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The lower income family really cannot meet the high cost of buying essential foods and clothing to survive. If we just look at one item in clothing which is essential - shoes, unless we expect our people to walk barefooted - the price of shoes now ranges from \$200 for a simple pair of sandals right up to \$600 and \$1,000. Transportation has gone up for the average working class family. In some cases, transportation may take as much as a quarter of a worker's income. The cost of electricity has gone up. Everything has gone up.

The Ministry of Housing spent \$3.7 million in 1986 from an allocation of \$4.1 million. In 1987 there was a provision of \$6.243 million, which is, I suppose, an increase because of the higher rates of pay and allowances for those who work in the Ministry, but what I want to examine is what is coming out of the Ministry. What I encountered many years ago when I was Minister and low rental apartments and low income housing units, some by self-help mainly, were being built, the only renewable policy was that of building self-help houses. After our period in Government very little was done insofar as low rental Government housing and low cost housing was concerned. As I said, it was mostly in the field of self-help, which we all endorse. It is a good form, but now there is very little of that going on.

The 1972-1976 Development Plan envisaged the construction of 65,000 housing units at an average rate of 13,000 a year, which was a good idea but unfortunately it was never implemented. In 1976, when the Plan was coming to an end and when, according to the 'blurbs' of the P.N.C. Government, Guyanese were supposed to be housed, not even 6,000 of the 65,000 housing units had been built and in that 6,000 are included the housing units done by the private sector. I am talking about new housing units.

The reality is that the housing shortage has created extremely difficult conditions for most people but, of course, it is much harder for the lower income group, those who are unemployed and those who are under-employed. Rents have soared as a consequence and what we are experiencing in the capital city is that very few houses - or almost no houses - are available to the middle and lower income groups. Because of the breaking down of the houses, which I referred to previously, in low income areas, most workers have been forced out of the city

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to the environs. One can look at the advertisements of buildings and land for sale and see what is happening. They tell their own story. We can look at the Want Advertisements today and compare them with similar advertisements six or eight years ago. We will see advertisements of houses for \$2½ million and such rates. There is hardly any house available today below \$100,000 and when one looks at what is advertised for \$100,000 it is something the size of a chicken coup. So there is really nothing for the man at the bottom. This famous man, who was going to be made into a real man, is now having a terrible time with everything - electricity, water, transportation, food shortages. Perhaps one of the greatest burdens the working man in Guyana bears is that under the present regime he is suffering from very poor housing conditions. What is perhaps even worse is the fact that there is no hope, there is nothing planned.

If one reads the Annual Report of the Ministry of Housing one will see that -

"The Housing Department's main function is to formulate, implement and monitor national housing policies. This includes the preparation and implementation of housing programmes and projects with the aim of improving the quality and quantity of the national housing."

I am reading from the Annual Report of the Ministry of Housing for 1986. The report also puts us right at the level I am talking about -

"The targets set for the year with respect to capital works were minimally achieved or not at all because of the non-provision of funds from the Central Government.

• • • The work of self-help and community administration was handicapped by the unavailability of transport and shortage of funds."

The Government is just not providing any money for any housing programme. The money that is now allocated and that has been allocated in the last few years is only to keep the bureaucracy going, to pay those officers who are in office. I am not exactly sure what work they are doing, but I suppose they have certain duties. There is no money that you can talk about. Maybe the Minister will tell us of one or two self-help housing units that are still ambling along. The fact is that no money is being provided; there is no housing programme; there is no future for housing in the country. Inflation is so out of hand that no small man and no middle income man can even think of building his own house. These are the facts. They are very sad but true. The housing report shows that the Central Government is not grappling with the chronic and acute housing crisis in the country and is leaving the solution to the private sector. This means that large numbers of

/workers

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workers will continue to remain homeless or will live in terribly crowded conditions, under insanitary conditions, and will be moving from place to place as they can. There will be more squatting, rents will rise further and our slums will continue to deteriorate. The taxpayers of this country are saddled with a bureaucracy and nothing else as far as housing is concerned. The bureaucracy is not producing houses as it is supposed to do.

