

T H E
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
OFFICIAL REPORTS

VOLUME 107

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

44th Sitting

11:00 hrs On Thursday 1985-03-14

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (74)

Speaker (1)

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

Members of the Government - People's National Congress (61)

Prime Minister (1)

Cde. H.D. Hoyte, S.C., M.P.,
Prime Minister (Absent - on leave)

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

Cde. H. Green, M.P.,
Vice President, Social Infrastructure and
First Deputy Prime Minister

Other Vice-Presidents and Deputy Prime Ministers (2)

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

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

Other Deputy Prime Minister (1)

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

Senior Ministers (9)

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

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

Cde. R.H.O. Corbin, M.P.,
Minister of National Mobilisation - (Absent)

Cde. H. Rashid, M.P.,
Minister of Energy and Mines - (Absent - on leave)

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

*Non-elected Member

Cde. Sallahuddin, M.P.,
Minister of Forestry

Cde. Dr. R.A. Van West -Charles, M.P.,
Minister of Health and Public Welfare

*Cde. M.L. Parris, M.P.,
Minister of Education
-(Absent – on leave)

Cde. S. Prashad, M.P.,
Minister of Transport

Ministers (5)

Cde. Urmia Johnson, M.P.,
Minister within the Ministry of National Development
-(Absent – on leave)

* Cde. Yvonne V. Harewood-Benn, M.P.,
Minister within the Ministry of Education

*Cde. K.W.E. Denny, M.P.,
Minister of Manpower and Co-operatives

Cde. R.C. Fredericks, A.A., M.P.,
Minister of Youth and Sport within the Ministry of
Education

*Cde. Dr. S.P. DaSilva, M.P.,
Minister within the Ministry of Agriculture

Ministers of State (3)

Cde. M. Corrica, M.P.,
Minister of State within the Ministry of
Internal Trade and Consumer Protection
-(Absent)

Cde. H.L.B. Singh, M.S., M.P.,
Minister of State within the Ministry of Regional
Development

Cde. D.A.N. Ainsworth, M.P.,
Minister of State in the Ministry of
Education
-(Absent – on leave)

Parliamentary Secretaries (2)

Cde. Agnes W. Bend-Kirton-Holder, M.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary, Housing, within the
Ministry of Health and Public Welfare

Cde. B. Bhaggan, M.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary, National Development

Government Chief Whip (1)

Cde. Bidiawattie Tiwari, M.P.,
Government Chief Whip

Other Members (24)

Cde. O.E. Clarke, M.P.
-(Absent – on leave)

Cde. R.E. Williams, M.P. (Absent)

Cde. J.P. Chowritmootoo, J.P., M.P.

Cde. Philomena A. Rayman, M.P.

Cde. J.B. Caldeira, M.P.

Cde. E.H.A. Fowler, M.P.

Cde. Joyce Gill-Mingo, M.P. (Absent)

Cde. M. Ally, M.P.

Cde. M. Armogan, M.S., J.P., M.P.

*Non-elected Member

Cde. Bissoondai Beniprashad, M.P.
Cde. A.A. Chin, M.P.
Cde. Elaine B. Davidson, M.P.
Cde. H. Doobay, M.P.
Cde. A.B. Felix, M.P.
Cde. Patricia Fredericks, M.P.
Cde. E.F. Gilbert, M.P. (Absent)
Cde. A. McRae, M.P.
Cde. Joyce M. Munroe, J.P., M.P.
Cde. R.N. Primo, M.P.
Cde. C.G. Sharma, J.P., M.P. (Absent)
Cde. C. Vandenburg, M.P.
Cde. Edwina Melville, M.P.
Cde. Y. Khan, M.P.
(One seat vacant)

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

Cde. R. Bishop, M.S., M.P.
Cde. Bhagmatee Latchminarayan, M.P. (Absent - on leave)

Members from the Regional Democratic Councils (10)

