing

Ministers (6)

The Hon. W. G. Carrington,
Minister of Labour

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

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

*The Hon. Miss C.L. Baird,
Minister of Education and Social Development

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

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

Members of State (9)

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

***Non-elected Ministers**

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

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

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

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

*The Hon. C.V. Mingo,
Minister of State for Home Affairs **(Absent)**

*The Hon. W. Haynes,
Minister of State for Consumer Protection **(Absent)**

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

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

Parliamentary Secretaries (8)

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

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

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

Mr. E.L. Ambrose,
Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of Agriculture **(Absent – on leave)**

***Non-elected Ministers**

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

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

Mr. J.P. Chowritmootoo,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Education
and Social Development

Mr. R.H.O. Corbin,
Parliamentary Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister **(Absent)**

Deputy Speaker (1)

Mr. R.C. Van Sluytman, Deputy Speaker

Other Members (17)

Mr. J.N. Aaron
Mrs. L.M. Branco
Mr. M. Corrica
Mr. E.H.A. Fowler
Miss J. Gill
Mr. W. Hussain
Miss S. Jaiserrisingh **(Absent – on leave)**
Mr. K.M.E. Jonas
Mr. M. Nissar **(Absent)**
Dr. L.E. Ramsahoye
Mr. J.G. Ramson
Mrs. P.A. Rayman
Mr. E.M. Stoby, J.P.
Mr. S.H. Sukhu, M.S., J.P.
Mr. C. Sukul, J.P. **(Absent – on leave)**
Mr. H.A. Taylor
Mrs. L.E. Willems

Members of the Opposition – Liberator Party (2)

Mr. M.F. Singh, Leader of the Opposition
Mrs. E. DaSilva

OFFICERS

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

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

7.8.74
2.05 p.m.

National Assembly

2.05 – 2.15 p.m.

PRAYERS
ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER
Leave to Members

The Speaker: Leave has been granted to the Hon. Prime Minister, to the hon. Members Mr. Ambrose, Mr. Hussain and Mr. Sukul for today's Sitting.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS ETC.

The following Paper was laid:

- (1) Annual Report of the Guyana Fire and Ambulance Service for the year 1972. [The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Development and Agriculture on behalf of the Prime Minister.]
- (2) Statement of Guarantees given by the Minister of Finance under section 3 of the Guarantee of Loans (Public Corporation and Companies) Act, 1971 (No. 16 of 1971) for quarter ended 31st March, 1974.
- (3) Report of the Director of Audit on the Accounts of the Transport and Harbours Department for the year ended 31st December, 1970.

[The Minister of Finance]

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS – FIRST READING

The following Bill was introduced and read the First time:

Guyana Water Authority (Amendment) Bill 1974 – Bill No. 24/1974, published 30.7.74. **[The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Development and Agriculture on behalf of the Prime Minister]**

7.8.74

National Assembly

2.05 – 2.15 p.m.

National Development Surtax (Amendment) Bill 1974 – Bill No. 26/1974, published on 7.8.74. [**The Minister of Finance**]

PUBLIC BUSINESS
BILLS – SECOND READING
CHURCH OF GOD IN GUYANA (INCORPORATION) Bill 1974

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to incorporate the Board of Trustees of the Church of God in Guyana to hold the property in Guyana of the Missionary Board of the Church of god and for purposes connected therewith.” [**Mr. Aaron**]

Mr. Aaron: Mr. Speaker, hon. Members will recall that in October last year I presented to the Assembly a Petition from the Missionary Board of the Church of God of Anderson, Indonesia, United States of America, seeking to introduce in the Assembly a Private Bill to incorporate the Church of God in Guyana. The Assembly had granted leave to the promoters of the bill to proceed in accordance with the Standing Order. The Bill was published in the Official Gazette and in the Daily Chronicle newspaper of the 22nd and 29th June and 6th July, 1974 and was introduced in the Assembly on the 18th July, 1974.

The Bill merely seeks to give effect to the wishes of the Church to have a Board of Trustees incorporated to hold the property in Guyana of the Missionary Board of the Church and for the purpose connected therewith.

Clause 4 states:

“The Board shall consist of not less than three nor more than five persons resident in Guyana who shall be appointed by the Executive Council.”

