

T H E
P A R L I A M E N T A R Y D E B A T E S
O F F I C I A L R E P O R T

[VOLUME 7]

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

96th Sitting

2 p.m.

Friday, 18th June, 1976

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Speaker

Cde. Sase Narain, O.R., J.P., Speaker

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

Prime Minister (1)

Cde. L.F.S. Burnham, O.E., S.C.,
Prime Minister (Absent - on leave)

Deputy Prime Minister (1)

Cde. P. A. Reid,
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of
National Development (Absent – on leave)

Senior Ministers (9)

Cde. H.D. Hoyte, S.C.,
Minister of Economic Development (Absent – on leave)

*Cde. H. Greene,
Minister of Co-operatives and
National Mobilisation

*Cde. H.O. Jack,
Minister of Energy and National Resources

*Cde. F.E. Hope,
Minister of Finance

***Non-elected Minister**

*Cde. S.S. Naraine, A.A.
Minister of Works and Housing

*Cde. G.A. King
Minister of Trade and Consumer Protection

*Cde. G.B. Kennard, C.C.H.,
Minister of Agriculture (Absent – on leave)

*Cde. C.L. Baird,
Minister of Education and Social Development (Absent)

*Cde. F.R. Wills, S.C.,
Minister of Foreign Affairs and Justice

Ministers (5)

Cde. W.G. Carrington,
Minister of Labour (Absent)

Cde. S.M. Field-Ridley,
Minister of Information and Culture

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

*Cde. O.M.R. Harper,
Minister of Health (Absent)

*Cde. C.V. Mingo,
Minister of Home Affairs

Ministers of State (9)

Cde. M. Kasim, A.A.,
Minister of State for Agriculture

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

Cde. P. Duncan, J.P.,
Minister of State – Regional (Rupununi)

*Non-elected Minister

Cde. C.A. Nascimento,
Minister of State,
Office of the Prime Minister

Cde. K.B. Bancroft,
Minister of State – Regional
(Mazaruni/Potaro)

Cde. J.P. Chowritmootoo,
Minister of State – Regional
(Essequibo Coast/West Demerara)

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

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

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

Parliamentary Secretaries (6)

Cde. J. R. Thomas,
Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of National Development **(Absent)**

Cde. M.M. Ackman, C.C.H.,
Parliamentary Secretary,
Office of the Prime Minister,
and Government Chief Whip

Cde E. L. Ambrose,
Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of Agriculture

Cde. S. Prashad,
Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of Co-operatives and National Mobilisation **(Absent)**

Cde. R.H.O. Corbin,
Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of Education and Social Development **(Absent)**

Cde. M. Corrica,
Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of Works and Housing **(Absent)**

***Non-elected Minister**

Other Members (19)

Cde. L.M. Branco

Cde. E.M. Bynoe

Cde. E.H.A. Fowler

Cde. J. Gill

Cde. W. Hussain

Cde. S. Jaiserrisingh

Cde. K.M.E. Jonas

(Absent)

Cde. M. Nissar

Cde. L.E. Ramsahoye

Cde. J.G. Ramson

Cde. P.A. Rayman

Cde. E.M. Stoby, J.P.

Cde. S.H. Sukhu, M.S., J.P.

Cde. C. Sukhu, J.P.

Cde. H.A. Taylor

(Absent)

Cde. R.C. Van Sluytman

Cde. L.E. Willems

Cde. C.E. Wrights. J.P.

Cde. M. Zaheeruddeen, J.P.

Members of the Opposition (16)

(i) People's Progressive Party (14)

Leader of the Opposition (1)

Cde. C.B. Jagan

Deputy Speaker (1)

Cde. Ram Karran

Other Members (12)

Cde. J. Jagan

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud, J.P.

Cde. Narbada Persaud

(Absent – on leave)

Cde. C. Collymore

Cde. S.F. Mohamed

Cde. L. Lalbahadur

Cde. B. James

Cde. C.C. Belgrave

Cde. R. Ally

Cde.Dalchand, J.P.
Cde.Dindayal
Cde.H. Nokta

(ii) Liberator Party (2)

Mr. M.F. Singh
Mrs. E. Da Silva

(Absent – on leave)

OFFICERS

Clerk of the National Assembly - F. A. Narain

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

2 p.m.

PRAYERS**OATH**

The Speaker: Comrades and hon. Member, at our last Sitting, I informed you of the fourteen candidates whose names had been extracted from the People's Progressive Party list and who had been declared to have become members of the National Assembly. Thirteen of those members made and subscribed the oath of office at that Sitting. The other Member, Cde. Janet Jagan, was not present at that Sitting. As she is here at this Sitting, the oath of office will now be administered to her by the Clerk.

The Oath of Office was administered to and made and subscribed by Cde. Janet Jagan.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER**Welcome to New Member**

The Speaker: Comrades and hon. Member, I wish on behalf of Members and myself to welcome back to Parliament Cde. Janet Jagan and to extend our best wishes to her.[Applause].

Office of the Leader of the Opposition

I have been informed that the office of Leader of the Opposition was vacated by the hon. Member, Mr. Feilden Singh and that Cde. Cheddi Jagan was appointed to be Leader of the Opposition with effect from 1st June, 1976. On behalf of the Members of the National Assembly and myself, I congratulate Cde. Jagan on his appointment and extend best wishes to him.
[Applause]

Office of the Parliamentary Secretary

I have been informed that Cde. Corbin who was a Parliamentary Secretary in the Office of the Prime Minister was appointed a Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Education and Social

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National Assembly

2 – 2.10 p.m.