Cde. Dianne Abraham, M.P. (Region No. 8 - Potaro/Siparuni)
Cde. W. Bipat, J.P., M.P. (Region No. 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)
Cde. Nellie R. Charles, M.P. (Region No. 7 - Cuyuni/Mazaruni) (Absent - on leave)
Cde. I. Chowritmootoo, M.P. (Region No. 6 - East Berbice/Corentyne)
Cde. D. Hinds, M.P. (Region No. 10 - Upper Demerara/Berbice)
Cde. K.V. Jairam, M.P. (Region No. 2 - Pomeroon/Supenaam) (Absent - on leave)
Cde. K.N. Jones, M.P. (Region No. 1 - Barima/Waini)
Cde. H.I. London, M.S., M.P. (Region No. 5 - Mahaica/Berbice)
Cde. Cora A. Singh, M.P. (Region No. 3 - Essequibo Islands/West Demerara)
(Vacant) (Region No. 9 - Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo)

Members of the Minority (12)

(i) People's Progressive Party (10)

Minority Leader (1)

Cde. Dr. C. Jagan, M.P., (Absent)
Minority Leader

Deputy Speaker (1)

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

Other Members (8)

Cde. Janet Jagan, M.P. (Absent)
Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud, J.P., M.P.,
Minority Chief Whip
Cde. N. Persaud, M.P. (Absent)
Cde. C.C. Collymore, M.P. (Absent)
Cde. S.F. Mohamed, M.P. (Absent)
Cde. I. Basir, M.P. (Absent)
Cde. C.C. Belgrave, M.P. (Absent)
Cde. H. Nokta, M.P.

(ii) United Force (2)

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

OFFICERS

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

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

PRAYERS

14:00 hrs.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Ministerial Changes

The Speaker: I have been informed that with effect from the 1st March, 1985, Cde. Seeram Prashad, Minister of Transport has been appointed a Senior Minister and Cde. Donald Ainsworth, Parliamentary Secretary, Youth has been appointed a Minister of State in the Ministry of Education. On behalf of Members of the Assembly and myself I will like to congratulate Cde. Prashad and Ainsworth on their new appointment and to extend best wishes to them.

Another recent announcement of National Honours on the occasion of the 15th Anniversary of the Republic, one Member of Parliament was granted an award. Cde. Sharma received the Award of the Golden Arrow of Achievement for long and dedicated service of a consistently high standard in political and social work. Cde. Sharma is now entitled to have the initials "A.A." after his name. I also wish to congratulate him on behalf of myself and Members of the Assembly.

Leave to Members

The Speaker: Leave has been granted to Cdes. Hoyte, Rashid, Malcolm Parris, Johnson, Ainsworth, Clarke, Latchminarayan, Charles and Jairam for today's sitting.

Comrades, I also would like to record on behalf of Members of the Assembly and myself our deepest sympathy to Cde. Ram Karran on the recent loss of his wife.

PRESENTATIONS OF PAPERS AND REPORTS, ETC.

The following Papers were laid:-

- (1) Review of the Operations of the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund Committee for the year 1982. ∟ The Vice President, Social Infrastructure and First Deputy Prime Minister, on behalf of the Prime Minister/.
- (2) Financial Paper No. 1/1985 - Schedule of Supplementary Provision on the Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$25,819,116, for the period ended 1984-12-31 (Advances made from the Contingencies Fund in 1984). ∟ The Minister of Finance/.
- (3) Annual Reports of the Customs and Excise Department for the years 1981 and 1982.
- (4) Rate of Interest Order 1985 (No. 11) made under section 6 of the Rate of Interest Act 1979 (No. 13) on the 18th February, 1985. ∟ The Minister of Finance/.
- (5) Annual Reports of the Transport and Harbours Department for the years 1980 and 1981. ∟ The Minister of Home Affairs on behalf of the Minister of Transport/.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

MOTION

CONDOLENCE ON DEATH OF WILLIAM ALEXANDER BLAIR

"Be it resolved that this National Assembly records its deep regret at the death of Cde. William Alexander Blair and pays tribute to the distinguished service which he rendered to Guyana and to its Parliament and directs that an expression of its sympathy be conveyed to his sorrowing widow and children."

The Vice-President, Social Infrastructure and First Deputy Prime Minister.