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The small man is out of it. The small man has to pay the black-market price for paint, for cement, for everything in the whole housing syndrome. The irony is that the man at the top gets all the permits, gets all the goods and materials at the right prices, but the little man gets them at the wrong prices. The whole country is topsy-turvy. There must be an attempt to correct it. The small man must not be the man that everybody is wiping his feet on. Everyone wipes his feet on the small man. If there had been no small man there would have been no Guyana. He has been trampled upon; he has been exploited and the housing situation is one of the means of exploitation. I think that much of the money we have at our disposal is being wasted. Many times during the Budget debate we point out that millions of dollars are going down the drain in the wrong direction. Why cannot we subsidise low income rentals and low income housing as well as control the prices. It is the duty of a government to see that the people have a chance to live under decent conditions. They must not live like chickens and pigs as many of them have to do at the present time.

I would say that we must take a serious view of this; we must have a housing programme that is real, that can be applied, that has an allocation of enough funds and has enough control so that something can be produced. That is what I am requesting in this Motion which I put before the Assembly.

Mr. Kwayana: Mr. Speaker, I wish to second this Motion and to occupy a few minutes supporting it. I make bold to quote article 26 of the controversial Chapter II of the Constitution:

"Every citizen has the right to proper housing accommodation."

There is much controversy nowadays whether this is a mere declaration or whether the policy set out in that article is binding on the Government. Article 39 is still there and up to this point it imposes a duty on Parliament, the Government and other public agencies to act in line with the article cited, article 26.

It will be argued that perhaps some additional piece of legislation is needed before this article becomes enforceable, but in 1948 the Housing Act was passed and in section 13 it is stated

"Any employer of labour, and any person of the working class, may, subject to this section, make application in writing to the Central Authority for an advance of money for the purpose of purchasing or constructing one or

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more houses or for carrying out alterations or repairs to any house or houses."

Section 15 (1) states -

"It shall be the duty of the Central Authority -

(a) to consider the needs of Guyana with respect to the provision of housing accommodation for persons of the working class in any particular area;"

Here we have a clear policy and constitutional foundations for the kind of action which the Motion is asking for. We cannot ignore them. If the Government ignores this Motion it is simply saying that these laws and these constitutional provisions are simply a scrap of paper. What we want to see is some energy, some action, in these directions to provide the facilities which the Government of Guyana is obliged to provide. The Government is hemmed in by obligations on this question of housing. It was well in advance of the 50's when housing became a matter of great public concern. The Women's Political and Economic Organisation - the mover of this Motion as well as Mrs. Gaskin and Mrs. Stafford were founders and active members of this organisation - went about the slums seeing how the people lived and agitating on this question of housing. I have no doubt that it was this kind of agitation and the upsurge that took place on the sugar estates in the late 40's that led both to the Housing Act and to the establishment of the Sugar Industry and Iabour Welfare Fund.

The question of housing is a very painful one. There are many ways in which people suffer from a lack of housing. Many people - mainly in the city but not only in the city - live a nomadic existence moving from home to home and place to place, night after night. As we know, many of the worse off are pavement dwellers. Our pavement dwelling community may not be as large as it is in some cities, but it is there and seems to be growing. There are hundreds of people who, when the night comes, go and sit out the time with a watchman or spend the time somewhere or the other because they have no homes. Let us think of the impact of all of this on family life, on the upbringing of children. All of us must know children who do not have a settled home to be martured by their parents throughout the day and especially at night. Many people in this country, but mainly in the city, are suffering great personal humiliation because of the apathy shown at Government level on this question of housing.

The prices of building materials must be rising at a rate of anything like 40

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per cent per year at the minimum. The mover of the Motion cited some figures. There are others, for instance, zinc sheets. When we turn to a substitute that is produced in Guyana we are faced with the problem of supply. Suppliers are not there. Some people talk about shingles, but where do we obtain a supply of shingles? Where are the supplies of the various substitutes that can be pointed to theoretically? The cost of zinc sheets has doubled between 1984 and 1987. Cement is a scandal. I should like to be corrected if I am wrong, but it is my impression that cement, or most of it, is imported into Guyana through the public sector. There is an official price at which it is supposed to be sold, but on I am told that the east coast of Demerara, where I live, the price at which it may be obtained at the region is something like \$80 a sack, as against \$63 a sack at the Guyana National Trading Corporation in Georgetown. Outside of that I am told it is \$100 a sack. These are oppressive prices and in speaking on this Motion I think we have a right to demand that something be done about them. We cannot allow the prices of building materials to be escalated in this unbridled fashion and expect, at the same time, to provide housing for the working people.