7.8.74

National Assembly

2.05 – 2.15 p.m.

I, therefore, have great pleasure in moving the Second reading of the Church of God (Incorporation) Bill 1974 and I commend it to the Assembly.

Question proposed, put and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Assembly in Committee.

Bill considered and approved.

Assembly resumed.

Bill reported without Amendment, read the Third time and passed.

2.15 p.m.

NATIONAL SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL BILL 1974

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to provide for the establishment and incorporation of the National Science Research Council and for purposes connected therewith.” [**The Minister of Economic Development**]

The Minister of Economic Development (Dr. King) I move that the Bill intituled:

“The National Science Research Council Bill 1974.”

be read a Second time.

This is a simple Bill which seeks to establish the national Science Research Council with the responsibility for assisting in the formulation of, and advising the Government of Guyana on, a national Science Policy.

In the past, what little research has been done in Guyana has been done in a fragmentary manner. The various technical departments – the University of Guyana, the few research organisations which we have – have all conducted research based on the policies of the Ministries concerned and reflecting the policies of the Government of Guyana but, in fact, the research was done in isolation.

This Bill seeks to establish this Research Council which will advise the Government on the research which it ought to pursue; on the research policies which it ought to formulate and on the priorities which it ought to follow. In doing so we hope that we will not only refrain from duplication of research activities but also that we will manage and control the scarce resources of manpower and of finance which we have to the best advantage of this country.

If we look at the objectives of the Bill which are shown in Section 4 of the Bill we will see that the functions of the Research Council are not only advisory but they have the very important objective of reviewing the research work which has been done in this country from time to time and recommending to the Government what steps should be taken to implement the research findings of the Council.

The Council has another important function. Much of the research which is done in the developing countries is research which has already been done either in other developing countries or in the developed countries themselves. So it does seem to us to be important that we should have a body of dedicated, scientific and technical people who will review the research publications of the world and extract from these publications, those aspects of research and of

technological development which are important to the over all development of this country. So that again we will not be duplicating the efforts of researchers not merely in our country but in the world as a whole.

I hope, sir, that everybody in this House will support this Bill because it seeks basically to do two things. It seeks to prevent wastage both in personnel and in finances and it seeks to rationalize the development of this country or those aspects of the development of this country which are concerned with research and technological improvement. I comment, therefore, the Bill to this House.

Question proposed.

The Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. M.F. Singh): Mr. Speaker, I commend the Government for having brought this Bill before Parliament. It is a measure that is, to some extent, overdue and we, on this side of the House, are certainly very happy to support it, subject to the amendments which I have tabled and which have been circulated. To a certain extent, the Bill is late but it is always better to be late than never.

I have been making inquiries and, there is, in fact, in existence at the present moment, a National Science Research Council. It exists and functions on a voluntary basis. It has a very wide cross-section of very capable people headed by Dr. Dennis Irvine of the University of Guyana. It is a body which could achieve a lot in a developing nation like Guyana if the same people were appointed.

As I understand it, this proposed legislation will now give this body, provided its members are re-appointed, legal status. It will be allowed to have public monies made available

to it by Parliament. It will be able to expand its operations, as the hon. Minister quite rightly said, and research institutions and so on will be financed.

We look at the Bill and we not in Clause 12 that:

“There shall be paid to the Chairman and other members such remuneration (if any) (whether by way of salaries or travelling or other allowances) as the Minister may determine.”

So there is provision for those people who are appointed to be paid instead of being voluntary workers as they are at the present moment.

2.25 p.m.

This leaves us to hope fervently that the present very good composition would continue; it leaves us to hope that men of integrity, men of ability, will be appointed under this proposed legislation to the Board of the National Science Research Council.

Unfortunately, the tendency in Guyana has been that wherever money is involved, wherever people are being paid for services, they are appointed because of their political affiliation, rather than because of their knowledge and ability. The “best man for the job” is not usually the criterion for appointments to paid positions. This is a tragic situation in Guyana and it has been going on for some time: the best man for the job is not appointed. The person who is appointed is the “party boy” who can carry out political directions.

It is true that in between we have had good appointments. And here I want to take this opportunity to make a very important statement as far as my Party is concerned. Some appointments have been good; appointments like that of the hon. Minister Dr. Kenneth King.