Development with effect from 1st June, 1976. We extend our best wishes to Cde. Corbin on his new appointment. [**Applause**]

Leave to Members

Leave has been granted to the Cde. Prime Minister for today, to Cde.Reid up to the end of June, to Cdes.Hoyte and Kennard and the hon. Member Mr. Feilden Singh for today, and to Cde. Narbada Persaud for three weeks from 9th June.

Death of Speaker of Grenada

Since our last Sitting, I received a communication from Grenada informing me of the death of the Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Parliament of Grenada, the hon. R.C.P. Moore and on behalf of our National Assembly I sent a cable expressing our shock at the news and conveying our deepest sympathy to the relatives of the Speaker.

PRESENTATIONS OF PETITIONS

PRIVATE BILL

MORAVIAN MISSION COUNCIL

Cde. Speaker, I beg to present a Petition on behalf of the Moravian Mission Council, seeking to have introduced in the Assembly, a Private Bill to incorporate the Provincial Board of the Moravian Church in Guyana.

The Speaker: The Clerk will read the Petition.

The Clerk read the Petition as follows:

PETITION

To: The Honourable Members of the National Assembly in Guyana.

The humble petition of the Moravian Mission Council respectfully sheweth:

1. That your Petitioner is a body corporate incorporated in Guyana under the Moravian Mission Council Incorporation Ordinance, Chapter 218.

2. That by the said Ordinance all property in Guyana acquired by or given to the Moravian Church in Guyana vest in Your Petitioner in trust for the use and benefit of the Moravian Church and provision is made therein for the administration thereof.
3. That on the 17th day of May, 1971, a new body was formed called “The Provincial Board of the Moravian Church in Guyana” to carry on the work formerly carried on by the Moravian Mission Council.
4. That Your Petitioner is desirous of promoting a Bill to incorporate the Provincial Board of the Moravian Church in Guyana to hold the property in Guyana of the Moravian Church and for purposes in connection therewith.
5. That the objects of the Bill are to incorporate the Provisional Board of the Moravian Church in Guyana to replace Your Petitioner and to provide for other related and incidental matters thereto which are considered desirable and expedient in the interests of the Moravian Church in Guyana.
6. That the provisions of the Bill have been approved by the world wide Moravian Board.
7. That a copy of the Bill is hereto annexed.
8. That Your Petitioner humbly requests that the Honourable Members of the National Assembly be pleased to permit the introduction of the Bill to enact the same.

Wherefore Your Petitioner as in duly bound will every pray.

Dated the 12th day of May, 1976.

(sgd.) C. Richmond
Joseph Johnson
Members
The Moravian Mission Council.

...

Question -

“That in accordance with Standing Order No. 57 (4), the Promoters be allowed to proceed with the Bill”,

put, and agreed to.

The Speaker: The Promoters may proceed accordingly.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following Papers were laid:

- (1) (a) Review of the Operations of the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund for the year 1975.
- (b) Reports and Audited Accounts of the Guyana Telecommunications Corporation for the years ended 31st December, 1972 and 31st December, 1973.

[The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House on behalf of the Prime Minister]
- (2) State Pension Order 1976 (No. 47) made under Section 4 of the State Pensions Act, Chapter 27:04, on the 2nd of June, 1976, and published in the Gazette on 12th of June, 1976. **[The Minister of Finance]**

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS – FIRST READING

The following Bill was introduced and read the First time:

Co-operative Financial Institutions Bill 1976
Bill No. 9/1976. **[The Minister of Finance]**

PUBLIC BUSINESS

MOTIONS

DECLARING VACANT THE SEATS OF MEMBERS OF THE ASSEMBLY

“Be it resolved that this National Assembly recommends that steps be taken to amend the Constitution of Guyana to provide for declaring vacant the seats of Members of the Assembly who cease to support the Party on whose list they were elected to the Assembly. **[The Leader of the Opposition]**”

The Leader of the Opposition (Cde. C.B. Jagan): Cde. Speaker, this Motion standing in my name is being dealt with in this House and not for the first time. Way back in the late ‘40s or

early '50s, this question was raised but then it received the same fate as an application by the state of Arizona to enter into the United States union.

The Speaker: Cde. Leader of the Opposition, are you speaking on the Motion substantively?

Cde. C.B. Jagan: Yes.

The Speaker: You will have to move it and you will have to have a seconder.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud seconded.

The Speaker: You may proceed now.

Cde. C.B. Jagan: As I was saying, this Motion received the same fate as an application for admission by the State of Arizona to the United States union. When that application was presented, there was in the application a constitutional provision for the recall of judges. President Taft on seeing this measure vetoed the enabling Bill and remarked that the provision was inconsistent with republicanism. In those days of colonialism – I refer to the late '40s and early '50s – recall was regarded to be inconsistent with monarchism. Today we have a different situation in the country and I hope that is measure will receive the full support of all the Members of this House.

Recall is based on two, what I consider to be, fundamental concepts: one is the question of democracy and, secondly, the concept of morality: First of all, the concept of democracy. If a people were to elect and have the sovereign right to place persons in the Parliament to speak on their behalf, *ipso facto*, it seems that those people should also have the same right to remove such an individual, if they are dissatisfied with his representation, especially if he has gone against some of the things which he had enunciated to the people when he sought their mandate.