In debating one of the budget speeches I said that millions of dollars are being made overnight. Many of the people engaged in the supply of building materials are multi-millionaires. They belong to the container community. A large number of containers come in for them. They have access to the seats of power and they are minting millions. It is time for some proper policy to be set down to make housing possible and to bring it within the reach of what the laws describe as "persons of the working class."

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I am sure that we are also aware that panes for windows, wooden blades are being used and that shingles are being used instead of zinc and galvanised sheets and what have you. Those are examples of measures that are being used in order to ensure that the cost of shelter is within access of the ordinary man.

All this is being done through the housing fund and to date over \$2.2 million have been spent on the construction of these houses as well as on infrastructural works. That, to my mind, is an indication that this Government remains fully committed, despite the difficulties, firmly committed, to the task of housing. Presently, efforts are being made to restructure the Ministry of Housing, the Central Housing and Planning Authority, with a view to achieving greater efficiency. Recently, several meetings were conducted with private developers to discuss their involvement in housing development. As I indicated earlier in my presentation, the private sector has made significant contributions to the development of housing in this country. It means, therefore, that

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its involvement at this time is necessary and the Ministry is presently engaged in discussions with some developers with a view to having them develop raw land, not only for construction of units but for sale to persons who can build privately or independently.

It is my view that, based on the situations that I have alluded to, based on the measures that are being put in place presently in order to contribute to the housing programme in this country, the Motion before this Assembly is definitely, to my mind, baseless and unfounded. In the circumstances, I wish to submit that the Motion should be rejected.

The Speaker: Cde. Scotland, I should like, on behalf of Members of the Assembly and myself, to congratulate you on having made your maiden speech.

It was quite an impressive one. Applause.

Cde. J. Jagan (replying): Cde. Speaker, it is regrettable that the speaker, in his maiden speech, which he presented very well, could come to wrong conclusions. Certainly this Motion before the Assembly is one that cannot really be thrust aside on a partisan basis because the Opposition party has brought it forward. That is ridiculous. We are talking about human needs. We are talking about people surviving in this world. You are unable, totally unable, to discuss the present situation. I could have gone back and discussed what happened many years ago. It is so ridiculous to talk about what happened before. That is pretty bad.

This whole period of 20 odd years has been a terrible period for discrimination and corruption in housing. I have not gone into that. I was dealing with the needs of our society today and I don't think it is correct that this should be pushed aside with rosy talk about how much we have done and what we are doing. You are doing nothing. There is nothing of any comparable nature going on to ease the housing situation. The speaker was talking about a period when we had loans at 6 per cent. I read you a release from this Government increasing the Government loans to 14 per cent. Is that going forward or backward? Let us be realistic.

Talking about the private sector, during 1986 and 1987 two financial firms dropped out of housing. The Guyana Mortgage and Finance Company and the /Guyana

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Guyana Housing and Development Company have ceased giving housing loans.

They transferred to the New Building Society. We are going downward. The New Building Society, is it giving loans to middle and lower income groups?

It cannot. It is hidebound by the realities of making loans. It has to evaluate the total income of the applicant and that has to be in the thousands in order to get a loan with which to build a house.

Let us be realistic. The private sector cannot do anything. It is impossible. The private sector is building for the high income housing group. Those are the realities of life and the very Government which sits before us has found it necessary to raise the interest on housing loans. Where are we? I cannot understand it. We must go through the pathetic stance that this Government uses every time it is reminded of its responsibilities, where we are told that all the Third World countries are in trouble and we are in trouble too. What kind of answer is that? Not all the Third World countries have what Guyana has. Not all Third World countries could come out of this in a very realistic position. We have resources but we don't have administrators, we don't have correct policies. We don't know where we are going. The country is corrupt.

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Mr. Kwayana: I thank you for your guidance, Mr. Speaker. I was under the impression that it is only when something is actually before the Courts.