The Vice-President, Social Infrastructure and First Deputy Prime Minister

(Cde. Green): Cde. Speaker, I beg to move the Motion of condolence on the death of Cde. William Alexander Blair which stands in my name. As we meet here this afternoon ^{with} the news of demise of so many persons it is useful perhaps that we use the thoughts of an old philosopher who observed that we who live here are really in the world and the land of the dying and that the next land is the land of the living.

William Alexander Blair was elected a member of the Legislative Assembly, as it was then called, for the Berbice River constituency for the first time on the 5th October, 1961, and he remained a member of that Assembly until the 24th September, 1964, when it dissolved for the purpose of holding National Elections. At the end of those elections, he was again returned to this Parliament on 31st December 1964 and served throughout the length of that Parliament, then the National Assembly, to the 4th November, 1968.

Those of us who are old enough to recall William Blair will know him as a quiet, unassuming, sincere and honest person. He was, indeed, a good man and even though he was not the talkative type, his work, both in and outside of this Parliament, branded him the kind of citizen, the Guyanese, that we can hardly lose these days. A man who believed in his party, who believed in his God, he was a good Christian who believed in the purpose of life on earth. They say death - I submit in his case to a good man - is but passing through a dark entry out of one little room in his father's home into another area that is fair and much larger and much more beautiful.

Cde. Blair lived an interesting life. In April of 1945, after being a teacher for 24 years, he resigned from the then Lutheran body to be trained as a Minister of Religion, to be a Minister of the Church. As an indictment against the old system after serving for almost a quarter of a century, for 24 years, there was a note found in his file by the Assistant Director of Education which simply said when he made a request for some assistance after serving 24 years and when he argued that he was going on to serve other people at a higher level, that gratuity is not paid

to teachers on resignation. The harsh electrical colonial system therefore disposed of him in those few words. Of course, at that time, as a head-teacher, he was earning the princely salary of \$30 a month with a promise of some increase.

William Blair served much of his time in the Berbice River and I recall myself when I was General Secretary of the People's National Congress that he was one man that you could rely on when you went into the Berbice River area. Every family knew him the length and breadth of the Berbice River. They knew him and they expected him and, in fact, he made the work of the party much easier because he had easy intercourse with the families and the people in that area. I recall when campaigning with him one evening he stopped at St. Cuthbert's Mission and, because we had difficulties with the outboard engine, we stopped there some time after midnight. The Berbice River at that point was rather choppy and uncertain and even though I was concerned and, I admit, scared, old William Blair kept assuring me that we would get there. I kept asking him, "When?" When we got there, he said, even though the people may have gone home it would be all right. I recall that we arrived there and we slept on the floor of a church and I felt that I was being made holy but Cde. Blair had no worry. He said that in the morning people would be there and we would be alright. This was true. As the sun came up, residents came out and we were safe. We conducted business in the usual fashion.

Cde. Blair served at Ituni from 1921 to 1933. He served at St. Cuthbert's Mission from June 1933 to August 1937 and at Maria Henrietta Lutheran Church from 1937 to the end of December, 1939. In report by his supervisors this was said of Cde. Blair "Discipline: Very Good." I believe that very simply and without ostentation this described this really grand old Guyanese, a very good man. Even those who felt that his political activity was not consistent with the activities of the Church said this of him in a report: "He lived a decent and respectable family life." There are so few of us of when we can say this in these days. The report continues "and is held in high esteem by all who know him. His services to school, church and community are truly meritorious."

His services to this country were truly meritorious. There is no one that I met who ever said anything ill of William Blair. There are many of us of whom some people will say good things and others will say ill things. I remember in New Amsterdam political opponents of the party – and therefore of Cde. Blair – admitted that because of his simplicity, his charm and his honesty, they had nothing against him. They perhaps had something against his choice of party but Cde. Blair, apart from being simple was also a wise man and therefore, even in those days, he made the

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right choices.

With reverence, with sincerity, I move the Motion of condolence on the death of William Blair and ask that this Assembly records with deep regret his passing and that we express our sympathy to ^{his} sorrowing widow and children.

Motion proposed.

