

National Assembly Debates

**PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF
THE FIRST SESSION (2001) OF THE EIGHTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA
UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE RE-
PUBLIC OF GUYANA**

Part I

9TH SITTING

2.00 PM

Wednesday, 27th June, 2001

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (68)

Speaker (1)

The Hon. Hari N. Ramkarran, S. C., M. P. - *Speaker of the National Assembly*

Members of the Government - People's Progressive Party/Civic (34)

- The Hon. Samuel A.A. Hinds, M.P. - *Prime Minister and Minister of Public Works and Communications (Absent- performing the functions of the office of President)*
- The Hon. Reepu Daman Persaud, O.R., J.P., M.P. - *Minister of Parliamentary Affairs*
- The Hon. Clement J. Rohee, M.P. - *Minister of Foreign Trade and International Co-operation (Absent)*
- The Hon. Harripersaud Nokta, M.P. - *Minister of Local Government and Regional Development*
- The Hon. Gail Teixeira, M.P. - *Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport*
- The Hon. Dr. Henry B. Jeffrey, M.P. - *Minister of Education*
- The Hon. Saisnarine Kowlessar, M.P. - *Minister of Finance*
- The Hon. Shaik K.Z. Baksh, M.P. - *Minister of Housing and Water*
- The Hon. Navindranauth O. Chandarpal, M.P. - *Minister of Agriculture (Region No. 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)*
- The Hon. J. Ronald Gajraj, M.P. - *Minister of Home Affairs (Region No. 3 - Essequibo Islands/West Demerara)*
- The Hon. Rev. Dr. Ramnauth D.A. Bisnauth, M.P. - *Minister of Labour, Human Services and Social Security (Absent)*

The Hon. Clinton C. Collymore, M.P.	- Minister in the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development
The Hon. Satyadeow Sawh, M.P.	- Minister of Fisheries, Other Crops and Livestock (Region No. 5 - Mahaica/Berbice)
*The Hon. S. Rudolph Insanally, O.R., C.C.H., M.P.	- Minister in the Office of the President with responsibility for Foreign Affairs (Absent)
*The Hon. Doodnauth Singh, S.C., M.P.	- Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs
The Hon. Dr. Jennifer R.A. Westford, M.P.	- Minister of the Public Service
The Hon. C. Anthony Xavier, M.P.	- Minister of Transport and Hydraulics
The Hon. Bibi S. Shadick, M.P.	- Minister in the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security (Region No. 3 - Essequibo Islands/ West Demerara)
**The Hon. Manzoor Nadir, M.P.	- Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce
The Hon. Carolyn Rodrigues, M.P.	- Minister of Amerindian Affairs
The Hon. Dr. Leslie S. Ramsammy, M.P.	- Minister of Health (Absent)
Mr S. Feroze Mohamed, M.P.	- Chief Whip
Mr Cyril C. Belgrave, C.C.H., J.P., M.P.	- (Region No. 4 - Demerara/Mahaica) (Absent)
Mr. Donald R. Ramotar, M.P.	
Mr Husman Alli, M.P.	- (Region No. 7 - Cuyuni/Mazaruni)
Mr. Komal Chand, C.C.H., J.P., M.P.	
Mrs Indranie Chandarpal, M.P.	
Mr Bernard C. DeSantos, S.C., M.P.	- (Region No. 4 - Demerara/Mahaica) (Absent)
Mrs Shirley V. Edwards, J.P. M.P.	
Mr Odinga N. Lumumba, M.P.	
Mr Heeralall Mohan, M.P.	- (Region No. 2 - Pomeroun/ Supenaam)
Mr Ramesh C. Rajkumar, M.P.	- (Region No. 6 - East Berbice/ Corentyne)
Mr Kumkaran Ramdas, M.P.	
Mr Khemraj Ramjattan, M.P.	- (Region No. 6 - East Berbice/ Corentyne)
Dr Bheri S. Ramsaran, M.D., M.P.	
Mrs Philomena Sahoye-Shury, C.C.H., J.P., M.P.	- Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Housing and Water
Mrs Pauline R. Sukhai, M.P.	- (Region No. 1 - Barima/Waini)

* Non-Elected Minister

** Elected Member from The United Force

Members of the Opposition (30)

(i) People's National Congress/Reform (27)

Mr. Hugh Desmond Hoyte, S.C., M.P.	- <i>Leader of the Opposition</i> (Absent)
Mr. Robert H. O. Corbin, M. P.	
Mr. Winston S. Murray, C.C.H., M.P.	
Mrs Clarissa S. Riehl, M.P.	- <i>Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly</i>
Mr E. Lance Carberry, M.P.	- <i>Chief Whip</i>
Mr Ivor Allen, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.2-Pomeroon/Supenaam) (Absent - on Leave)</i>
Mrs. Deborah J. Backer, M.P.	
Mr. Deryck M.A. Bernard, M.P.	
Mr. C. Stanley Ming, M.P.	
Mr. Raphael G. C. Trotman, M.P.	
Mr Vincent L. Alexander, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.4-Demerara/Mahaica)</i>
Mr. Andy Goveia, M.P.	
Mrs. Volda A. Lawrence, M.P.	
Dr Dalglish Joseph, M.D.,M.P.	- <i>(Region No.5-Mahaica (Berbice)</i>
Miss Amna Ally, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.10-Upper Demerara/ Berbice)</i>
Miss Sandra M. Adams, M.P.	
Mr. Jerome Khan, M.P.	
Dr George A. Norton, M.P.	
Miss Myrna E. N. Peterkin, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.4-Demerara/Mahaica)</i>
Mr. James K. McAllister, M.P	- <i>(Region No.3-Essequibo Islands West Demerara</i>
Miss Lurlene A. Nestor, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.4-Demerara/ Mahaica)</i>
Mr Abdul Kadir, J.P., M.P.	- <i>(Region No.10-Upper Demerara/ Berbice)</i>
Mr Ricky Khan, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.1 - Barima/Waini)</i>
Mrs. R. Bancroft, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.8 - Potaro/Siparuni)</i>
Mr Nasir Ally, J.P., M.P.	- <i>(Region No.6 - East Berbice/Corentyne)</i>
Miss Judith David, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.7-Cuyuni/Mazaruni)</i>
Miss Genevieve Allen, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.4 - Demerara/Mahaica)</i>

(ii) Guyana Action Party/Working People's Alliance Party (2)

Mrs Sheila V.A. Holder, M.P.	- <i>(Absent-on Leave)</i>
Mrs Shirley J. Melville, M.P.	- <i>(Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo)</i>

(iii) Rise, Organise and Rebuild Party (1)

Mr Ravindra Dev, M.P.

OFFICERS

Mr Frank A. Narain, C.C.H., Clerk of the National Assembly

Mr Sherlock E. Isaacs, Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly

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PRAYERS

The Clerk read the Prayers

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS ETC

By the **Speaker (Chairman of the Committee of Selection)**

*Minutes of the Proceedings of the 1st Meeting of the
Committee of Selection held on 26th June, 2001.*

PUBLIC BUSINESS

MOTION

MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 2001 (2001 BUDGET)

Assembly resumed the debate on the motion for the approval of the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2001.

The Speaker: Hon. Members, we will now resume the debate on the Budget for 2001. The first speaker for today is the Hon. Member, Mr Vincent Alexander.