The Speaker: I think this is already before the Magistrate, Mr. Sullivan.

It is only that the date has not been fixed.

Mr. Kwayana: Thank you. In closing, I commend this Motion to the Assembly. To support it could hardly be in conflict with the present policy of the Government as announced by the Director of Public Prosecutions. What is the policy of the Director of Public Prosecutions or the Government on the question of an inquest on Mr. Vincent Teekah's death we do not know, but we hope that the airing of this matter this afternoon and the views we have expressed will alert the Government to the need to respond constitutionally when someone dies unnaturally in the future.

Motion proposed.

The Minister of State in the Ministry of Home Affairs (Cde. Odie-Ali): Cde. Speaker, I should like to outline before this honourable House the procedures dealing with unnatural deaths as set out in the Coroners Act, Chapter 4:03 of the Laws of Guyana. Section 4 states:

"Everyone who becomes aware of an unnatural death shall notify it to the coroner or at the nearest police station."

Section 12 (1) of the same Act states:

"Where the death of any person is reported to, or first comes to the knowledge of, the coroner as an unnatural death, he may make a preliminary investigation, and if he considers after doing so that it is unnecessary to hold an inquest or an inquiry, he may issue an order for the burial of the body."

Section 12 (3) states:

"Whenever the coroner issues an order for the burial of the body without holding an inquest or inquiry, he shall report the facts to the Director of Public Prosecutions and the grounds for the order and transmit all reports and documents in his possession connected with the matter."

That is what the Coroners Act states.

I want to begin by rejecting entirely the insinuation that the authorities in any way acted improperly with respect to the specific cases referred to in the Motion or for that matter in any way at all. As you know, Cde. Speaker, coroners and magistrates deal with many cases and because of the heavy workload in coroners' inquests there is a backlog of cases, a pile-up.

This matter

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This matter was brought to the attention of His Excellency, the Cde. President, who wrote to the Chancellor of the Judiciary. As a result, the Cde. Chancellor gave some specific directions and took some action to deal with that backlog about which I just spoke.

I want to assure this Assembly that at all times the Police acted correctly and in accordance with the laws of this country. The delay in conducting the backlog of inquests has been accordingly addressed by the Cde. Chancellor and I think it was on April .4 of this year that Mr. Cecil Sullivan was appointed coroner with the specific task of clearing the backlog of inquests.

The Office of the President did not leave it at that. They issued a Press Release on the matter of these current inquests and I want to read that Press Release. It is dated April 4, 1987 and it says:

"The existence of a large number of outstanding inquests has been brought to the attention of the Comrade President who has in turn discussed the matter with the Chancellor of the Judiciary.

Investigations have revealed that at the end of December 1986, 157 such cases were outstanding in all judicial districts.

Under the law, inquests should, as a rule, be held by the coroner whenever sudden death arises from unnatural causes.

Following on these discussions and with a view to reducing the backlog, the Chancellor has made arrangements for Magistrate Sullivan to be assigned full-time for the purpose of holding inquests in the Georgetown Judicial District. Magistrate Sullivan will begin his assignment on Monday, 6th April, 1987."

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"In/other judicial districts, arrangements are being made for magistrates to proceed in a systematic and expeditious manner to hold inquests in outstanding cases in their districts."

I am happy to report that Magistrate Sullivan has been doing his task successfully. I am appalled at the irresponsibility being displayed by the mover of this Motion who seems to be displaying either a crass lack of knowledge or just sheer unadulterated malice.

Let us look at the case of Cde. Vincent Teekah. He died on October 24, 1979. It is alleged that he was shot by two unknown men at the Industrial Site while in company, as the mover said, of a foreign female. The report, in accordance with the law, was submitted to the Coroner/Magistrate, Cde. Jackman, to hold a preliminary investigation. The findings were - and those findings are public knowledge:

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anybody could go and look them up - that/person or persons unknown, was or were responsible for the death of Cde. Vincent Teekah. The Police have been unable to arrest anyone because the only witness, that is, the foreigner who was with the victim at the time of his death was unable to assist the Police in any way by way of identification or description of the assailant or assailants.