His appointment has been an outstanding thing for Guyana. [Applause] He is, undoubtedly, a brilliant son of Guyana; a man dedicated to his job.

But, again there is the tragedy in that even he is leaving Guyana now. Why is he leaving? Gentleman that he is, he would not say, but he is fed up. He is fed up because of what is happening in Guyana. He will not speak a word against his colleagues; he is too much of a gentleman to do that. But we know the reason why he is leaving. We have heard his colleagues mention it.

We know that he has made enemies because of his frank and forthright manner, because of the pragmatic approach which he has brought to his job, and the fact that he has not hesitated to tell off anyone who has attempted to interfere with his work. I am not asking him to deny it; I do not expect him to deny it; but we know that he has made enemies and that those enemies are glad to see him go. But let me say here and now on behalf of the United Force, that it is a tragedy for Guyana; it is a loss to the Cabinet; it is a loss to the nation.

The nation will be poorer when Dr. Kenneth King leaves this country. We in Guyana will be a poorer people as a result of his departure. We have had our differences but I am glad to say that he has not been the kind of political animal who has blindly followed ideological facts. He has chosen instead to dedicate himself to his job and to look at it from a pragmatic point of view rather than merely blindly following party politics.

I am not asking him for denials. I am not asking him to make any statements. In the final analysis what I am saying is that Guyana is the poorer when men like Dr. Kenneth King leave this country. Guyana will also be the poorer when Sonny Ramphal leaves these shores. As I understand it, he will be leaving in the not too distant future.

This is the problem: too many of our brilliant sons in Guyana are leaving. Why are they leaving? They are leaving because of the ill-advised policies, the emotional, the ideological,

rather than the pragmatic approach which the Government prefers to follow. Forget the ideology; forget the emotion; and let us get down to the job of really building a nation.

The exodus continues: ministers are going; doctors are going; businessmen are going; professionals are going. There is talk that even on-professionals – or they may call themselves professionals because they are in the political field – are leaving.

There is the power under this proposed legislation to appoint a new council; who will appoint it? Will it be the present hon. Minister? Hardly likely. I understand that his departure is imminent. **[Interruption]** The problem with some members of parliament who know to move only Church Bills is that they do not even realise how serious the situation is in Guyana. The situation is tragic! It is critical! People are leaving every day and every day the nation becomes poorer because of this exodus to other countries. What are we doing? What is happening in Guyana?

As I was asking: Who will appoint the new Board? Let us hope that the man who, as Minister of Economic Development, will appoint the Board – because the existing Council is voluntary – will be a man of integrity like the present hon. Minister; a person who will make the appointments on the basis of the best man for the job, instead of on the basis of party politics. **[Hon. Member:** “Why not the best woman?”]

2.35 p.m.

If you were a lawyer, you would know that masculine includes feminine. I am sorry the legal adviser is not here to tell you that the masculine includes the feminine, and singular includes plural.

[Mr. Singh contd.]

We must sympathise with the lack of knowledge on the part of the hon. Members on the other side. It is very rarely that they have the opportunity to speak. At least, I am speaking on my feet, and Mr. Speaker, I would ask you to bear with them and sympathise with them. I plead their cause because they do not have an opportunity to speak normally.

The Board that will be appointed can do a very important job. It has the power to do it under this legislation and I am looking forward to it really getting down to doing its job. I would appeal to the Members of the Cabinet to use whatever influence they may have to see that the new appointee is a man of integrity, who will appoint people of integrity to this Board, so that the high ideals in this legislation are carried out.

This is a case like the granting of powers to the Ombudsman. We have been told that those powers will be extended. We are still waiting for his report. We are still waiting for his powers to be extended. What is he? He is almost a sinecure. It is like the powers given to the Elections Commission under the Constitution, a very elaborate bit of wording under the Constitution. But what is it? It means not a thing because, in practice, the Elections Commission does not operate as was the intention. I was there at the Independence Conference. I know the rationale –

The Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, let us proceed with the Bill, please.

Mr. M.F. Singh: Very well, sir. I was merely drawing the analogy that if this proposed legislation operates like those entrenched in parts of the Constitution, then we will get nowhere. We sit down and we debate this, and we commend it, and we laud it. But where will it get us if it remains merely a piece of paper and we do not have the correct people to carry out these laudable provisions in this proposed legislation?