This providing of recall, therefore, has been incorporated in many constitutions most notably in the constitutions of the socialist states, but even certain Western countries, the Scandinavian countries, for instance, have incorporated this in their constitutions. In the United States of America, while it is not part and parcel of the Federal Constitution, the principle of recall, initiative and referendum, has also been incorporated in the constitutions of several State legislatures. I understand from a book which was written during the War that at that time recall was applicable in over one thousand municipalities and in more than twelve States. Public officials and State officials were subject to recall. In fact, only two days ago, I read in one of our papers that some officials in the United States had been removed by the recall.

The other principle to which I refer is the moral principle, that is, that if individuals are elected on the basis of either a party programme or a manifesto which they had put out to the electorate, and subsequently they decide to depart from the policies expressed in the party programs or in their personal manifesto then, it seems, it becomes a moral question and as such those who have chosen such an individual must certainly have the right to remove such an individual.

Well, sir, we have had experiences from time to time in this House where persons elected on a party ticket subsequently either crossed the Floor or remained on the same side of the House but refused to obey the Whip of the party on whose ticket they are elected.

It behoves this House to deal with this matter from the two positions I have stated, the democratic principle and the moral principle, and to support it.

The Motion speaks of declaring vacant the seats of members who cease to support the party on whose lists they were elected to the Assembly. Normally in single member constituencies, the procedure is somewhat different from what is suggested here and that is that a certain percentage of the electorate can sign a petition requesting the recall of the member whom they had elected and, once a goodly number of petitioners have signed such a requisition, then a new election is held, a run-off election as it is called, and if the individual who was elected loses the run-off election, then he automatically vacated his seat.

2.20 p.m.

Under the constitution, we no longer have single member constituencies. Under the Proportional Representation system, especially the list system of P.R. where the whole country has become, so to speak, one constituency, it is not possible to adopt that procedure and so the procedure which I propose should be, I think, accepted by the House, that is, that the representative of the list should be given the right to declare the seat of a person vacant if he and the party which he leads, considers that such a member or members cease to support the party.

This principle already has had recognition in this House in another way. Individuals have been elected on the basis of going to the electorate on a Party list, with a Party programme and, therefore, they have collective responsibility to that Party. If they do not abide by the aims, wishes, policies of the Party on whose ticket they were elected, then they should be removed from the House.

This principle was raised for the first time in 1968 when provision was made for the representatives of the list to select names at random anywhere in the list of fifty-three candidates. You will recall, sir, that in 1964 the procedure was different. The representative of the list had to choose the persons in order or priority and the sequence in which they were listed. This was changed in 1968 and the argument for that was that all the individuals who were there and those who were elected, were elected on the basis of a Party programme, elected by the people who voted for them, not as individuals, but as a Party.

Thus, keeping in line with that same procedure and practice, I propose that the same should be done on this question of recall, that is, that the representative of the list should be authorised to withdraw, to declare vacant the seat of any member, or members, if such member, or members, ceases to support the Party.

As I said, I do not think this is a controversial issue, I think it is based on sound principles and I commend this Motion to the Members of the House.

The Speaker: Hon. Member Mrs. DaSilva.

Mrs. DaSilva: Mr. Speaker, “Be it resolved that this Assembly recommend that steps be taken to amend the Constitution of Guyana to provide for declaring vacant the seats of Members of this Assembly who cease to support the Party on whose list they were elected to this Assembly”. This Motion, quoted verbatim from the Official Report of the Parliamentary Debates, was moved by Dr. Fenton Ramsahoye and debated in this Parliament on the 15th November, 1966. This Motion appears at page 935 in the Official Report of the Parliamentary Debates of 15th November, 1966.

The Motion standing in the name of the Leader of the Opposition, Dr. Cheddi Jagan, reads almost exactly the same. There are just three small differences which I will mention, not because they change the substances of the Motion or the matter, but merely for the record. The three are that in front of the word “Assembly” the words “the National” now appears and further down this Motion speaks of “Members of the Assembly” while Dr. Ramsahoye’s Motion referred to “Members of this Assembly”. Those are three small matters of no importance but just to show that this debate took place almost ten years ago. So much has happened in ten years. We have certainly got to give credit to Dr. Jagan and the P.P.P. for perseverance for they certainly believe in the old saying, “If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again”.

At the General Elections in 1964, the People’s National Congress received 96,657 votes and were allocated under the P.R. system, 22 seats. The P.P.P received 109,332 votes and was allocated 24 seats. The United Force received 29,612 votes and were allocated 7 seats. The P.P.P., although they had the majority of seats, that is 24, could not form the Government. The P.N.C. being next on the list could only form the Government if they joined with the only remaining Party, the United Force, to form a coalition Government, for they were also in a similar position with the P.P.P. We, the small United Force, formed the balance and in the interest of the nation joined with them.

What happened after that, the ups and downs, the subsequent break-ups, is irrelevant to this debate and I do not propose to deal with that to-day. But what I propose to deal with and what is most important coming out of that coalition is that in November, 1996, the Government,

comprising of the P.N.C. and the United Force, voted against Dr. Ramsahoye's Motion and the Motion was lost.

Ten years later, what do we hear? The P.N.C. Government with 37 Members the P.P.P., the major Opposition with 14 members, at last making their appearance after three years, and small United Force with 2 Members. Again, sir, may I say how pleased we are that the P.P.P. – this is our first debate since they took their seats on the 24th May – are here again to share and help in the work of the Opposition and form the Government of Guyana which should rule – a point which I shall deal with a little later on – in the interest of all the people of Guyana.