14:25 hrs

14:15 hrs

(Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud)

Cde. Speaker, once we are born in this world death faces us every conceivable second of the day. Death is inevitable. It is reality, inescapable. Probably death sounds a warning to the living which should influence people in the world to live a life in consonant with some principles and values so that when death strikes as it did we can listen to an eulogy or speech like the one just presented by the Cde. Vice-President. I know Cde. Blair. I served in Parliament for the period 1964 – 1968 when he was there. What is accepted as adverse politics did not in any way contaminate his thinking personality or character. He brought with him a great degree of experience maturity and respect to the other man's point of view. He was truly a school master of the old order and I think the tribute paid to him this afternoon is most fitting. There are times probably when someone is asked to perform in this capacity that, that person is put to a great strain to say something, and probably in those circumstances silence would have been an excellent course. On this occasion, however, Cde. Speaker, that is not so. Unlike the Cde. Vice-President, my expressions on this occasion in relation to Cde. William Blair are earnest and sincere. I think those of us who still enjoy the glorious opportunity of life can learn from him. We can learn from his manifest simplicity, decency. I think the varying comments which were attributed to him this afternoon were justified and well deserving. I wish on this occasion on behalf of the People's Progressive Party to join with the Cde. Vice-President in paying tribute to the late Cde. William Blair and at the same time to express sincere condolences to his bereaved dear ones, and I sincerely trust that our expression of condolences be expressed to his bereaved dear ones left behind.

Mr. M.F Singh: Mr. Speaker, I am no philosopher, but when death is occurring of so many people who I knew so well one stops to think when will it be my turn? We must all go at some time or the other and that is why I agree with the last speaker that our lives must be carried by such ideals and principles that will make us ready to meet our maker whenever the calling comes. I first knew Mr. Alexander Blair in 1966 when I first entered Parliament. He sat not far from me in those benches. I found him to be quiet, and these were words I wrote down even before the Hon. Vice-President said them; a very quiet and unassuming man, never ostentatious, never boisterous. He was a man whom I deeply respected. I remember him always coming in the Parliament with Mr. Harold Wharton who was also at that time a Member of Parliament.

I also remember him distinctly as a man who carried himself with the highest dignity and decorum in Parliament. I have never heard him heckling in this Parliament. I never heard him use injectives like so often happens in this Parliament these days. He was highly respected. He carried himself with such an extent that he earned the respect of those who were not of his political persuasion. He will be greatly missed as a true son of Guyana. The United Force supported the motion and expressed its deepest sympathy to those bereaved relatives.

The Speaker: Will comrades kindly stand in silence for one minute in support of the motion.

Members stood in silence for one minute.

Motion Carried

CONDOLENCE ON DEATH OF CDE. GOBERDAN HARRYLALL

“Be it resolved that this National Assembly records its deep regret at the death of Cde Goberdan Harrylall and pays tribute to the distinguished service which he rendered to Guyana and to its Parliament and directs that an expression of its sympathy be conveyed to his sorrowing widow and children.”

[The Vice-President, National Development and Deputy Prime Minister]

The Speaker: Cde. Chandisingh

The Vice-President National, Development and Deputy Prime Minister (Cde. Chandisingh): Cde. Speaker, it is with feelings of great sadness and loss that I move the motion expressing regret at this passing of a former Member of this House, Cde. Goberdan Harrylall, and expressing deep sympathy and condolence to his wife, Clara, and children and other relatives. We who were his friends and associates were shocked to learn that he died on the morning of Thursday, 7th February, 1985. He was sixty-five years of age. And although we know he had been ill for some time and that since October 1983 he could not get around and be as active as he used to, his death was unexpected. As we meet today to mourn the loss of a friend and colleague and a former member of this Assembly, who served three consecutive terms as a Parliamentarian, Cde. Harrylall as we knew him was first elected to the legislative assembly for the Corentyne West Assembly on October 6, 1961 to September 24, 1964. He was again elected for the National Assembly and served from May 1965 to November 4, 1968 and he served his third term from January 3, 1969 to June 6, 1973. Those of us who were members of this house during those years will remember Harrylall for his witty speeches and his liveliness he brought to this chamber. He had a sound knowledge of the sugar industry and brought that knowledge to bear in debates here.