And then I have to reveal that the mover is displaying that same crass lack of knowledge or that malice of which I spoke earlier --

The Speaker: Cde. Odie-Ali, today was a very pleasant day. We had no harsh language expressed by the Minority. May we refrain from that, please.

Cde. Odie-Ali: I am sorry, Cde. Speaker.

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During the next year he left this country for the United States to study dentistry. He spent two years at Howard University and after the two-year pre-dental course and three years at North Western University of Chicago he qualified as a dentist. We are told that he spent two additional years in Chicago making an even seven years in the United States.

It was during his stay in Chicago that another significant thing happened to him. He met and married Janet Rosenberg in August 1943 and returned to Guyana that very year. He was then a quarter of a century. In the first two years he set up a successful dental practice in Guyana, but by 1945 he became involved in what we called then "colonial political affairs." He joined the Manpower Citizens Association and in 1945 became the Treasurer of that group. Along with Ashton Chase in 1946 and Jocelyn Hubbard and his wife he formed, as you mentioned, the Political Affairs Committee. The bulletin that was published dealt exclusively with matters that affected the working class in those days. It is safe to say that it is that bulletin which is the predecessor of "Thunder", the official organ of the newly formed People's Progressive Party.

As was observed, in 1947, under a limited franchise, he successfully contested and won the seat of Central Demerara and he took his seat on Thursday, 40 years ago. Cde. Speaker, I believe that you omitted to say something when you said he was the youngest Member in this Assembly. I think he was the youngest and the handsomest Member of this Assembly. Applause. From that time he has been as constant as the Northern Star and on each occasion in 1953, 1957, 1961, 1964, 1973, 1980 and 1985 he retained his seat, either on that side or on this side within this Assembly.

I mentioned earlier that he made a name internationally and those of us, old enough, will remember that there are certain things about Dr. Jagan that you cannot really forget. When he first entered Parliament in 1953, for example, it was one of his ideas, I believe, that all M.P.'s should be immaculately attired in white suits. Cde. J. Jagan: "White sharkskin!" Cheddi himself wore that sharkskin and his famous polka-dot bow-tie. I don't know why he stopped wearing that polka-dot bow-tie.

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Dr. Jagan and Dr. Lachmansingh - I believe they had with them Mr. Daniel Debidin, the lawyer - led the procession for the five Enmore martyrs on another Thursday, June 17, 1948. It is well known that these comrades were shot at Enmore by the British colonial police. I think it was there that Dr. Jagan really made a significant public appearance. I don't know if I told him this before, but I recall seeing that procession as a youngster at Queen's College when it came from the East Coast. In those days, to me, it was just a group of people, some a little rowdy, some pensive. It did not mean much to me then, but I remember it very clearly because they passed in some area near to where we were doing some work. Dr. Jagan, in an interview, claimed that he was so moved at the graveside - and I believe him - that he made a silent pledge right there to dedicate, as he said, "My entire life to the cause of the struggle of the Guyanese people against bondage and exploitation." Even though sometimes we did not agree with his methods and his manner, I think it is fair to say that with honesty and conviction he has carried out that mandate.

The People's Progressive Party was formed in January 1950 with Dr. Jagan as leader, Forbes Burnham as Chairman and Janet Jagan as the General Secretary. The 1953 elections, for the first time under universal adult suffrage, saw the P.P.P. surface as clear winner with 18 out of 24 seats. That victory surprised and shocked the conservatives in our society and particularly the British Government. I believe that even before the P.P.F. Members took their seats the British had decided that this was not what they wanted and subsequent events bore that out. They were able to suspend the Constitution 133 days after, a suspension which, to this day, those of us who were involved contend was completely unjustified.

Cde. Speaker, you alluded to a period of incarceration and also to the split which took place in February 1955. It was the second day of the party congress held at a Georgetown cinema when two factions emerged. There were two strong, powerful men who could not share the captaincy. Those two factions contested the elections in 1957. Dr. Jagan was the victor, gaining 9 out of 14 seats. Some of us will remember that the public understood it to be P.P.P. Jaganite and P.P.P. Burnhamite. After the 1961 victory, the P.P.P. gained 26 seats, the P.N.C. 11 and the U.F. 4. Dr. Jagan became the first Premier of Guyana.