Mr Vincent L. Alexander: Mr Speaker, Hon. Members of this House, I am indeed privileged to be able to speak on the Budget 2001.

Mr Speaker, before I go to my presentation, I wish to make three observations for corrections. Yesterday evening, a Member from the Opposite side of this House, sought to inform this House, that it was not true that stand-pipes were intended to be erected in De Kinderen under the provisions of the Budget. I don't know what was the Member's point of reference and I would like to bring to the House's attention for those who have not already read the document, the Third Volume, Reference 184 of the Budget, where, under Description of Project, it is specifically stated, the project entails the construction of roads at Belle Vue, Cornelia Ida, De Willed, Zeeburg, Goed Fortune and installation of stand-pipes at De Kinderen.

The second correction I would like to make, Mr Speaker, is in reference to another Member who intimated that the Chairman of the BV/Triumph Neighbourhood Democratic Council had been found guilty of an offence when . . . [*Interruption*]

The Speaker: I don't think the Hon. Member said that the person to whom he referred has been found guilty. The Hon. Member said, to my recollection, *is before the courts*. The Hon. Member did infer from that, that the person was guilty of corruption and the Hon. Member was corrected and had to withdraw that allegation.

Mr Vincent L. Alexander: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

The third matter which I wish to refer to, has to do with the Marketing Centre in East Berbice. This matter which is approximately eight years old has become a popular point of reference. Apparently there are no recent cases in this House, but I would like to make it clear that the person in question was brought before the Courts, and the Courts found that the person had committed no unlawful act.

Mr Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate

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the Hon Minister of Finance, Mr Saisnarine Kowlessar on his demeanor and his humility. He cannot be faulted for his exemplification of the demeanor of the President on the occasion of the President's address to this August House. Unfortunately, there have been significant departures on that side of the House from the President and the Hon Minister in teams of inclusivity and working together. In particular the contribution of the Hon Member, Mr Rajkumar of Berbice and Mr Ally of Bartica, made it quite clear that partiality and majoritarian dictatorship are the orders of the day. In the case of the Member, Mr Rajkumar, he made it clear, reiterated and emphasized that the Berbice Campus of the University of Guyana will become the University of Guyana. This may be argued by some to be hallowed rhetoric but the Capital Estimates of the Budget tells a story. It allocates \$ 225 million for capital works for the Berbice Campus and a mere \$30 million for the Turkeyen Campus. Mr Speaker, his revelation makes the PNC/Reform rallying's call to the rescue of the nation, even more relevant now than it was a few months ago.

On the other hand, the Hon Member, Mr Ally made it pellucidly clear that majoritarian dictatorship is well and alive, when he proclaimed that nothing that this side of the House has to say would make a difference and that the passing of a Budget was a foregone conclusion.

Mr Speaker, a few weeks ago, His Excellency the President addressed this House and his address was subsequently discussed in this House, and it was argued that the address was platitudinous and fell short of comprehensiveness and a common call, other than the call for us to work together. The responsive chorus at that time was,

wait for the Budget, it would be comprehensive and would provide all the answers.

Mr Speaker, it is sad to say that promise has been far from

fulfilled, even in the Budget.

The Budget falls short by virtue of its platitudinous nature and the sharp absence of ideational and pragmatic bases. On the platitudinous side, the Budget speaks about modernization of the economic infrastructure.

Mr Speaker, I must admit to rehabilitation and in some instances the construction of economic infrastructure. However, modernization is starkly lacking. For example, the Stelling Rehabilitation Programme saw the reconstruction of Stelling that are manual and antiquated in their operation. Not to mention, the airport where attempts at modernisation have left the sliding doors dysfunctional and the viewing lounge barren, like in its smell and appearance.

Mr Speaker, the Charity Wharf comes to mind and one of the few success stories in modernisation. In that case we seemed to have mastered the technology of submarine engineering.

Mr Speaker, from the ideational and programmatic prospective, one can hardly discern any coherent policy direction in the Budget.

On the contrary, the specific reference to Local Government, the Budget has just one paragraph and that paragraph is found under the heading other measures, which boldly states in parts and I quote:

Mr Speaker, \$254 million has been budgeted to assist Local Government Bodies in the execution of their programmes.

Mr Speaker, that is all that this Budget Speech says about Local Government. In addition to a phrase on Page 2 which states and I quote:

We need to integrate our Regions, towns, villages and communities;

Mr Speaker, this statement can hardly be considered as a policy or programmatic platform for Local Government. What is ironical is that at least two documents on which millions of dollars were spent, the **National Development Strategy** and the **CARICAN Report on the Government of Guyana Public Administration Project Regional Administration Phase II** do provide ideal national bases and programmatic platforms for budgetary allocations to Local Government. However, a perusal of the Budget would show that the provisions therein are intended to do the opposite to what is found in the two documents which I have mentioned.

Mr Speaker, the NDC underlines good governance - I repeat, *good governance* as a basis for the country's development. On page 7 it states and I quote:

It is now generally acknowledged that there can be little lasting and sustainable, social and economic development in the absence of good governance.

Mr Speaker, the National Development Strategy does not leave the understanding of good governance to chance. Among other elements, it opines that:

Good governance is characterized by participation and that participation occurs when citizens or their representatives possess adequate and equal opportunity to initiate discussions on issues which concern them, to be consulted on matters of national, regional, or provincial interest, to express their views and preferences on these issues and matters and to play a role in formulating the ultimate decisions.

Mr Speaker, the National Development Strategy did not restrict itself in identifying laudable and desirable principles. It surveyed the local situation, identified the problems and proposed solutions. In that regard, it concluded on Page 9:

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the current systems of Local and Regional Government do not lend themselves to meaningful participation.

In more definitive terms it states again:

the power to make decisions which impinge upon Region and village life rests almost entirely with the centre.

The NDC concludes:

There must therefore be a greater degree of decentralization to the Regional and Local authorities. Systems must be put in place which will empower the Regional authorities to make laws and impose local taxes.

Mr Speaker, it is exactly these things which the government refuses to do. For how long now, has the Mayor and City Council in Georgetown been requested that its revenue base be explained, so that it can have the resources to respond to the needs of the citizens of Georgetown and those of the thousands who visit Georgetown on a daily basis. This is only one example and I can already see running through the minds of my colleagues on the opposite side a retort about the PNC twenty-eight years, what did the PNC do for Local Government?

Such retorts are irrelevancies at this time. The PPP/Civic had twenty-eight years to critique the Local Government System, to determine what they would have done and they have had approximately nine years at least to embark on a particular policy direction. But alas! In 1999 seven years after the PPP/C Government came to power the CARICAN Consultants reported that RDC, NDCs, Municipalities and Villages are potentially development-based institutions. But they also reported the need for legislative reforms, along with the need for the granting of greater powers, responsibility and autonomy to Regional bodies, in that they reported the lack of consultations between the RDC and other Regional entities and Central Government.

Mr Speaker, it is policy, programmes and projects to respond to the maladies identified by the National Development Strategy and the CARICAN Report that one would have expected of the Budget but to the contrary what does one see? One sees centralization of expenditure and decision making, excluding or ignoring of local officials in the decision making process, marginalisation of the people's representatives who are not or who are perceived not to be PPP/Civic, marginalisation of constituencies which are not Pro-PPP, discrimination in the allocation of resources, victimisation of the administration of Local Government Projects and programmes, selective and unnecessary interference in the affairs of local bodies and the turning of a blind eye to recalcitrant local bodies because of their political affiliation.