14:25 hrs

(Cde. Chandisingh continues)

Indeed, he had so much to say on that score that he aroused amusement and empathy on both sides of the Assembly, including the Speaker, by the way he pleaded, cajoled and entreated for more time to complete his speeches. He could always be depended upon to enliven the debate in his down-to-earth manner.

Cde. Harry Lall was an astute and adept politician.

For most of his political life he functioned as a member of the People's Progressive Party and during the last few years, from 1976, as a respected member of the People's National Congress, for whose leader, Cde. L.F.S. Burnham, he had the highest regard.

Cde. Harry Lall was also a trade unionist. The cause of the workers was always dear to his heart. His activity on behalf of the workers gained him their recognition. For several years he was General President of the Guyana Agricultural Workers Union, GAWU. Earlier, he was a shopsteward at the Sawmill and Forest Workers Union in New Amsterdam and later he became President of the Berbice branch of the Guyana Labour Union and a member of the co-ordinating committee of the Berbice branch of the Guyana Trades Union Congress..He was also a member of the Berbice Educational Institute Trust and of the Rice Producers Council.

As President of GAWU, Cde. Harry Lall spoke on several occasions in this Assembly on problems facing sugar workers especially on housing conditions on the sugar estates prior to/nationalisation of the sugar industry. He was supremely sympathetic to the problems of sugar workers and gave them representation the best way he could for their betterment, /he never hesitated to correct the workers whenever he thought they were wrong. He gave sound advice. He eschewed mere demagoguery to build the workers' hopes and expectations when he knew their demands were unrealistic. He had the courage of his convictions and would not seek to mislead the workers he represented. He did not play to the gallery when it came to advising workers. He favoured an approach that avoided sterile confrontation in which the workers, the Government and the nation all suffered. He felt the workers as a whole could achieve more tangible benefits through dialogue and co-operative with Government, particularly after nationalisation of the industry. At the same time he recognised there were problems that had to be resolved and was not averse to blistering the management whenever he

felt they were wrong.

For the championing of their cause, his honest and frank approach, the benefits he had won for sugar workers as a whole, for so many individual workers whose cases he fought and won, Cde. Harry Lall became loved and respected by the workers so that even when he was no longer attached to the GAMU, the recognised union in the sugar industry and when he performed his duties as deputy head of the Labour Desk of the Industrial and Labour Relations Committee of the People's National Congress and later as head of the Labour Desk for Berbice, many were the sugar workers who visited him and aired their grievances and have their problems resolved. Cde. Harry Lall was also at that time adviser to the President on the sugar industry.

This close relationship he had with workers could readily be understood if we were to recall that Cde. Harry Lall was himself a worker from the tender age of nine. His father had died earlier and when his mother passed away he was only nine years of age. He had nowhere to turn for help and at that tender age when he should still be studying at school and playing with his little friends, Harry Lall started his life as a worker. He passed through the school of life, the life of a working man. I recall passing by Blairmont Estate with him when he pointed to a number of tall spreading trees blinding the road. He said he had planted those trees, a fitting memoriam. But whenever he referred to his early life experiences he never did so out of self-pity. He seemed to be proud of the fact that he was exposed to the world of work so early in his life and I think this was a positive feature that helped to mould his character. Springing from the grassroots he maintained a link with the grassroots and understood the problems and characteristics of the grassroots.

Cde. Harry Lall also took an active part in the Labour Code Commission. I recall working with him when we were both advisers on that Commission. His contributions to the Labour Movement while on the Commission were indeed valuable and were always in the best interest of the workers. So also were the contributions he made in this Assembly.