2.30 p.m.

My Leader is unfortunately not here today as he has been confined to bed on his doctor's order but on his behalf and mine I welcome Dr. Jagan and his colleagues and particularly Mrs. Janet Jagan who is here for the first time since Independence. We look forward to working with them in the interest of all the people of Guyana. Make no mistake about it, if the P.P.P. proposes a measure in the interest of all the nation that party will get our support. If it does not appear to us that it is so we shall vote against it.

We heard Dr. Jagan talk about democracy and moral issues. Parliamentary democracy and the role of the Opposition in Parliament we have kept going for the past three years and we have left the doors open for the members of the P.P.P. to take up their seats. Had we not done so, one wonders what might have happened. One hesitates to speculate on what could have happened. Let those who chastised and ridiculed us think again.

Now, back in 1966 when this Motion was first brought before this House for debate, brilliant arguments for and against were put up both by the mover of the Motion, Dr. Fenton Ramsahoye, and the then Attorney General and Minister of State, the hon. S.S. Ramphal.

This is a very tricky and very ticklish Motion to debate for at first glance one feels that is only right that a man who crosses the Floor is nothing but a traitor, disloyal and unworthy to be

allowed to retain his seat in the Parliament of Guyana. He has been guilty of most despicable act and betrayed his party and the people who put him there. One feels that it is right and proper that the representative of the list should have the “right to recall” and the erring M.P should vacate his seat in Parliament.

But this Motion is very deep, far-reaching and serious one and what at first glance would appear to be the obvious answer, on careful thinking proves not to be so. It is merely taking the line of least resistance for there is the other side of the coin.

When a person is elected to Parliament, when the hullabaloo and the shoutings of elections have died down and that person has taken his seat, he is in the Parliament of Guyana not to serve a particular political party – not even the political party to which he belongs – but he is a servant of the people of Guyana. We are here to serve all the people of Guyana, not just our own party members and those who have voted for us.

Sir, with your permission I would like to digress for a moment and read the first paragraph of the opening prayer which we have just said and which we say at the beginning of every Sitting of Parliament.

“Almighty God, we who are here gathered together, do mostly humbly beseech Thee to guide us in all our consultations so that we may together build land where knowledge is free, where the mind is without fear and the head is held high, and where words come from the depth of truth.”

These words are taken from the Indian Poet, Rahindranath Tagore, and if I might be allowed to be personal I would like to say here how touched and proud I was as a Guyanese, when last November with my friends, the hon. Cammie Ramsaroop, Margaret Ackman and Mr. Maurice Henry, we had the privilege of being at the C.P.A. Conference in India and these words were sung by the All India Radio and T.V. Choir as part of the cultural show so graciously put on by the Government of India for the entertainment of delegates. I was very touched and proud to be a Guyanese and to have our prayers used on that occasion. It brought back to me, sir, more

than ever, the seriousness of these words. If all the members of this House took to heart, really lived and conducted the business of this Parliament and our duty towards our fellow Guyanese in keeping with the spirit of that prayer, then there is hope for Guyana yet.

As I said, we are all here representing all the people of Guyana. But who chooses us, or to use the correct words “extracts” the names from the lists?” The representative on the list. In that man’s hands rests all the power of putting a person in Parliament. No one, but no one, be it the Leader – unless, of course, he is also the representative on the list – be it the party’s Executive or anyone else, can sign that list of names for members of Parliament to be accepted by the Chief Elections Officer except the representative on the list.

We know, of course, as in the case of my party – and the other two party claims the same thing – that the persons are chose on the advice of the Executive Committee – or whatever form of designation they give their leading members. But in the final analysis, it is the representative on the list who signs the form and the names appearing above that man’s signature are the ones that are accepted. One might argue that he is bound in duty to submit the names as supplied by his Executive but in the final analysis if he so desires, if he is unscrupulous, he can submit other names of his choosing from the list and no one can do anything about it. The entire control and responsibility is in the hands of the representative on the list. Should that man decide to act unilaterally would be proof that there is something seriously wrong with the discipline of the party.

We are not here, however, in this House to rectify the failure of a party to keep its “colleagues in discipline” and these are words I quote from that same debate, words uttered by Mr. T.A. Sancho, P.N.C., Member of Parliament in the 1964 Parliament when he spoke on the 16th November, 1966, in the debate on a similar Motion. The words can be found at page 1007 of the Official Report of the 16th November, 1966.

But what is happening in this Motion? In spite of Dr. Jagan’s references to democracy and moral issues this is exactly what he wants to do, to change the Constitution. He has had so many resignations recently from his party hierarchy that he has now, I understand, arranged with the P.N.C. to give him the power to become a despot, to remove at his will, any member if he so

desires. This will necessarily entail a change in article 61 of the Constitution which sets out the ways in which a Member of Parliament should vacate his seat.

Why should we be a party to such an arrangement to give one man such power? Now that the P.N.C. has its two-thirds majority it does not need the P.P.P. M.Ps anymore to cross the Floor to help make the numbers to get the 37 they wanted. But we stand by what we said in 1966. It is wrong, to give one man such powers that he has complete control of all members of Parliament for the life of Parliament.

2.40 p.m.