Mr Speaker, many examples of these short comings as regressive and unpatriotic practices have already been given by my colleagues from Regions 1, 3, 5, 6 and 7. I am sure that other Regions and the Regional MP from those Regions will give shades of the same story. I will therefore restrict myself to Region 4 as I provide the evidence to support my early articulations.

Mr Speaker, the issue of Centralization and Expenditure and Decision Making: If one takes a closer look at the Budget under the capital provision, one would see \$18 million allocated for capital works, only \$1.129 million had been allocated to the Regions for the people's representative to execute projects in those Regions. A clear case of centralization of expenditure. We all know that Central Government Ministries should not spend much more time on policy formulation and monitor the implementation of projects and programmes. It is because of the amount of time they spent on the execution that we have the tremendous policy deficiency and problems with execution.

Apart from the fact, Mr Speaker, that this heavy concentration, heavy centralization, keeps the boys at the centre next to the kitty, we have the recent memories of the stone scam and the Mon Repos Sea

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Defence debacle. We understand what happens when the boys at the centre are so close to the kitty and why they are so reluctant to decentralise the expenditures .

Mr Speaker, not only are decisions and expenditure centralized, but even decisions of what should be done locally are centralized. For example, Region 4 requested \$174 million for capital, only \$79 million was granted and out of that \$79 million the Ministry inserted projects for Mon Repos, Bee Hive, Strathspey Primary School, Grove Craft Centre and Buxton/Friendship. These are all projects which were not proposed by the people's representatives of the Region but centralized decision making has seen the insertion of these projects by the central Ministry. Suffice it to say, Mr Speaker, that some of these projects qualify for inclusion under the Poverty Reduction Programme. When I exclude them from that programme much more is left close to the centre for discretionary allocation by the centre.

Mr Speaker, the aforementioned typifies the exclusion of local officials from the decision- making process and as a consequence leads to marginalisation of communities which are not perceived to be PPP/C oriented.

Mr Speaker, decisions on land selection in Region 4 for the last three to four years have excluded the PNC. There has been clear policy marginalisation, a clear policy of not facilitating good governance in the regard. Here are the elected representatives of the people who are totally ignored in a process that affects their lives and well being.

Mr Speaker, it is this same PPP/Civic which cries foul when they are included in committees in Region 4, but not allowed to chair those committees.

Mr Speaker, this marginalisation also occurs when Ministers from Central Government visit those areas with no reference or difference to the regional or local officials and proceed to dole out

funds from the National Budget. In fact the practice has been to identify centrally for local areas without any reference to local representatives. This is also very much the case of what happens in Georgetown.

Mr Speaker, I turn to the question of discrimination. I want to give only one glaring example. If one looks carefully at the capital provisions of the various regions, and if one calculates the per capita income, the per capita expenditure under those allocations, one would see that in the case of Region 4, the per capita expenditure is \$286. The closest to that \$1,386, there can be no more a glaring case of discrimination than in this case. *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Time, Hon Member.

Mr. E. Lance Carberry: Mr Speaker, I request fifteen minutes for the speaker to continue his presentation.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr Vincent L. Alexander: Mr Speaker, discriminatory nature of the allocation of SIMAP Funds, Basic Trust Funds, or should I use a minor word - the discretionary nature of the allocation of SIMAP Funds, Basic Trust Funds, Poor Rural Community Project Funds and Poverty Funds which all total \$1.8 billion leaves tremendous scope for more discriminatory allocation of resources. It creates a possibility for the perpetuation and further marginalisation of Regions and local areas which are not perceived to the PPP/C areas.

Mr Speaker, in closing, I draw our attention to some specific issues, *in facitwo*, specific issues in Region 4. These are issues which have been addressed to the Prime Minister, to the Hon. Minister Nokta and which still awaits the positive responses. So, I bring it to the attention of this House with a hope that those responses would be forthcoming, not in the House, but in action in the fields.

Mr Speaker, on the 10th May, the Hon Prime Minister was written

to and I quote:

Only two weeks ago pipe lines were laid in that part of Bachelor's Adventure in front of or before Bareroot, indicating clearly that GUYWA had no intention of supplying them with water. Immediate motion would give them some home.

Mr Speaker, Beirut cries for its fair share. Mr Speaker, the residents are using the same arguments about the supply of electricity. They claimed that this does not require a meeting with Minister Nokta but a clear indication that the Guyana Power and Light Company begins operations to transport and lay poles for supply of electricity.

You see, Mr Speaker, I have shown instances when the people's representatives are not consulted. But here is the reverse, a situation where there is no means of consultation. The people have made it absolutely clear what they wish, they wish water and lights. They need action and what do they get in the place of action, they get some letter saying, 'I am coming to meet with you'. They said it clearly, they do not want meetings, they want action.

Mr Speaker, it is very clear that there is absolutely no focus in the Budget in relation to a way forward for Local Government and at the same time, Mr Speaker, National Development Strategy and the CARICAN Report provides a window of opportunity for Local Government in this country.

I close in saying, Mr Speaker, that if this Government is serious about Local Government, then they have maybe one last opportunity in the form of the Reform Committee on Local Government. Let that Committee work, let the action emanate from that Committee and then, Mr Speaker, the day may be saved. Thank you. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you very much, Hon. Member.

The Minister in the Ministry of Local Government and Regional

Development.

Hon. Clinton C. Collymore: Mr Speaker, I wish to congratulate the Hon. Minister of Finance for producing a very practical Budget. He has worked with the fiscal tools at his disposal and notwithstanding the fulminations on the opposite side of this House, the Minister of Finance is within his rights that he has done what he can do and what he cannot do otherwise.

We have just heard the Hon. Member Mr Vincent Alexander speaking and I wish to say that I have no difficulty with his perceptions. I am not saying that one hundred per cent of what he spoke is true but I have no difficulty with his perceptions. In the same vein, whenever Mr Winston Murray speaks, one listens, he is the most sober of the persons on the Opposite side [*Laughter*] and to some extent, Mr Speaker, Mr Deryck Bernard. The others, I have tremendous difficulties with how they present their problems. [*Interruption: "You haven't spoken as yet."*]

Mr Speaker, I want to say that the Budget is a practical Budget for 2001. Within the circumstances prevailing in 2000, it is a very honest presentation without embellishing anything. We should factor in the following aspects:

Domestic circumstances

World Market realities

Climatic conditions

Fiscal prudence

Thrift and good governance.

Within this context, I want to say that compounded atrocious prices for our commodities on the World Market and the act of God in relation to the adverse weather, certain satanic forces ran amuck

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on the political front. *[Applause]* Mr Speaker, that is the gist, that is the kernel of the 2001 Budget; in a nutshell - that is it, certain satanic forces running amuck on the political front.

Mr Speaker, the Ministry of Local Government has been pilloried inside of this House and outside, but I just want to say that the Ministry is very much understaffed. We are operating below fifty per cent establishment. For instance, the Department which deals with the Neighbourhood Democratic Councils and the City Councils, has only one person and there should have been nine. We are dealing therefore with Central Administration and much of the work of the Local Government Ministry transcends the other Ministries - transcends each of them.