Cde. Harry Lall boasted no distinguished academic record since he had to begin work at a very tender age. But those of us who knew him could attest to his fine intellect, his native intelligence which he put to the service of the working people. Cde. Harry Lall possessed wide interests and he represented his union

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abroad at several international trade union conferences. On these occasions when he visited certain socialist countries he observed very keenly and developed a conviction that socialism was the only way forward for Guyana. As a socialist, he eventually in the latter part of his life found his way to the P.N.C. As a socialist he believed in and worked for national unity and the strengthening of that unity. As a socialist he espoused the cause of the People's New Constitution and the new system of local democracy, independence, self-reliance. In short, he supported actively and devoted all his efforts to what the cause of the party and its socialist objectives.

with
Cde. Speaker, /Cde. Harry Lall's passing we have all suffered a greivous loss, the family and relatives, his colleagues and friends, the P.N.C. of which he has a staunch member, the entire nation whose cause and best interest he upheld and championed. But men like Harry Lall will always be remembered for the valuable contributions they made to this nation for progress.

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(Cde. R. Chandisingh continues):

Cde. Speaker, I wish on behalf of the People's National Congress, the Government and on my own humble behalf to pay tribute to the late Cde. Goberdhan Harry Lall for the distinguished service he has rendered to Guyana, to our Parliament, to the Trade Union Movement and to the Nation. Our deepest sympathy is extended to his Widow Cde. Clara Harry Lall, his children and grandchildren who all miss him very much. We all miss him.

Question proposed.

Mr. F. Singh: Mr. Speaker, I met Cde. Goberdham as a member of the P.P.P. when I first entered Parliament in 1966 as a member of the Coalition Government. I remember on one occasion when Peter D'Aguiar as Minister of Finance was presenting his budget and there were increase taxes on some items, after examining the items Harry Lall exclaimed 'How Peter, you mean you will tax ladies panties and braziers too'. I remember also his many criticisms in this Parliament. I remember coming to Parliament and people asking me when Cde. Harry Lall was speaking because they like to come and listen to him because his speeches were so interesting. He must have been a man of some... to have risen to the post of Leader of the largest Trade Union in Guyana. Cde. Goberdham Harry Lall, I am sure through his passing has something that will be missed by all Guyanese. Cde. Speaker, The United Force supports the motion and extends to the bereaved relatives our deepest sympathy. Thank You.

The Speaker: Will Members kindly stand for one minute to indicate your approval.

Members stood in silence for one minute.

Motion carried.

BILL - SECOND AND THIRD READING

POST AND TELEGRAPH (AMENDMENT) BILL 1985 - BILL No. 6/1985

A Bill intituled:

"An Act to amend the Post and Telegraph Act". [The Vice President
Social Infrastructure and First Deputy Prime Minister]

Cde. H. Green: Cde. Speaker, I beg to move that the Post and Telegraph Amendment Bill, No. 6/1985 be read a second time.

Cde. Speaker, this is really an amendment to the existing Post and Telegraph Bill which itself sets out to describe certain equipment for the purpose of the Local Contracting, local fees etc, and this amendment to Section 63 of the Telegraph Act, Chapter 47:01 relates to the existing licencing procedure for licensing wireless worlds telegraph sets. As you are aware, as we advance in the world, terms change and we have to change our laws to take into account new equipment and when this was enacted there were no satellite.....

The amendment seeks to ensure that when we apply the loan as suggested in the Minister of Finance's budget that what we intend to include, they are not excluded and was really intended to include televisions which abounds in our society today and this amendment is to ensure that this . . . of the Post and Telegraph Bill and I propose the question that the Bill be read a second time.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Cde. Speaker, Section 63 of Chapter 47:01 does not take into its ambit, as I looked at it and read it carefully television receiving sets and television. Thus this Bill seeks to bring into the law a provision which would enable the Government to impose licenses on television and similar equipment and devices. There is need Cde. Speaker, for a probe and enquiry in so far as the Bill is concerned and my first enquiry is what service the Government is providing to impose license on television equipment generally relating to the Bill as a whole.

Secondly, at least one person is providing the kind of service, not the Government, a private individual is and as I understand it citizens are linked to that channel provided by that person. I dont know what the arrangement is - how legal is that operation. Has it received the approval of the Government, if so when? What kind of approval or agreement, what kind of services really are being provided by that individual because other persons are seeking to enter that field of activity. It is too technical for me to attempt to really handle it as it ought to be but we are all aware of what I am talking about.