The change would give power for the representative on the List to change M.P.s, but there would be no way in which the representative would be changed. So, for fear of losing their seats, all M.P.s would be mere “yes” men or women to the representative of the List. He would control them completely until the next election. Why should we change the Constitution merely to help Dr. Jagan control his members?

We all have of us, three Parties here in Parliament, suffered by members crossing the Floor. But we have to ask ourselves the very important question: Is it right that one person, the representative of the list, should have such absolute powers that he can, at his will, either refuse to submit a name for Parliament when directed to do so by his Executives, or, as is being asked in this Motion, recall an M.P. and fill the vacancy from the List either with or without the approval of his Executives when in the words of the Motion that persons “ceases to support the Party on whose list “he was” elected to the Assembly”. Remember that the erring M.P. can be replaced, but the representative on the List cannot. He remains there until the end of his service as a Member of Parliament unless he dies or falls under any of the other categories well spelt out whereby an M.P. ceases to be an M.P.

We are virtually establishing a dictatorship and placing complete control in the hands of one man, and this the United Force will never allow. We are seeing now before us absolute power – and the P.N.C. has this by its two –thirds majority – can corrupt. We are seeing before our very eyes so many of our Ministers becoming power drunk and ruling not in the interest of

the peoples of Guyana but in their own personal interest and in the interest of some of the people of Guyana. Are we to allow this Motion to pass knowing full well what the consequences might be?

We all here have in mind its application to Members who cross the Floor. That however is not the only way it can apply. What is to prevent the representative of the list recalling an M.P. – either with or without the approval of his Executive – if he feels that that person “ceases to support the Party on whose list they were elected to the Assembly” for such a reason as, say failing to carry out a Party assignment, falling down on his Party dues, not voting at an Executive meeting the way he or the majority of the executive voted or even through sheer spite? The examples can be numerous and are wide open to abuse by an unscrupulous representative of the List. We have always voted against any absolute control by one man.

We do this fully conscious of our duty to all the peoples of Guyana. By no stretch of imagination can this be deemed to be in their best interest, and I say, without any hesitation or doubt, that they would not wish it. If a full and proper report of what I say here today could be printed in our national press I am sure I would receive the full support of all the peoples of Guyana. We cannot support this Motion.

I do not know sir, if the P.N.C. members intend to Support this Motion or how they intend to vote. It is generally believed they will support this Motion. I do not know, but one understands this Motion was one of the conditions laid down by Dr. Jagan, that in consideration of its passing this Motion he would take up his party’s seats in Parliament. I do not know, I was not present at the talks between Dr. Jagan and the hon. Prime Minister. This, however, I do know that should the members of the P.N.C support this Motion, after having voted against it in 1966, they will publicly show the people of Guyana that having benefited by those who have swelled their numbers when they crossed the Floor thus giving them their two-thirds majority they no longer care about moral issues or democracy. What was wrong with this Motion in 1966 now suddenly becomes right in 1976. I wonder how this will appear to those who voted for them.

To end, sir, I should like to remind the members of the P.N.C. of their stand then I can do no better than to close my remarks by quoting the remarks of the then Attorney General, Mr. S.S. Ramphal, speaking on behalf of the P.N.C. Government during the debate in 1966. This appears in *The Parliamentary Debates, Official Report*, Tuesday, 15th November, 1966, at column 973 in concluding paragraph of the words of Mr. S.S. Ramphal speaking on behalf of the P.N.C. Government. This is what he said:

“This Motion, conceived as it was in pique and nurtured on misunderstanding, stands revealed for what it is – a political absurdity, masquerading as constitutional dogma. It does not deserve the support of hon. Members of this House and will not I hope, command it.”

The Speaker: Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud.

Cde. R.D. Persaud: Cde. Speaker, I wish to give unqualified support to the Motion and, in so doing, I want to adduce arguments to support the view that the People’s Progressive Party takes on this question.

The hon. Member who spoke before me obviously is a stranger to the provisions of the various Acts and Ordinances that govern Elections. For her information, I wish to point out her main error, and if that error is pointed out, and I am sure what I say is accurate, then her entire contribution to the debate falls to the ground.

In fact, the representative of any List can never become a Dictator. If we follow the principles upon which Members were elected to this National Assembly we will find that each Party presented a Manifesto to the electorate of this country and each candidate appearing on the List of Candidates subscribed and pledged to the electorate that he would, inside and outside of Parliament, fight for the realisation of the aims and objectives of the Manifesto. If that is so, then each Member elected to the Parliament on the basis of our own electoral system owes allegiance to the Party and to the electorate. To me these are inseparable.

2.50 p.m.

But more than that, Cde. Speaker, the list is put to the electorate in alphabetical order which in fact makes it clear to them that it is the Party and the representative of the list who must finally decide who will be chosen to enter the National Assembly. If that is so, then the electorate is clear on what the position is. Based on the provisions of the law as well as the programmes and policies put out by the respective Parties, the electorate voted at the Elections.

If, therefore, after such exercises, a person is chosen to enter the National Assembly and then subsequent to his or her entry to the Assembly, he or she ceases to support the Party –and ceasing to support the Party means ceasing to support the programme, the policy of the Party and many other things – then that person has no moral right thereafter to continue to sit in the Party, and the point is very well made by the comrade and who moved the Motive that it is collective responsibility. It will, in effect, mean that that person has broken the bond of collective responsibility and has chosen to be an individual.