The Speaker: Save your comments for the Amendment you propose making later on.

Mr. M.F. Singh: I will deal with that in the Committee Stage. I did make that reservation when I first started.

As I understand it, the existing voluntary National Science Research Council has a sub-committee – and the hon. Minister will bear me out on this – to deal with a Bureau of Standards. This sub-committee is headed by Miss Eileen Cox. It has as members Mr. Burke from the Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Brian Berry from the Guyana Manufacturers' Association. They are good people who will work voluntarily.

The sub-committee also has Miss Field-Ridley from the Ministry of Trade, Dr. Clarke of the Government Analyst Department, Mr. Munroe from the Physics Department of the University of Guyana, the Consultative Association of Guyanese Industry is represented, Miss Magda Pollard of the Guyana Consumers' Association, Mr. Sohan of the Technology Department of the University of Guyana. This is a very impressive list of names of persons who comprise one sub-committee of the present voluntary National Science Research Council and it is a very good sub-committee.

We have been promised a Bureau of Standards since 1967. Will this proposed legislation carry us any further towards establishing this? My answer to that, subject to what the hon. Minister has to say is, "No". It will not carry us particularly further. What we would have to have is proper substantive legislation to set up a Bureau of Standards. At the present moment, there are no teeth in the Food and Drugs Act. It has no particular sanctions attached to it.

We have a policy of feeding the nation by 1976. Of course, the experts, who would probably have been recommended by the hon. Minister without Portfolio, Mr. Kit Nascimento, say that 1976 will now be five years further, that it will not be 1976, but it will be 1976 plus five years. Anyway, the policy of the Government is that we must be self-sufficient in food by 1976. What have we really done in respect of establishing this Bureau of Standards which has been promised since 1967? What have we done about it? The Food and Drugs Act is still to come.

There are a lot of small industries established in homes. I have talked to some of the people who are members of this sub-committee which is to deal with the Bureau of Standards and they have told me there are no sanctions, that they sit there and they know that stuff is coming on the market, they know that it is produced by the small man – and I have every reason to support the idea that the small man should be able to produce stuff in his own little home – but what I say is he must have some guideline, he must have some standard to which he must conform. I am all for cottage industries; I am all for the small man establishing his own industries; I am all for people producing generally throughout the length and breadth of the country. But let us also think of the consumer. Let us protect the consumer who needs to be protected. The present food and Drugs Act is archaic.

I have been told by the Government analyst Department that there is legislation forthcoming in respect of a new Food and Drugs Act, and I would like to see this law come into existence to supplement this legislation which is now before the House because, at the present moment, a sub-committee has been formed to deal with this.

2.45 p.m.

I would like to see, also, that really substantive legislation is established and brought before Parliament in respect of the establishment of a Bureau of Standards because food and drugs will deal only with food and drugs as it says. But what about other things, for example, textiles which we say we will manufacture in the not too distant future, if we are not doing some of it now. What about shoes, electrodes and all the other things that are not food or drugs? What about bread? We need standards. Bread is food also. The hon. Minister – I am not sure whether he is with or without portfolio – fails to recognize that bread would fall within the category of food. But food is something we must look at also.

We have to deal with all the other commodities that would need regulation and that is why we need a Bureau of Standards. There is no quarrel about this. The Government has

[Mr. Singh continued]

announced since 1967 that it is committed to establishing this. The only problem is that while the grass is growing the horse is starving. We have seen no progress at all.

The Government Analyst Department is doing its little bit, but there is no provision whereby it can prosecute. It is not able to enforce any standards and that is why this legislation, even though good in itself, needs to go further. This is a very laudable beginning and I am really sorry that the hon. Minister will not be here to pursue this further and to see that what I am talking about does come to fruition.

If we look at the legislation proper we will see that Clause 4(1) – and I am being very general here – states:

“It shall be the function of the Council –

(a) to assist in the formulation of, and to advise the Government on, a National Science Policy ...”

Let us turn to Clause 17. It states:

“The Minister may, after consultation with the Chairman, give to the Council directions of a general character as to the policy to be followed by the Council in the performance of its functions and the Council shall give effect to such directions.”