Thirdly, we do not have a television station. Is the Government contemplating setting up one? We need to know and I think the Parliament is the best place to say exactly what is being done.

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Now Cde. Speaker, as I said and I repeat this does not allow the Government to impose licence in all these areas. The Government obviously is seeking through this Bill to collect some revenue.

14:45 hrs

I want to question the collection of revenue when no service is provided. It is well appreciated that the ^{owners of} radio receiving sets should pay licences because there are two broadcasting stations. The owners are receiving something but when this Bill is examined carefully one will find that any person who has a television set, just the television set with no video apparatus, will have, under this law, to pay whatever licence fee is prescribed by the Government. And this is in a country where there is no television station. I want to question that. I think it is grossly unfair to charge a man any sum of money. From the Budget Speech I gather that the sum contemplated is \$200. It is grossly unfair to charge a man any sum at all much less \$200 simply for having such a piece of equipment in his home. You cannot own that piece of equipment, you cannot buy it and keep it in a box with the hope and expectation that one day Guyana will have a television station. Once you have it, you have to pay a licence.

Secondly, when such equipment comes into the country there is duty to be paid. The person pays, or is expected to pay, the duty. It is not a case that the Government has not benefited when the equipment came in. The Government benefits when the television sets come in by way of the duty it collects. The imposition of a further sum of \$200, more or less, must be opposed by everyone and we strongly oppose it this afternoon.

I wish also to say that the Parliament, the country, needs to know first and foremost what arrangements have been entered into with private individuals against whom the Government will move to impose licences. What is the yardstick used. Is there not need to formalise all these operations and then let us know exactly what is the Government's intention? Is it not a case that someone can come and start something which the law does not provide for and subsequently the Government moves by way of legislation simply to impose a licence? We need clarification on all these areas. I want to ask the Cde. Vice-President to answer these questions so that the nation will know exactly what is taking place.

In anticipation, I do not think there is justification for the Government to argue that a person who has a television set is a well-to-do person and that once a person can afford television equipment he or she must pay a licence. We know that thousands of persons have very close relatives overseas - mothers, brothers and others - and I understand that the cost of a T.V. set is in the vicinity of \$600 (U.S.). People overseas have been purchasing them and sending

them to their relatives here. Many of these persons definitely cannot afford to buy such equipment. What are they doing? I am restricting my contribution at this point to the video operation. - They get their own tapes. Bill No. 4 of 1985 has imposed a licence on those who will deal with tapes. I do not want to query that. That is a business, but it means that that family will have to rent or purchase it and whatever that set receives is what that family or that individual obtains based on his capacity to buy or to hire a tape.

No service is being provided by the Government for that receiving set which now under this legislation becomes taxable. As I said, there can be no complaint about the radio. There probably could be no complaint if the other category, on which I am seeking to get information, is explained. This is a domestic operation. It is something for personal use in a country where there is limited entertainment, limited avenues for relaxation. People have been seeking to create circumstances and conditions where they can have some kind of entertainment and some devices for relaxation. I do not think that that area specifically can justifiably carry a licence.

We can look at the other areas where the Government is bent on imposing a licence. The Minister did not deal with it very comprehensively, but surely he can consider at this point withdrawing any taxation from the kind of equipment that I am alluding to, that is, the television which is operated with a video set for purely domestic use. The person chooses the film, the person has to get the film and keeps it for his personal use. It is not something being offered at a national level. I do not think the Government can bring any argument to justify the imposition of a licence in that area even if the members of the Government can put up some argument for the other areas which will be caught by this Bill.

In the circumstances, we cannot give our support to this Bill as it is framed and therefore we must record our opposition to it and at the same time appeal for releasing from this imposition those who are going to operate simply in a domestic way, in a personal way. No service is provided. It is not like paying a licence for a car and roads are provided or like turning your radio to a channel. There is nothing you can turn to unless you have the other equipment. This section is so framed that you are caught even if you do not have the other equipment. Let me read it -

"'broadcast receiving sets' includes television receiving sets," -

that is to say clearly that television sets were not included before -

"whether used in conjunction with video recorders or not."