As far as my memory goes, individual policies ended in 1947. That was the last time persons entered this Parliament on that basis. In 1953, it is true that the Constitution made provision for individual candidates and we had a small number. I think we had a maximum of three persons: Kendall, Lee and Carter. If that is so, it would, in effect, mean that the country, the electorate rejected, by a substantial voice, individual candidature at the General Election and voted in support of Party.

Cde. Speaker, since 1953, we had 1957 and we have seen consistently 1957, 1961, 1964 and 1973, people voting for Parties as distinct from individuals. What the hon. Member wants us to do in this day and time is revert to the days of 1947 when the rich, the millionaires, those who made up the sophisticated society and those who were far away from the wishes and feelings of the masses of this country –

I hope that this Government- because I know the position of the Party – will never ever again join with the elements who wish to set back the march of history of this country but that it will move forward progressively to a better country and a better place for all to live and that, as the comrade puts it, we will have dictatorship of the proletariat.

What we had then was dictatorship of the few over the broad masses. The whole process of political changes in this country aims, and must continue to aim, at ending that state even if it exists in a small measure in the country today. And that is why we say laws must be so made. Laws are laws and the Courts are governed by laws –just or unjust, they must interpret the provisions as they exist. But the provisions of the law can also allow such a situation to continue. The People's Progressive Party will fight to repeal those laws and to remove them from the statute book of our country.

I hope therefore that these words of my positive contribution to the Motion will put the hon. Member in a better position to understand 1976 politics as distinct from 1947 politics because she is speaking of 1947, of the past, not of the present.

Cde. Speaker, what is the position of the P.P.P. on this Motion? Not in 1976 but ten years ago, the People's Progressive Party initiated the Motion through one of its Members, Dr. Fenton Ramsahoye. It was our Motion. How we felt then, we still feel so today because the People's Progressive Party, unlike others, has a policy of consistency and not inconsistency. I stand here honourably and with pride to support the Motion so ably moved today by the Cde. Leader of the Opposition.

On the question of one man becoming a dictator, let me put it clearly because I think I am conversant with the Act. If at any stage, the leader of any list loses the confidence of the majority of members who make up the list, the majority of members can so declare – the provision are clear – to say who is the next person that commands the confidence of the majority of members. And for the information of the hon. Member, let me also point out that if the Leader of the Opposition loses the confidence of the fourteen members, the fourteen members have that democratic right to say who should be the Leader. **[Laughter]**

The hon. Member definitely has no grounds in so far as her argument is concerned – and this is her main argument – that the Motion will give too much power or too great a power to one person who becomes a virtual dictator. Now that she understands the legal position, I hope that her vote will be in favour of the Motion because the democratic process is still there.

Proceeding from there, I want to say this afternoon that morality is the most significant consideration to this Motion. And let me say that we have confidence, strong confidence in our Members that sit with the People's Progressive Party.

If the United Force in 1966 had heeded the call of the People's Progressive Party when the Motion was moved, when they parted company with the P.N.C., they would have come out in one piece and not broken up in fragments and ended up in several pieces. The leader of the United Force at the time lacked vision. He opposed the Motion. He did not do what needed to be done then to protect the democratic principle. He allowed his Members of Parliament to rattle him and to rattle the Party. Therefore, we must set the record straight, not for today's parliamentarians but for the future of this country so that once and for all. "red rats", immoral individuals – and renegades as they are called in political terms, will not be permitted to desecrate the sanctity of this Chamber.

3 p.m.

Political desecration is the worst type of desecration because they would have undermined and betrayed those who put them into this House, and this House has not been without experience of such elements in the past, and, probably, in the present, as it is presently constituted. Therefore, on the moral principle, this Motion must be strongly supported.

We move this Motion, not as the hon. Member said, to protect our members; and we move it because we believe strongly that it is a principle thing to do. In fact, if after the passing of this Motion comrades are persuaded to think morally, now, and even in subsequent Parliaments, then there will be no need to enforce the provisions of the legislation because, if you no longer subscribe to the policies and principles of the party which brought you to this House, then the most honourable thing to do is to hand your resignation to the Speaker of the Assembly. The Motion will then remain on the statute book, nobody will have to enforce it.

I want to say this afternoon that we know of too many persons in the past who have shown absolute disregard for the people who from time to time reposed confidence in them and put them in high offices and high positions. If we are to set our records straight and our path

straight to true socialist democracy, we must start now weeding out the rats, the turncoats, the renegades, and the immoral ones, who have got a legacy of betrayal of the people.

Roget, in his book, **Thesaurus**, and even more than that, described the renegade this way: “Deserter of party or party principles, a turncoat, rat, deserter, backslider”. He also gives the phrase, “slippery as an eel.” It seems to me that some individuals cannot be described adequately unless the full and total description of the **Thesaurus** is used. This afternoon the People’s Progressive Party seeks this opportunity to point out to this honourable House, to the nation, and to all those who aspire to high office and aspire to enter the highest forum of the land, that is entering that forum they must maintain strict morality. They must understand that they owe a duty to the people and to the party and if they recognize this duty and this fact, then it is clear that there will be no need to enforce the provisions that will follow the Motion. I therefore support the Motion and state clearly the intention of the Motion. The intention of the Motion is to give the representative of each list of candidates the right, if he loses confidence in that Member, to remove the Member from the Parliament. The question of the democratic process undoubtedly must have been provided in the constitutions of all the political parties that make up the House. I therefore strongly support the Motion.