We also deal with capital works programme. The supervision of Local Government Organs, Drainage and Irrigation work, the training of personnel, field visits to various communities, subventions, other financial assistance and macro-programmes.

I want to speak about one of the macro programmes which has been lightly touched by the Hon. Member Mr Alexander - the Urban Development Programme. This programme, we have to admit is late, but it is running. It has landed on its feet running and we hope that it will continue its momentum until all the phases have been completed. That programme is to the tune of US \$25 million and for this year, Mr Speaker, we are spending \$268.5 million. The acceleration in the programme could be discerned when you look at the 1999 allocation which were only \$4.9 million rising to \$116 million last year, this year it has been more than doubled. There are starting projects, projects which are on stream and the contract have been signed. For the record of the Parliament, I wish to relate the projects and the contracts which have been signed. We have:

- the Norton Street Rehabilitation to the tune of \$147 million.
That contract has been awarded to C. D. Ram

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- the Robb Street Rehabilitation Project \$92.8 million, the project has been awarded to DIPCON
- the Stabroek Market Rehabilitation - \$150.9 million awarded to BASJOO
- the Wismar Market Rehabilitation Project - \$100.1 million allocated to Courtney Benn
- the Corriverton Market Rehabilitation - \$89.8 million allocated to BASJOO
- the New Amsterdam Market - \$109 million allocated to S.A. Nabi
- the Anna Regina Town Hall - \$54 million allocated to BASJOO

Other projects which are on stream and in various stages of completion are as follows:

- New Market Street and West Side Line Dam, Rose Hall,
- Cemetery Road and Main Street, Romper, Corriverton
- One Mile Canvas City, LINDEN
- Smithfield Road in New Amsterdam
- Go-Slow Avenue in Georgetown
- **Market Road** in Anna Regina
- Maunder Circle in Anna Regina
- White Carib Road in Anna Regina and
- Mora Street in Linden.

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There are other roads and streets to be done, but these will fall into the second phase.

Mr Speaker, I should tell you that the designers, who first dealt with the road, they over-designed, their enthusiasm ran away with them and they were producing twenty-year duration roadways. We don't need those things, very solid foundation as though war tanks have to move on them, and we have therefore asked for these roads to be redesigned to a ten-year duration and this is the reason why some of the road programmes are delayed, but we have been able to save \$200 million, part of it, we hope to spend in Linden.

Sir, the Urban Development Programme also pertains to waste disposal. It deals with street lighting, abattoirs, town hall rehabilitation, road works, outcall, drainage and waste disposal. We have a two-pronged plan to deal with waste disposal. One of the prongs pertains to the City of Georgetown, the Capital City which has no where else to dump garbage, and we are seeking to FINALISED a spot at Eccles behind the Industrial Estate in that locality. We have been able to secure three hundred acres of land from GUYSUCO and by September of this year, we are going to receive the first trench of thirty acres to commence the project, assuming that the environmental impact assessment is favourable. So this is one of the prongs for the Eccles land-fill project to benefit the City of Georgetown because the Mandela site is nearing completion.

We also have another prong pertaining to the rural areas. We have identified several areas in the country side and these areas are being amalgamated to have more or less centralized land filling operation taking place. We are looking into funding and these areas have already been vetted by the Environmental Protection Agency. Funding is being sought from the United Kingdom, United Nations Development Programme and India.

Mr Speaker, other IDB assistance within the Urban Development

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Programme pertains to the valuation of property, assistance to the Chief Valuation Officer, training of local government personnel so as to strengthen institutional capacity, assessment of new revenue measures and sustain ability of revenues.

The Hon. Member, Mr Alexander, mentioned City Hall and the new revenue measures asked to be implemented by that Council. These measures are being considered and we have had exhausted discussions with City Hall preparatory to identifying how we are going to move with them.

Mr Speaker, the Local Government System, as I said is very large. The Ministry of Local Government does not have many people, but as I said, it permeates all the other Ministries, we have to deal with ten very large regions, a few of them tending to be pugnacious. *[Interruption: 'Who are they?']*

I am not going to identify those which are pugnacious. We have also sixty-five Neighbourhood Democratic Councils, six municipalities and some seventy-nine Amerindian Councils or villages and communities to deal with.

The Hon. Member, Mr Alexander mentioned that for this year the Ministry has been allocated \$254 million to operate a subvention to the NDCs and the Town Councils. If he is inferring that this is a very small town, I agree with him, this is a small town. I would have liked to see this money doubled, but it is just not possible. This is the reason why I said, I have no difficulty with his perception of the Budget. It is not possible, if your people are scaring away investors, trying to do things to deter development. What do you expect? There would be an impact, a negative impact on revenues. *[Applause]*

So, I am sure the Minister of Finance would have been glad to give us \$500 million. He doesn't have the money, he doesn't have it. So the Regions, in fact are going to get \$1,134.9 million which

compared with last year \$1,044.3 million. The Regions together will receive an aggregate of \$90.6 million more.

Mr Speaker, we are currently engaged in the process of leading to the reformation of the Local Government System and for this, a joint task force, a bipartisan task force, has been set up and I have the honour to be the Co-Chairman along with the Hon. Member, Mr Alexander, and I want to say that we are making some progress on strategising how we are going to reform the Local Government System.

Under this Local Government Reform process, we are going to deal with the re-establishment of Village Councils, the establishment of Community Councils, greater autonomy to Government bodies, not independent - greater autonomy.

Allocation of Resources Criteria: Mr Alexander said that he believes that there is discrimination in the way resources have been allocated. As I said that is his perception. Well it's a belief; he believes that. I want to disabuse himself of that, but at the same time Mr Speaker, we are dealing with this particular aspect, we are dealing with the criteria to award resources to the Local Government Bodies which will remove these allocations from the Minister because the Ministers are coming in for a certain amount of flag which they don't deserve. At the same time we are also dealing with procedures for new elections to local government bodies in view of the fact that Communities Councils and Village Councils are to be catered for. Then we have the Local Government Commissions.

Mr Speaker, The Constitution Reform Commission indicated that there should be a Local Government Commission, but do you know that a Local Government Commission is already in the Statute Books. Such a Commission is in Cap 28:01, in the Municipal and District Councils Act. *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Hon. Member, the Constitution Reform Commission

was aware at the time of the debate on that matter that there was such a provision. I do not believe, subject to Mr Alexander's correction that the Constitution Reform Commission recommended that there be established a Local Government Commission. It recommended that the Commission be made functional.

Hon. Clinton C. Collymore: You are making me profound, Mr Speaker. *[Laughter]* That is exactly what I wanted to say. There is a Commission but it has never functioned. We came into office and met it as a dead letter in the statute books. Perhaps one of the reasons why we left it there is because in the absence of the Commission, I am the Commission. *[Laughter]* According to Cap 28:01, in the absence of a Commission, the Minister is the Commission - me.

Mr Speaker, the time frame for us is one year but I am sure that with the co-operation of the Opposition, we will be able to complete our work within that time frame.

Mr Speaker, we are trying to modernise the Ministry. We want to have various aspects of our work computerise and we are proceeding to have this done with the assistance of foreign donor agencies. We want to have computers in the Ministry, in the Regional Democratic Councils, and in some of the Neighbourhood Councils and Municipalities.