Once the video equipment is not there you can receive nothing, you can play nothing, you can see nothing but, according to the Budget Speech, you will have to pay \$200 a year. It is grossly unjustified and unwarranted and should be considered with a view to removing it. That is my contribution.

The Speaker: Mr. Feilden Singh.

Mr. M.F. Singh: Mr. Speaker, on this occasion I want to agree with the remarks made by the last speaker. This piece of legislation was first intimated to Parliament in the 1985 Budget Speech. The legislation is now being brought to Parliament. I am wondering if it is just another measure to raise money. From this point of view I would ask these questions: Am I right in saying, as the last speaker said, that the fees will be charged only on television sets and not on video sets? I presume the fee will be as stated in the Budget Speech, that is, \$200 for television receiving sets. Therefore, if you have only a television set in a box in your home and nothing else, you will have to pay on that. If you have a video set without a television set, you will not have to pay anything, but if you have a television set alone, in a box in your home, you will have to pay a licence whether it can turn on or not, whether it can receive or not? Am I right in saying that?

(Mr. F. Singh continues)

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I agree with the last speaker that the Government is not providing a service and therefore it is not justified in demanding a charge for something in respect of which it is not providing a service. Normally you provide a service before taxation. For example, as in the case of car licence, Government provided roads, for radio licence, the Government provided radio broadcasting stations. From what I understand of the situation, at the present moment Government is providing no Television service. The only person providing a service is one individual and you have to pay for that service. Now I note in the Budget Speech that the individual will have to pay \$40,000 per annum for his system. Do you think he is going to pay that? Of course not. He is going to pass it on to the consumer. They people who are receiving the service from the private individual will have to pay increased charges because he has to pay more to the Government. Now, it seems to me that this is unfair. Why should the owner of a television set who is not getting any service from the Government be called upon to pay charges as has been introduced in this Bill before the Parliament at the present time? And in respect of Government providing television service, I want to say since I entered this Parliament in 1966 I heard of the Government setting up a television station. Kit Nascimento, a former Minister was sent overseas to study television. He came back to this country, He wrote a report and presented it to this Government setting out the whole apparatus for the setting up of a television station. I do not know what happened. Afterwards, Philadelphia from Telecoms went away, had negotiations, there were publications in the papers, I cannot put my hand on them, about the Government setting television stations a few years ago. I think it said that they were introducing the French system. Nothing has happened since. As we have heard nothing will the Government tell us if they are putting on a charge will they be providing a service? How soon will they be providing a service? Until they can provide a service, I think it is unfair for them to call on owners of television sets to pay licences as is proposed in this piece of legislation.

The Speaker: Cde. Green.

The Vice-President, Social Infrastructure and First Deputy Prime Minister

(Cde. Green): Cde. Speaker, my two friends on the opposite side seem bent on drawing me into a debate on the merits and demerits on television in Guyana. I can assure them that the Minister responsible for information will present them

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with an opportunity at some time to debate this whole question of television in Guyana. Cde. Speaker, I am not aware that the Government, any Government for that matter would necessarily need to supply services before you apply a licencing mechanism before taxation. The Government is assumed to have a general overview and in fact responsibility for the system and you are aware, Cde. Speaker, and I am sure both speakers are aware that there is a big argument going on in the world today between the Third World countries as to the rights or the lack of rights to deal with air space satellites and how much Government and citizens can impose taxation fees in terms of what people term very loosely their natural resources and which exclude air above it and the sea below us. In fact they see it as a technical problem. On this question of taxation, this is a mechanism to ensure that these things come within the ambit of the postal and telegraph licencing regulations. In terms of licencing something, again I repeat, Government never had an obligation to provide a service before applying licences. Those of us who are here will certainly recall that as youngsters we had to take out dog licences. I am not sure what services Government provided in that case. Cde. Speaker, even now you are required to take out Dance Licences. I am not sure what services are provided there. In terms of the general information policy, we will and will continue to look at this whole question. I am surprised I submit, Cde. Speaker, that the arguments raised this afternoon by my two good friends may be relevant in terms of another debate and at another time.

Question 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.

**AJOURNMENT PAGE
MISSING**