The Speaker: Cde. Minister of Foreign Affairs and Justice.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs and Justice (Cde. Wills): Cde. Speaker, I rise with great trepidation to speak on this Motion, trepidation because I am thinking of what place I might subsequently have in the history of Guyana and appalled at the thought that one day Cde. DaSilva might quote me. That is what is worrying me because I can think of no bigger burden to take to one’s grave, no bigger burden to take to this hereafter, if you believe in it, which I don’t, than to carry the burden of being quoted by Mrs. DaSilva. I sympathise with my friend over there, the hon. Member who found argument in her speech. I have dissected it and studied it, examined it closely and divided it, and found no argument, but then he found it. I suppose that he is more generous to ladies than I am. But my generosity does not extend to stupidity.

The chief thing I want to say here is this. First of all, let me say personally – I was not here on the previous occasion – and now on behalf of the Government and the party, that we are pleased to hear the first substantial contribution to a debate in this House made by the Cde. Leader of the Opposition. We wish to congratulate him. I hold and I am sure all of us will hold that his contribution to the political awareness of Guyanese people is one that will go down in the history of Guyana.

Having said that, I cannot, however, agree with all that has been said because of a personal difficulty. I confess readily that I think that this kind of Whitehall democracy in which we are indulging is one of the most crippling constraints to development, and all these niceties of hon. Members, and what have you, are things which I personally would rather do without, but then, we have them handed down from the colonial days. What is intriguing is to find that people are arguing about the Constitution. The hon. Member Mrs. DaSilva is speaking about changes in the Constitution as though that is appalling and that is the last possible thing that can happen. **[Interruption]** The inference is clear. But then I am always guilty of misunderstanding what ladies say. I confess it readily. I am always guilty of it.

The thing is this: the people of Guyana are very wise people. You must not fool them. The people of Guyana are also very aware. You will observe that nobody has ever crossed the floor from any socialist party to a right-wing party. You will observe that the people of Guyana are very much aware that whatever clothes they wear, they do not want to continue wearing the clothes of reaction and clothes of right-wingism.

The problem of the United Force is that the few misguided persons they seem to have congealed around them in the past have been dwindling day by day. I believe this is their half-day because I see half their representation here. **[Interruption]** I was not aware of anybody being sick but I take a lady's word for most things. We must not let ourselves in this place, if we have to retain it, indulge in mental acrobatics, intellectual calisthenics, about what happened in the past and what will happen in the future.

We must realise – I agree with what was said by the hon. Member of the Opposition – that this is a new era. The politics of 1976 are not the politics of 1947 or even 1964. We have

gone past all the backlog of Independence politics and the hemming and hawings of Duncan Sandys and what have you. It is a new era.

The bases given to the support of this Motion are not to my mind the real bases. The bases given are (a) democracy and (b) morality. What I find difficult about that is that there is an implied assumption that democracy is moral but it is separate and distinct from morality. I would have thought that the one basis would include everything.

The basis is that nowadays everything must be excluded which does not tend toward, and everything must be promoted which tends toward, a socialist society – the important thing is discipline. Discipline is implicit in the formation of a socialist society and at all levels discipline must be encouraged and fostered and postulated.

It is not for anybody to say another party will be a dictator if a measure is passed or a Bill is accepted. We cannot interfere with the internal workings, so I am told. I am not very good at Whitehall democracy, with how other parties run their own thing, how they choose to elect people, how they choose to nominate persons, or give a nod to individuals. That is their business and you cannot be a moral judge and sit down in judgement on the processes under which they choose to put people up or refuse to. It is not, therefore, open to you to criticise a Motion of this kind on the ground that it will make the hon. Leader of the Opposition a dictator. That is for his party, not for you. You make sure that your party does not become a dictatorship of two because I understand from a reliable authority that all the membership of the United Force, at least the membership we know of, is two. It is very significant. **[Interruption]** I think I am behaving better than I thought I would.

There is an apprehension about crossing the floor. The most outstanding crosser of the floor has been a reactionary and I need not remind you of Churchill. He came into Parliament on a Conservative ticket. He saw Lloyd George might get power so he crossed over to Lloyd George and he worked with Lloyd George. He then saw that Lloyd George would not retain power so in 1922 he went back to the Conservatives and became Chancellor of the Exchequer. He stayed with them for a while then he was removed and not taken into the Government of National Coalition, as it was called. After the war, when Chamberlain, the Conservative leader

behaved so badly, he formed the Government of National Coalition but when Chamberlain died he made sure he became leader of the Conservative Party.

3.10 p.m.

That kind of gymnastics and acrobatics is a right-wing thing and should be condoned. I think that my knowledge of history is rather a little bit fuller than that of the Cde. Member of the Opposition. I think she should not venture into terrain with which I know she is unfamiliar and when, I am quite sure, the compendium of her knowledge amounts to just a little above zero. {Interruption} I hasten to assure you, Cde Speaker, that I do not advert to the comrade of the Opposition. My criticism is not based on the fact that she is of the female gender.

This Motion which is being raised by the hon. Leader of the Opposition is a Motion which any person of socialist persuasion can endorse. We endorse it. We say that it will require amendments of three Bills. It requires an amendment to the Constitution, it requires amendment to the Municipal and District Councils Act and it requires amendment to the Local Government Act.