At the same time, some of the buildings housing the NDC offices are dilapidated. We came and met them dilapidated and we have been trying to repair some of them, but I can undertake to have this matter seriously addressed with greater emphasis in the years to come.

Mr Speaker, let me for the time being deviate a while, to deal with some of the remarks which were made yesterday. We were treated by Mr Nasir Ally of Region 6 to some fulminations. One of the matters which he raised, was to the effect that there is a rotation agreement at Gibraltar/Fyrish NDC and for several years this

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agreement was not honoured by the Government or by the PPP/Civic side. This is not true. Every single year this agreement is honoured - every single year. I have with me here, right now, and I can read it, a letter from Mr St Clair who has been nominated to be the Chairman for this year. I have sent him a letter asking him to come down to Georgetown, so that we can discuss the matter, because there are reports that he did not take up his Deputy Chairmanship seat last year, so I want to discuss the matter. It is not true to say that we are not working on it.

Then the Hon. Member, Mr Nasir Ally spoke about the streets in New Amsterdam which are in a deplorable condition. Some of the streets are the responsibility of the Town Council and other streets, the major arteries, are going to be done by the Central Government under the Urban Development Programme.

Mr Ricky Khan excelled himself yesterday, I made a note of what he said. He said, Region No. 1 has been left out in the Budget, Region No. 1 has been left behind. Mr Speaker, probably the Hon. Member does not read the document he is supposed to read. Listen to what is happening in Region No. 1 for this year: Last year Region No. 1 got \$43.9 million; this year they are getting \$76.6 million.

Mr Speaker, why the Hon. Gentleman made an error is because he did not peruse this document. We are not giving you this as a decoration for you to put on your shelf. These are the capital project profiles and I refer you to Division 531 dealing with Region No. 1 and you will see all the projects, the equipment, the draglines and so on that we are purchasing.

Sir, it is not true to say that the Region has been left behind. You have got a steeper increase than any other Region in the country. Mr Speaker, Region No. 1 has gotten \$32.7 million above what they spent last year and yet my Hon. Friend is not satisfied. I don't know if he wants the Minister of Finance to take the entire Budget and put it in Region 1.

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The Hon. Member Mrs Judith David said that the Budget showed marginalisation for all the Regions controlled by the PNC/Reform and she singled out Region No. 7 for emphasis. Mr Speaker that is not true. Region No. 7 was given \$55.7 million last year and for this year they are going to get \$58.8 million. How many more millions do you want? If you want more millions, let us have less slow fire and less more fire and you are going to get more money. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, I want to broke alliance with my Hon. Friend and Co-Chairman, Mr Alexander, when he said, *tongue in cheek*, I suppose that there is discrimination in the per capita allocation to the Region. Where Region 4 is concerned, right away I knew where he was making the error because he included Georgetown within the Region. For voting purposes, you include the population of Georgetown but administratively, Georgetown is not a part of the RDC in Region 4. *[Applause]* So had he excluded the population of Georgetown from his analysis, he would have gotten a more reasonable figure.

Remarks were made about three stand-pipes in the De Kinderen area in Region 3. Mr Speaker, I am informed that those three stand-pipes were requested by the residents temporarily until GUYWA's fully connected system comes into effect later on.

Mr Speaker, finally, Sir, the Ministry of Local Government receives representations from the various communities pertaining to roads and dams, sluices and koker, drainage canals, irrigation canals, bridges, markets, legal assistants for litigation, investigation into irregularities, waste disposal facilities and purchase of capital equipment. This will also explain one of the concerns of the Hon. Member, Mr Alexander, when he said there is discrimination because Central Government was **imposing** certain projects. We have perceived that certain communities have been overlooked by the Regions and Region 4 is not an exception. They have been overlooked and the people came to the Ministry and complained so in the succeeding year and in the ensuing year, we have these projects

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inserted into the Regional Budget. If that is a concern of Mr Alexander, that is the explanation and that is the truth.

Mr Speaker, I want to take my seat once more, congratulating the Minister of Finance on an excellent Budget within the contours of finances available. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Member.

The Hon. Member, Mr Ravindra Dev.

Mr Ravindra Dev: Mr Speaker, I rise to join the Debate on the 2001 Budget and let me from the very onset say, that I see no reason for us to merely score points. After all, we are debating matters that affect literally the lives of 750,000 people out there. It is our intent to offer a critique and in the light of that to make specific recommendations. It is our hope, that in light of what has been claimed by others, who made recommendations to the Minister and claimed to have been rebuffed. It is our hope that we, in this Chamber, including myself, are not merely adding to global warning and adding hot air.

We will proceed and unlike, for example, the other parties who have many individuals, who can look at specific area, at this point, of course, we only have one for the time being. Well, we have also lost Mr Nadir, who normally critiques the Budget from the right and we will miss that critique. Be that as it may, we will proceed by making some remarks on the overall Budget on the need for over-ideological thrust to any Budget and then proceed to the three areas which all Budgets in mixed economies seemed to fulfil, that is the *stabilisation* function, the *allocation* function and the *distribution* function.

It is to be noted, that the acronym from those three functions form something called *SAD* and of course, it is our point that the history of Guyana showed that all our governments' interventions up to now have been more or less sad for our people and it is our task to reverse that trend of sad government's intervention.

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Now, the Minister on page 2 of his Speech said that a comprehensive economic development strategy for implementation of the next five years is where he locates his Budget, being the first step towards the realization of that comprehensive strategy. We are, therefore, to infer that the government has a plan, which we are told that by 2006, will deliver us to the promise land. Incidentally, the Minister of Education is not au fait with this promise because yesterday, he claimed that the Budget should stand on its own as a one year document. It is not what the Minister had said in the document itself.

Now, in terms of looking through the document and seeking an ideological thrust, I looked at the overall position of the PPP, as having never jettisoned, as far as I am aware, its Marxist/Leninist ideology, even though in Government, it has proposed that it following the free enterprise oriented line. I, therefore, look through the Budget in trying to discern elements of what might constitute such an orientation. I was disappointed because it does not offer anything dramatic to overcome that proposition.

Now when I look at, for instance, the one paragraph that talks about private sector development, it is not sufficient to say that the government is prepared to offer, and I quote increased concessions in areas such as information technology, eco-tourism, garment processing and so on.

Mr Speaker, there are dozens of countries out there that are competing for foreign investments and they have what we all know **to be a very detailed** investment codes. I would have made this talk of being oriented towards free enterprise palpable, if this government could have had an investment code in place. It does not, and we have to make this very clear that there has to be a strategy for attracting investment and capital.

Capital and investment do not just rush into countries. Unless there is a strategy in place you will not be able to attract foreign

direct investment and that's the truth. The bottom line, therefore, is that at least there should be an investment code in place.

Another sign, one might say of being oriented towards free enterprise was that in the Budget there is allocated \$225 million but it sounds better if we put it in US terms \$12 million to develop industrial parks, at Lethem, Belvedere, New Amsterdam and selected few areas. It is obvious then, we are talking at a minimum of four new industrial parks. I want to ask, are we serious about industrial development? Do we know what industrial development is all about? At a very minimum if a company is to relocate to another country:

- it needs pure water
- it needs reliable and very highly regulated supply of electricity
- it needs telephone
- it needs communication, and
- it needs roads.