We note on the one hand in Clause 4(1) that the Council shall assist in the formulation of, and advise the government on, a National Science Policy, and we note in Clause 17 that the Minister can give policy directions to this very Council which has to advise on a National Science Policy. I am not saying that there is a conflict between the two. What I am saying is that it must be carried out in the spirit in which it is written here, that is, as a general policy. Clause 17 is capable of being abused. Policy directions can, in fact, exceed what is envisaged here in Clause 17. I recognize that there is no direct conflict as such. But let us recognize that,

depending on the Minister, this can be abused. If it were the present hon. Minister I would have no quarrel. It is any other Minister we will have to look at it very carefully.

There could be very serious problems faced by these honourable gentlemen who are scientists. You are calling on a Minister of the Government to give directions to scientists; to people who, they say, should be chosen for their scientific ability. You are calling on them to follow directions given by a political Minister. It can work, but like this proposed legislation it is merely a piece of paper and it depends on the way in which you carry it out. My fervent hope is that Clause 17 will not be abused by whom ever is the Minister appointed to perform these functions.

Lastly, there is a point in respect of Clause 14. I will raise this in Committee stage but I do say that instead of having an auditor picked and paid from outside it is better to have our Director of Audit, the independent person appointed under the Constitution to be Director of Audit, to audit the accounts of this body which will be spending public funds. I will speak more on this in Committee stage.

Dr. King (replying): Mr. Speaker, I never cease to be amazed at the ingenuity of the Hon. Leader of the Opposition. Here is a simple matter before this House and, if you will permit me a metaphor, the hon. Leader of the Opposition has managed to squeeze water from stone. He has ranged wide and far, he has talked about me – to which I will refer later – and he has talked about the Bill.

I welcome the kind words he has said about the Bill. In fact, this National Science Research Council has been in existence for nearly two years now. The hon. Leader of the Opposition said that it has been operating on a voluntary basis. If by that he means that the members have not been paid, he is correct. But if by that he implies or intends to imply that they have got together on their own and have established themselves with not even the modicum of Ministerial interference, he is wrong. This present Council, the Council which has not been

sanctioned by law but which has been meeting regularly, was established on the initiative of Cabinet and has not had any political interference from the Government.

I feel it is important for the public to know that the council has been in existence for two years and there has never been any allegation by anybody in the Council that Government has interfered, either directly or indirectly, with the workings of the Council. Because we want to give legal sanction and legal validity to a Council which now exists, it seems to me to be reasonable to assume that there will be no undue political interference in the workings of this Council.

2.55 p.m.

In one respect I am glad that the Leader of the Opposition spoke at such great length about this Council because I, in an attempt to save the time of the House, in an attempt to save the money of the ratepayers, have really been too brief in my introduction of this Bill.

I welcome this opportunity to say that over the last two years much valuable research has been done by this Council on such matters as utilisation of local woods for gas and the utilisation of alcohol for petrol fuel and the investigation of our local plants for medicinal uses and a whole range of activities which are germane to the development of this country and which basically utilise the resources which either are in existence in this country or which are produced in this country. I wish, sir, publicly to commend them for the work they have done without much fanfare and without much publicity.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition has talked about the Food and Drugs Act and has said that it has no teeth, no sanctions. I think he actually said that we have an obsolescent, if he did not go so far as to say “obsolete”, Food and Drugs Act. In fact, sir, the Food and Drugs Act, which exists in this country, was promulgated in this House in 1971. So we have what is

[Dr. King continues]

considered by most experts to be quite a modern Food and Drugs Act. What we do not have are the attendant rules and regulations to this Act.

It would have been easy for the Government, unmindful of the wishes and the expertise of the people who exist in this country, to ram legislation down the throat of this House, to have passed rules and regulations which did not have the benefit of the advice of these experts in Guyana. It did not have to ram it down the throat of this House, because one could publish these rules and regulations extra - the House. But mindful of the grave responsibility which lies on our shoulders and mindful of the fact that this is, in fact, a consultative democracy we have, over the last two years, been consulting with various groups of the country so that when our rules and regulations are published they will reflect the best thinking in this country.

I would like to give an assurance to the hon. Leader of the Opposition that the Government has never been, and as far as I know, will never be insensitive to the needs of the country. A Government cannot survive if it is insensitive to the needs of the country.