About the question of amending the Constitution, I think that Cde. Speaker and Members are aware of my views on the Constitution. Constitutions vary with circumstances. Certainly one could not expect that an Independence Constitution drafted in the cut-and-trust of constitutional debate, hammered out in the compromises required to be made for Independence, could survive to today when the whole essence of our political culture is economic development and socialist thrust. It could not survive. Therefore, far from being perturbed about a new amendment of the Constitution, I am looking forward to the day when we will have a new Constitution because this sort of Constitution is irrelevant to the present circumstances of Guyana. I hope that if we amend the Constitution some role could be found for the Member of the United Force, even if it means a quasi crossing of some kind of Floor somewhere.

Our problem is that we have to draft these Bills and we will have to lay them before Parliament. The Cde. Leader of the Opposition must not interpret anything sinister about it. We

(Cde. Wills continued)

shall do this with expedition and dispatch. We have a backlog and we will try to get it before Parliament as quickly as possible so as to get it on the statute book. That is the assurance I can give as Minister of Justice. We on this side of the House – and I speak on behalf of the Government and the people – support the Motion.

Cde. Speaker, I do not like to speak for a long time. I am a very busy person, but I would like to reply to something which is worthy of a reply. I agree with the Cde. Leader of the Opposition, I agree with Cde. Persaud. I also object to what was said and I disagree with what was said by the hon. Member. But there was nothing worth disagreeing about really, because the language was not particularly happy, the substance was irrelevant and the insights were insights that were antediluvian. They certainly do not belong to the modern age. With those few words and hoping not to be accused of attacking the United Force when they are only partly represented, I take my seat.

Cde. C.B. Jagan (replying): Cde. Speaker, first of all I wish to address my thanks to the hon. Minister of Justice for his contribution to the debate and his assurance of support for the Motion. I wish to assure, also, the hon. Member Cde. DaSilva of the United Force – I hope that I can call her comrade. She objects, so I shall say the hon. Member Mrs. DaSilva – that there is no question of dictatorship so far as the P.P.P is concerned. In fact, I should like to say, for her information, that before the Members were selected, although I, as the representative of the list, have that power to elect them the selection was made by the leadership of the P.P.P. And if there were to be any removals, I can assure her that even though it would be exercised through me, it will be done in the same way, that is, democratically, the Party having considered the matter at its highest level.

Perhaps the hon. Member does not understand how a Marxist/Leninist Party operated and that is probably here the confusion is. She first has to be forgiven for this because in bourgeois politics and bourgeois parties, even though they talk a lot about democracy, they all run dictatorially. The leaders generally make the selections, as they do, for instance, in the Conservative Party in England. But Marxists parties have the principle of democratic centralism,

centralism for the purpose of discipline which we heard the Minister of Justice speak about as being essential for socialism.

Democracy also is the fundamental question relating to socialism, and this is how the P.P.P. operates. The hon. Member need not have any fear. She spoke of an unscrupulous representative of the list. Maybe she was thinking of her own Leader, the Leader who, as a representative of the Liberator Party list, refused to carry out the behest of the Liberator Party and decided to come into the House in the name of the United Force. [Mrs. DaSilva: “No, we are here as the Liberator Party.”] [Laughter] That makes the confusion more confounded and the morality even more immoral. However, I think I have made the point and I need not dwell on that any longer.

I think that this is an important question of principle and as the Minister of Justice said we are now in a new era. We are in an era of socialism, not only when socialism is winning out throughout the world as a system, but when more and more the Guyanese people are looking forward to the emergence of a socialist society.

In this sense socialism will have to be built on principles, principles of democracy, principles of ethics, principles of morality. We may have had all kinds of reasons before in this same House – behavior perhaps – but we were not at this present stage, when we are talking about socialism, when the whole country expects to go ahead with socialism. Therefore, we need to begin thinking not just of material aspect, but of ethics and morality because these are inseparable from simply creating a society of material well-being.

What we need is a new man, a new type of man, a moral man. If that is to be so, if that is part and parcel of socialism, then the time must come when we must begin to do it in the highest chamber of this land, the National Assembly.

Attempts have failed in the past, in the 40s and in the early 50s and even as late as in 1966. The hon. Member from the United Force referred to the 1966 failure. She referred to the then Attorney General, Mr. Ramphal, but Mr. Ramphal is not here. Perhaps he is now in a place

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to which he really belongs, because with those quotations being thrown at his face, he would have been out of place in Guyana.

Let us go forward not looking back but looking at the situation dialectically. This is also a principle of the philosophy we believe in, Marxism/Leninism. But one must view things on different occasions depending on all the factors and all the circumstances. 1976 is not 1950, it is not 1966. I hope that all the Members of this House will support this Motion. [Applause].

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

The Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

MOTION

DECLARING VACANT THE SEATS OF MEMBERS OF MUNICIPALITIES

Cde. C.B. Jagan: I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

“Be it resolved that this National Assembly recommends that steps be taken to amend the respective laws of Guyana to provide for declaring vacant seats of Members of Municipalities and other Local Authorities who cease to support the Party on whose list they were elected to the Municipalities and Local Authorities.
“

Question proposed.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

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3.10 – 3.20 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House (Cde. Ramsaroop): I beg to move the adjournment of this House to Wednesday 23rd June, 1976 when it is proposed, Cde . Speaker, to do the Second Reading and remaining stages of the Co-operative Financial Institutions Bill, 1975.

Adjourned accordingly at 3:25 p.m.