These are the very basic infrastructures that must be in place before any country will even look at investing in another country.

I say therefore, this talk of developing industrial parks, four of them, from a miserly G\$225 million, is to quote former Minister Bernard, *merely scattering bird seeds*.

I looked on the other side of where the government has focused and one can see their ideologicalskirts peeping through, because there is a tremendous expansion of the bureaucracy. The PNC has been criticized by all of us, including myself in their hay day for having numerous Ministries. I counted, through this document I was given, and I counted nineteen. I am told there is twenty-three but one loses count. You lose count after a while, so it is anywhere between the perimeters of nineteen and twenty-three. There are now several

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ministries taking care of Tourism and Trade. One would say that the billions of dollars going into each of these Ministries could have been better served by expanding these industrial estates.

Another signal that we feel in our party, that has been sent that will discourage foreign investment or any thought of having a free enterprise system, is the right to property, where there are very grave signs in Guyana that the old habits of expropriation of property by dictated might still be alive and well.

All policies of any country will be judged in the light of the history of that country. We, in Guyana cannot lightly talk of expropriating private property in this modern world, in the light of our past when eighty per cent of our economy has been nationalized and we are coming out of that phase which we all know and conceded has been a failed phase in our history. We, therefore feel that it is not enough for executives to say in the spirit of Louis XIV that I am the State and I can do whatever I want. There is the rule of law and one has to be prepared to act within the rule of law or there is no right to property and therefore there would be no free enterprise system.

There is also the troubling question of corruption and another Member has mentioned the fact of the cost - the free-enterprise system now put some cost to corruption and to dealing with corruption. Companies will not relocate to countries that have corrupt regimes, because it is conceded that the cost of doing this is just not worth it, because too many resources have to be spent on getting rid of that corrupted element.

I want to move on and we just cannot, at this point with the proper functioning of a Budget because in Guyana at least the government still owns part of the productive sector. I speak at this point of sugar where I see that the Budget appropriated \$1.25 billion for the levy. Now, in no free enterprise system will a government extract a levy. It will impose export taxes in the form of a levy. This is a dis-incentive to any private enterprise company. Of course, one

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could retort that the government owns the company, therefore the government must get something. There is a rule in the free-enterprise system - the one who owns a company gets dividend.

We say therefore abolish the levy as the PPP promised way back when it was established in 1974. Abolish the levy, let the levy go through the accounts, let it show up as profits, as presently constituted, the government will get thirty-five per cent of that as corporate tax, a proper dividend can be declared, but most importantly, Mr Speaker, one will be able to judge GUYSUCO on its merits as to whether or not it is making profits, and more importantly, the unions will be able to look at the profitability of the entity, to be able to bargain for fair wages for the workers of GUYSUCO. This of course has been an argument not unique to ROAR, but the PPP has made this argument in all of its arguments for the abolishment of the levy. So I am simply reminded of that.

On the point of sugar, we also want to go on record in this Honourable House, to say that three years ago, when we spoke out against the misguided expansion plan of GUYSUCO conducted by a Foreign Management team whose objectives were not necessarily coincident with the people of Guyana and who might merely be seeking to perpetuate their own management contract fees. We said at that point that the modernisation plan was good with the exception of the expansion portion and that in a market that is tremendously volatile (we predicted it three years ago) that Europe would abandon the preferential markets. At that time individuals within the government and in the industry scoffed at our point but today, the chickens are coming home to roost.

Mr Speaker, the point is that here is a perfect example that when the State owns a productive part of the economy, in making allocation of resources it used criteria that are not determined by the market and in using those criteria, it is invariably going to make mistakes. Today, sugar is not something that we ought to be pushing. We hear complaints within the Budget on the price of sugar being a residual

one. Nothing is going to change even after the preferential markets are gone in this new EBA. World. (*Everything But Arms World*) - even when that market goes, let us not feel that the sugar market will become a normal one guided by just supply and demand, and even if it were, there are countries out there that would churn out their production to such an extent that prices will still plummet. There is a very, very pertinent school of thought in the world of sugar that says, in an unregulated market, sugar prices will plummet even further. But I could move on. We move on now to certain aspects of the proper functions of a Budget. We talk about distribution, that every country in producing its wealth has a notion of justice, as to how? We in a free enterprise economy, we accept that there has to be some notion of justice, how we distribute that wealth. I looked through the Budget for some consistent picture as to what standard of justice is being utilised in terms of the distribution of wealth, in terms of redistributing it. It is very pertinent to note that this is the source of a tremendous number of problems in our country. Mrs Backer who, incidentally, I was devastated to learn, really appreciates men of ample girth [*Laughter*]

There is a song that says it more poetically, but I am not sure that, *big-belly man*, the term is allowed in this House, but Mrs Backer said yesterday, very unequivocally, that wealth in Guyana, and I quote:

must be equitably distributed or else there would be no peace

and she spelt out the word *PEACE* not *PIECE*. That brings us to, again, the question, because I see a contradiction in going through a Budget of the Government. They are implicitly using a standard of distribution, that goes to the equality of opportunity. It is a distribution standard that as you earn, for example, depending on your merit and depending on what assets you have, you will be getting that equality of opportunity implicit within the formulations that is what I note. But not implicit but explicit in Mrs Backer's formulation is equality of outcome. I hope it is Miss and not Mrs . . . [*Interruption*]

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The Speaker: Mrs Backer.

Mr Ravindra Dev: Miss!

The Speaker: Mrs Backer.

Mr Ravindra Dev: I am devastated again! *[Laughter]* Mrs Backer is insisting on equality of outcome. Now this is a totally contradictory position of judgement and this is what is going to lead to severe problems and in fact is leading to problems, because if we are seeking equality of outcome and if the Budget is predicated on equality of opportunity, we all know that equality of opportunity does not, in so far, lead to equality of outcome, then you have an in-built conflict, and we ought to face that. Coming out of that also is the question which we seem to want to avoid in this Honourable House, that by whatever measure, we seek to distribute according to some measure of justice, are we going to do it on an individual basis or on a group basis and if it is by group, is it by wealth, is it to the poorest or to the richest? Are we going to take from the rich and give to the poor, or is it by ethnic groups? By what criteria?

These are all questions that have raised themselves, but are not being addressed. What the ROAR Movement has proposed is that we have to face these facts, that today when we speak about distributive justice, we are talking about the equality of outcome by and large. If we are to do so in Guyana, to be honest, we are talking about it from an ethnic standpoint. Therefore, we have proposed that every government policy, before it is implemented, that it undergoes something called ethnic impact assessment analysis, if you can have for the environment, such a statement and in this very House, every initiative of the government was subject to scrutiny and if you check as to what is the orientation of the scrutiny, you will see it was an ethnic orientation.

So let us not do it sub-rosa, let us not do it under the table, let us be up-front about it, because whether we like it or not, after the

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policies are implemented, we will ask whether Region 6 got more capital than Region 4. What is the implicit question, when we ask such a question? Let us not be obtuse; let us bring it forward.