It seems to me that if one looks at the past evidence with regard to a Committee such as this, one would see that this Council would, in fact, represent the best scientific and technical brains, not only in the Government sector but also in the private sector. This is our practice and I am sure it will continue.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition has seen fit to pay me some very glowing and personal compliments which I accept in the spirit in which they were given and for which I thank him. But it does seem to me that in the same breath he was paying me and the Government, which I have had the honour to serve, a disservice by implying that there are rifts concerning policy decisions and that there are disagreements within the Cabinet and within the Government of this country.

I think that the Leader of the Opposition must understand that the world is becoming smaller daily. No country is an island entirely unto itself. But there is a fantastic and a growing interdependence between Nations and between the international organisations which have been established to serve these nations. If any country wishes to play its rightful role in the development of the world, if any Govern – wishes to develop its own country as best it can, it must ensure that its citizens occupy posts of responsibility in these international organisation.

[Applause]

It seems to me that the Leader of the Opposition should have been paying a compliment to the Government, if the things he said about Mr. Ramphal and me are correct, in that the government should have had the foresight to have chosen people like us so that when the time comes when those posts are available – not for the asking sir, but for people who are capable, I hope, of occupying them – Guyanese will be found to be of the requisite to fill them.

I wish to disabuse the Leader of the Opposition that there are rifts which have made me leave. I think it is important – and he should know this more than I – to understand that this is a country of rumours and it seems to me to be endemic to this society, and I deplore it tremendously, that anything which is done in this country must have some adverse reason for the doing. There are sometimes things which are done above board.

I am leaving because I wish to serve – this sounds very pompous but it is true – the developing countries in general and Guyana in particular. I hope that if I do have to leave the United Nations somebody will say the nice things the Leader of the Opposition has said about me today without the aspersions which he has cast on the colleagues with whom I have had the pleasure of working over the last two years. **[Applause]**

The Speaker: Hon. Minister, I had hoped that another opportunity would have presented itself for me, personally, to commend you on the excellence of your contributions to this Chamber as well as to the nation. **[Applause]** I hope that that opportunity will still be

forthcoming to me personally but if it is not, as I may not be here when you are about to depart, may I take this opportunity on behalf of all the members of this Parliament, nay, Guyana as a whole, to pay tribute to you, one of its illustrious sons who served it so well and so excellently in the short time you have been in the political arena.

Your loss to Guyana will be felt, but I am sure, nay, I am confident that your preferment to a higher sphere of activity will permit you to serve mankind much more than is possible in the position that you now hold.

May I wish you the best and Guyana's good wishes go with you.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Assembly in Committee.

Clauses 1 to 13 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 14

The Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. M.F. Singh: Mr. Chairman, I rise to move the Amendment standing in my name in respect of clause 14. As the proposed legislation now stands, it provides for the books of the Council to be –

The Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, I take it that we are going to deal with the whole clause.

3.05 p.m.

Mr. M.F. Singh: Yes, sir, because it is merely the replacement of the present provisions by a provision for the Director of Audit to do the audit instead of a private auditor.

As I said, the position is that the Council's books will be audited by an auditor appointed by the Council with the approval of the Minister. The position now is that the accounts of almost all Government corporations, companies and agencies are audited by one particular accounting firm. I would hate to think that we are now going to add to that list this proposed National Science Research Council. Why not the Director of Audit? For what reason are we excluding him here? It is the taxpayers' money that will be used to finance the operations of this National Science Research Council. The director of Audit is an independent person under the Constitution. Why is he not good enough? Why is he not to be trusted to audit the accounts of the National Science Research Council? We are being invited to approve legislation to pay out money to an outside agency. Why pay out money to somebody else when our own Director of Audit can do the audit?

In the supplementary provisions approved on 3rd July, 1974, we substantially increased the staff of the office of the Director of Audit. I see no reason why he, as an independent person under the Constitution, should not be made to audit these books as part of his duties instead of passing it over to an outside agency and probably an agency that at the present moment audits the majority of the books of Government companies, corporations and agencies generally.

Let me make an analogy. It is provided in Chapter 98:03 of the **Laws of Guyana**, in Section 22 (1) which deals with Trade Unions that:

“Every treasurer or officer of a Trade Union ... should render the account ... which account the trustees shall submit to the Director of Audit for audit within fourteen days of its receipt from the treasurer.”