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In this Assembly, since we are talking about this Assembly, it is stale and unexciting when Dr. Jagan is not in his seat. In fact, I think sometimes the debates can be boring and uninteresting unless Dr. Jagan has to make a contribution, not only now but even very early in his career and life in this Assembly. As you said, he has brought excitement in all sorts of ways and even when Dr. Jagan is riled and says things that we may not necessarily agree with, he does it with a peculiar kind of charm that I always find interesting. As I told him on several occasions privately, we like him. He is a very likeable person he charmed and one can understand how/so many people, inside and outside of this Assembly even when they disagreed with him. There is never that feeling of permanent hose tility or malice. He can quarrel with you and a few minutes afterwards you may get a handshake and a very disarming and powerful smile which must have swept Janet off her feet so many years ago in Chicago.

What has happened since then is history to all of us. Dr. Jagan loves to travel. I believe he also finds excitement in travelling. It has helped to ,on both sides of the Assembly broaden his vision and his understanding of the world though sometimes/we contend that we like to have him with us.

I should like to congratulate Dr. Jagan sincerely on behalf of this side of the Assembly for 40 good years. He has been a survivor; he has been a fighter and, for me, I want to see him in this Assembly for many, many years so that we can have the benefit of his experience and the lustre he brings to this honourable Assembly. I wish him good luck. I wish him many more years and I know, by looking at Cheddi, that he has just begun to fight. Applause.

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Cde. Dr. Jagan: Cde. Speaker, permit me to thank you, the hon. Prime Minister, Mr. Eusi Kwayana, and the United Force, for all the words of commendation to mark the 40th anniversary of my entry into this Parliament. I want also to thank the Guyanese people who reposed confidence in me and in successive elections, since 1947, elected me to serve in Parliament.

The past four decades can surely be said to have been the best period in my life. They have been both challenging and exhilirating, full of successes and setbacks. Whatever I have achieved can be credited first to my parents and my wife, secondly, to all those selfless and heroic comrades of my party who stood, and still stand, by me; thirdly, to our heroes, named and unnamed; fourthly to the Americans and Russian revolutions; and fifthly to those outstanding world figures like Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin, Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King.

My parents made the necessary sacrifices for my formal education. My wife insisted that bread was important but man does not live by bread alone, that life is not just two cars in every garage, two chickens in every pot. Karl Marx made me to understand what makes the world go round. Our own heroes and Lenin, Gandhi and King taught me how to change Guyana and inspired me to struggle - Gandhi for independence, King for equality and against racism, Lenin for socialism. My comrades gave me the strength to continue to struggle, especially in times of adversity.

Perhaps I should add that whatever I may have achieved may be contributed also to the fact that I was a product of rural Guyana and that/my middle life in urban Guyana, Georgetown, the capital, that I was a product of East and West, coming from what might be called an oriental culture from my parentage and spending seven years of my formative life in the heart of the West, the United States. Thirdly, there is the fact that I got an education in the United States, an education which was much more democratic than the education which so many politicians receive in Britain whose education is geared to training the British ruling class. I am glad that I have contributed to uniting the working people, winning adult suffrage and independence, eliminating some of the inequalities experienced by "Divide and Rule" tactics and wiping out

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some of the vestiges of colonialism.

I want to assure you that I shall continue to work as a Guyanese for working class and racial unity, for national and social liberation, for justice and progress, for our people and country. In this task I am strengthened by the fact that what I stand for is winning out. During the past 40 years, socialism has become a world system; communism and working class national liberation movements have become powerful forces; colonialism has been virtually liquidated; the peace movement has grown; disarmament for development is on the current agenda and democratisation of international political life is gaining momentum.

On this occasion it is my wish and hope that Guyanese can unite and struggle to put Guyana in the main stream of world history. Applause.

The Speaker: Comrades and hon. Members, I think for this special occasion I shall give my blessing that you stand up and applaud.

All Members stood and applauded.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, "That this National Assembly stand adjourned to Monday, 21st December, 1988, at 2 p.m." The Minister of Regional Development. Adjourned accordingly at 17:03 ms.