We move now to the allocative aspects of the Budget and some of the things that we discern, but before that, we might make some proposals. We said, we will talk about some suggestions in terms of each area. Let me come back and talk about some distributive proposals. Obviously, others have mentioned that the Income Tax threshold should have been raised, that of course, would have been one where you were increasing the threshold, where those who were poorer would not have been taxed, and in a sense, one would have been transferring some measure of wealth to that group and that is one form of distribution which has not been included in this Budget, and which we recommend and we hope that there can still be implementation. As we said, we hope that it is not just hot air that we are adding to global warming.

Housing for the Poor

We have heard that part of the strategy for getting the economy going that there will be a massive housing spurt. It has come to our attention through the business sector, that fully forty per cent of the cost of any house, in terms of what goes in to build the house is Consumption Tax and other taxes that goes back to the government. So therefore, when the government talks about wanting a housing boom, which can be a spurt and a fillip to this economy, the government has within its power, the ability to reduce the cost of housing by forty per cent by giving a rebate on a needs basis to those who are poor. This would be one way of killing two birds with one stone:

To redistribute some wealth to those who are most needy, and

To encourage the building of houses

In the Budget it is boasted that 22,500 house lots were distributed

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last year. One would wonder how many houses were built on those house lots. Not many, I suppose and such an initiative would add a fillip to that.

Another area where there can be a redistribution and an effect on boosting the economy, would be the consumption tax on oil. While there has been a reduction on the Consumption tax, it is to be noted that the government is still raking in almost \$1 billion, over the budgeted amount for 2000. It means therefore that the government still has some leeway of reducing the amount of taxes on oil to give some relief to those who are most in need.

We turn now to **The Allocative Aspect of the Budget** and I begin by saying that all governments have to produce public goods, social goods which all of us share, and the Police, of course, is very much in the minds of all Guyanese. I must first of all, compliment the Minister for announcing several measures that are in stream for improving the lot of the Police Force, so to speak, one of it being the renaming of the Police Force, because it is important that one re-orientes the whole outlook of the Police Force. To call it the *Police Service* is part of that re-orientation. To protect and serve is not a motto, to protect and serve the rulers; but to protect and serve the people.

I would like though to bring to mind a point made by the Hon. Member of this House, Mr Trotman, who complimented the government about there being no discrimination, in terms of recruitment pattern and want to state for the record that discrimination neither begins nor ends with recruitment and as an Attorney, he would know that if there has been a historical pattern of discrimination against any group, whether overtly or co-overtly or whether institutionally or whether due to adverse impact through the application or facially neutrally fallacies, it is up to the government

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of the day to initiate policies to overcome such impediments.

It is a favourite term of law professors to mention that it does no good to invite the stork home to drink milk and offer him the milk in a flat bowl, because the stork cannot take that with its beak . . .
[Interruption]

The Speaker: Are you sure you are talking about Mr Trotman? He hasn't spoken as yet.

Mr Ravindra Dev: No, he has spoken another day, Mr Speaker. He will speak after me, and I am sure he will address this.

The point therefore, is that there will have to be reforms within the Force:

- in terms of its policies inside the Force
- in terms of its practices
- in terms of the good that it serves
- in terms of its religious observances
- in terms of its promotion policies
- in terms of its harassment of recruits
- in terms of its postings.

Balancing of the Force

Finally, we want to mention that we are very pleased that there is at least a Constitutional Committee that will look at the question of **balancing of the Force including the Police Force**. We want to say for the record, that balancing the Force is not only analytically distinct, but ontologically distinct from any distributive mechanism. The Forces are an aspect of the State. The state is a reflection of the

society, and if the Forces of the State do not reflect the society, they lose all rights to legitimacy. Therefore the basis for balancing a State does not come out of the right for distributive justice, but out of the very formation of the nature of the State.

We must continue, in terms of education to mention to former Minister Bernard, to share, say, that the irony he should have reflected upon, when he noted that there were no professors in Berbice, to teach at the Berbice Campus that the irony is, why in a country where there is over one hundred and fifty thousand people, why are there not individuals who are capable of teaching? Why are they not residing in Berbice? That is the question, that is the irony, Mr Speaker.

The irony, of course comes out of the fact, that there has been a tremendous neglect of the Regions outside of Georgetown and therefore, individuals who are so qualified cannot find any gainful employment in such regions and that is the reason why people now have to be trucking back and forth. It is to be expected, and I predict that it will be so, that as the Campus is upgraded where it can sustain a number of students, to have enough professors and teachers, that there will be no problems in having individuals living in Berbice. After all, Berbice has produced some of the very brightest and best Guyanese.

Again, in terms of the allocation of public goods, we were rather surprised in going through the Budget, not to note after the promise made by the Hon. Minister of Health that something will be done immediately for suicide which has reached epidemic proportions since 1995. We are disappointed that in the Budget, there has not been any monies allocated for something to be done on suicide, and we hope that since the Minister expatiated at great length, as to his knowledge of the suicide area that we will have some relief in that area after this Budget.

Going now to the third and last area in terms of Budgets, its stabilisation function. One thing that jumps out at the Budget, as with

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all the Budgets since 1993, has been the tremendously high rate of borrowing, that when we talk of \$14 billion in loans, in this Budget alone, and when you have to combine that with \$10 billion in grants versus current receipts of \$44 billion, we are talking of an overwhelming dependence on foreign aid and one would have expected again through the trenchant criticisms of the PNC excesses made by the PPP while it was out of office, one would have expected them to be a bit more cautious about embarking on such a huge pile of debt, because debt after all, is simply a postponed tax liability. Somebody is going to have to pay these debts. The fact that it will be our children and our grandchildren and possibly our great grandchildren does not in anyway vitiate the course of the argument that we are simply postponing the inevitable and possibly going to end up in the same way where we ended up in 1992 with \$2.1 billion of unserviceable debt. We, of course, by taking on so much debt, are perpetuating a dependency on the conditionalities of the IMF and World Bank. Again I speak to the People's Progressive Party/Civic that so eloquently and so trenchantly criticise the dictates of the IMF and World Bank during its days of Opposition, and for it to so heedlessly plunge into the arms of this suitor, willing though it might be, does not bode well for its future nor for its consistency.

The other point we want to make, because we said we will be making recommendations . . . [*Interruption*]

The Speaker: Before you go on Hon. Member, you will need some time.

Mr E. Lance Carberry: The Speaker, could I ask for fifteen minutes for the speaker to continue his presentation?

Question put and agreed to.

Mr Ravindra Dev: We have previously commended the Introduction in Guyana of a **Currency Board** arrangement. This is an arrangement, where it eliminates the need for monetary policy in a country where

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we are so short of individuals and are so much at the whims of external forces, whatever help we can get in this direction is to be taken. A currency board arrangement means simply backing our currency on a one to one basis, with some string currency possibly a basket of currency with the US and maybe the Euro and what this would do first of all, it would ensure a stable exchange rate which is a problem for all businessmen.

Secondly, it will infuse a great measure of confidence in our economy in general and our financial system in particular.

Thirdly, it will stem capital flight, because everyone will know at anytime the money is fully convertible. It will encourage capital inflow and most importantly, it will ensure that our interest rate will converge with the US interest rate, which we know historically within the last twenty years or so has been very low compared to ours.