By Law, Trade Union accounts must be audited by the Director of Audit. Why not these accounts which involve public funds? I appeal to the hon. Minister to accept the amendment and to let us have the accounts of this very laudable body, which we are seeking to set up here, audited by the Director of Audit, so that everything will not only be above board but will also appear to be above board.

Amendment proposed.

The Speaker: Hon. Minister of Economic Development.

3.15 p.m.

Dr. King: I would have had no problem in accepting this Amendment if it were necessary to amend this clause in order to accommodate the Director of Audit. In fact, as the clause stands, the Director of Audit is not excluded but is subsumed in the clause, so that the Minister has the power to appoint any qualified auditor to do the job. It would seem to me to be tying the hands of the Minister, it would be restricting his powers, if we accepted the proposed Amendment. In principle, I agree that if it is at all possible the Director of Audit should do this job.

However, sir, I should like to make one point. In pushing the case of the Director of Audit, the hon. Leader of the Opposition has, by implication, given the impression that those auditors who are not under the Director of Audit are not independent, are not to be trusted. If that intention was the one he meant to give, I hope that he will withdraw that, because the men who audit the books of the Public corporations are honourable professional men who do not do anything at all to impugn their professional honesty. I hope that I misunderstood the hon. Leader of the Opposition. If the hon. Leader of the Opposition did intend to imply that if you are not working with the Director of Audit you are not therefore independent, I hope that he would withdraw that remark.

I accept the principle which he proposes, but cannot accept it as law because it would be restricting the Minister and will not give us any extra powers which we need to have.

The Chairman: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, do you wish to say anything?

Mr. M.F. Singh: Mr. Chairman, I think it is unfortunate that so many Government corporations, companies, and agencies are in fact audited by only one particular accounting firm. I would not want to add to that.

Amendment that –

- (a) in subsection (10), the words “an auditor appointed by the Council with the approval of the Minister” at the end of the said paragraph be deleted and the words “the director of Audit” be substituted therefor;
- (b) in subsection (2), the words “auditor appointed to audit the accounts of the Council under this section” in the second and third lines of the said subsection be deleted and the words “Director of Audit” be substituted therefor;
- (c) in subsection (3), the word “auditor” in the second line be deleted and the words “Director of Audit” be substituted therefor.

put, and negative.

Clause 14, as printed, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 15

The Chairman: I take it that you will not proceed with the Amendment here because it will make nonsense of the whole thing.

Mr. M.F. Singh: I feel very strongly about the Amendment and I think we must proceed with it to its logical conclusion. The Amendment to clause 15 remains. You will have to put it to the vote, sir. The hon. Minister did agree that it would be, in principle, a good thing for the Director of Audit to be the person auditing. It was actually written in in respect of trade unions. I see no reason why it should not have been written in also in respect of this. This is taxpayers' money being spent. Money in trade unions is not taxpayers' money. I see no reason why it could not have been written in in the same way. Mr. Chairman, I expect you will put it to the vote and we will have a decision on it too.

Amendment proposed.

Dr. King: Sir, I think it was Emerson who said that “a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds.” I wish to say that the fact that we have put into one Act something which we now know does not necessarily mean that the thing must be done by the Director of Audit, does not mean that we should foolishly be consistent. I have given an assurance that, if it is at all possible, the director of Audit will do these things. There was no arcane reason for specifying it as it is except that the way the Bill is phrased now includes the Director of Audit. I hope that the hon. Leader of the Opposition will accept this explanation.

Amendment –

That in subsection (2), the word “auditor” in the second line be deleted and the words “Director of Audit” be substituted therefor.

put, and negative.

Clause 15, as printed, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 16 to 18 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 19

The Chairman: Hon. Members, I wish to draw your attention to clause 19 subparagraph (b). In the fourth line after the word, “person”, there should be a semicolon, or a colon, and thereafter, the words, “shall be liable”, should be in another line.

Clause 19 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 20 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Assembly resumed.

Bill reported without Amendment, read the Third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, “That this Assembly do now adjourn to a date to be fixed. [**The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House**]

Adjourned accordingly at 3.25 p.m.