In terms of the fiscal discipline needed where we have not been able to impose it and we can see the constraints on the Minister of Finance, because when you are playing with policies, there are trade-

offs that have to be made. For example, as he noted in terms of mopping up less excess liquidity, the Treasury engages, the Bank of Guyana engage in the high rate of issuance of key bills. But what this does, of course while it might have a stabilizing force in terms of inflation, in not having prices rise, it ensures that you have high interest. So there is that trade-off. Unfortunately it has to be faced when one is actively intervening to have a monetary policy done in this manner. Again the currency board arrangement will take care of this.

In conclusion, Mr Speaker, I have sat here and this is my maiden speech and I have compared the first set of proposals that were placed before this House, where consensus was reached between these two major parties, the People's Progressive Party and the People's National Congress and I am referring of course to the

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consensus that was honed through the Constitutional Reform process where very troublesome pieces of legislation, agreement was reached such things like balancing Forces. I would like to propose, Mr Speaker, that taking a leaf out of that book, that we take that process further, that there is obviously in Guyana today forces that have been unleashed, that our present forms of governance cannot address and to merely dismiss these protests and other forms of acting out dissatisfaction with the system, as the work of a few bad people is to miss the essential point and that point is that the forms of government are not immutable, they are meant to address the needs of the particular society in which they function.

I would therefore like to commend to this House and note the statement by the General Secretary of the People's Progressive Party as reported in today's paper that they are moving towards the seeking of greater consensus, to encourage this movement and I will not try to put words as to

what the form of governance might take, but to merely say that whatever the form the governance takes, it must take our reality into account, that our form of governance was imposed upon us by our colonial ex-masters and they could not have been put to us for our own good, because if we say on one hand, they had enslaved us for their benefit, they could not have made these rules of our governance for our own good. We therefore would like to commend to this House that spirit of co-operation and consensus buildings towards a greater form of governance, so that we can move the debate such as this, not merely towards criticizing but towards making rules where all of the people of Guyana can benefit. Thank You. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you very much, Hon. Member.

The Hon. Member, Mr Khemraj Ramjattan.

Mr Khemraj Ramjattan: Mr Speaker, I must, before I proceed to make some remarks, congratulate the Hon. Minister of Finance for a

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wonderfully presented Budget, in the context of a very harsh international and national reality.

Mr Speaker: It is not necessarily a panacea for a nation's ills that a Budget is presented annually. It is but simply a programme of events for the year as to how things are going to happen in the various sectors and how there will be a distribution of the wealth of the previous years, and the revenues earned during the course of the next year, how that would be distributed.

That is important because no one budget is going to solve Guyana's problems especially in the context of there being dynamos all over the place that are creating more and more problems.

However, Mr Speaker, it is important to know the basic mechanisms, the basic instruments for the purpose of ensuring that there is a continuance of the development programme that is going to lead to growth and greater prosperity as it is incrementally implemented. This Budget by the Hon. Minister, Mr Saisnarine Kowlessar, is a continuation of the implementation of those mechanisms of instrumentalities.

For the purpose of clarification, I want to indicate to the speakers on the other side that indeed one of the bases for that mechanism - philosophical base - is that this government has introduced and will continue to utilise the mechanism of the free market and if per chance that could not have been seen through this Budget Speech like the ones for the past eight years, it is because you are not looking hard enough.

We know the dominance in the world today, of the free market enterprise philosophy. It is something that poor little Guyana cannot in any event do away with, change or modify in any way. It is going to be that stream which we will opt to follow, the current that runs therein, and that is very clear from the Budget. That is also clear from the historical antecedents of this administration. If people do

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not see that there has been a movement towards appreciating the market economy, well too bad for them.

Historically we have privatised, I want you to know that we have privatised the GAC, the GPC, Guyana Stores, Guyana Stock Feeds, GNIC and KNUCKLE, those are the few that come to mind. Now what is privatization? If one is going to argue the case that I do not see but only Marxist/ Leninist as the ideological thrust, and to that I am really urging my colleague in Parliament here, Mr Ravi Dev, that this bug-bear of holding on to the PPP as being Marxist/ Leninist in its economic approach towards the fulfillment of happiness in Guyana, is a little too old fashioned [*Applause*]

It is something that in every respect attention must not be paid to. We must direct our efforts to doing the things that will make that happiness even greater or sadness less. I wish to inform this House, Mr Speaker, that what is entailed in relation to gatherings as much investment in this country as possible, this administration, over the last eight years, has done. You have to appreciate that there can be contradictions in an argument as to how you are going to deal with this question of investment.

And let's take the Ravi Dev's argument just now. You have to, as he said, bring pure water, bring road, electricity and all the other things that are going to attract the investors so that we can have investments so that we can get rich. But if we start from a poor position of having no pure water, roads and infrastructure, how do we get these things in the first place? We have to borrow and that is why, there is need sometimes, that we do not, when we borrow, spend in a fashion that is inefficient, but at least ensure that our roads and sea defenses are built and that is primarily, at the infra structural level, what this government has been doing. You cannot deny that the landscape of Guyana today is a far cry from what it was prior to 1992. [*Applause*] It is a far more attractive landscape, it is far more welcoming to at least the investors' eyes. But that alone does not constitute what is going to bring investors here and

we can go on to indicate -- *[Interruption]*

Yes, and I am going to come to that, but before I come to that, let me emphasise that there is need also for legislative arrangements to be in place and the right to property, as we know, even prior to 1992, and only recently prior to 1992 has been constitutionalise for and there weren't:

Any expropriation or as we will call them the expropriations during that period of time because even the PNC prior to 1992 realised, and the PPP knew too, that that kind of business approach towards investors is not going to get investors here.

We have ensured that those whose properties have been compulsorily taken that they have been paid the market rates and that has not happened in any regular fashion. In any event our constitution constitutionalise the right to property. We have all the legislations in place, basically they were implemented within the last eight years in connection with securities legislation, in relation to the updating of our companies Act, modernizing even our tax laws, doing all that-- *[Interruption: "What about Customs, Toucan Suites?. I do not know if you get compensation for harboring criminals, but my dear, in fact whatever the legislative arrangements are, it is not necessarily ridiculous. There is the courts that he can go to for justice in this country and I wish to make the point, that even for the investors coming to Guyana, we do have that which is also another necessary mechanism and that is, dispute settlement procedure."]*

In a sense, Mr Speaker, all that which it takes to get investors here, have been done, except one and that has to do with political stability and we have to be reasonable. We have to ask the question, why? I heard the concept of majoritarian dictatorship from my good friend Vincent Alexander, but what is democracy? If these cannot be, but at least the administering by those who win elections. But more than that, there has been inclusion into governmental policies

of that which the Opposition would like to see there. I can understand that indeed now and again, an opposition is going to make protestation as regards certain policies, but when the protestations get to the level of political instability, we are not going to get the necessary investment to ensure that the marginalisation they talk about is going to be absent, we cannot . . . *[Interruption: "That is a matter of opinion; Well it is a matter of opinion. I have here attracting Foreign Investments - New trend, Sources and Policies by an Indian Writer Senga Lall. It is quite clear from what he has to teach us, that indeed we need tax incentives, indeed we need entrepreneurs, we need everything, but very much important, in all of that, is stability in the economy. Because we can have tax incentives in Guyana and then St. Lucia or Barbados might give those tax incentives and then the investor would say, let me make a decision because that is common in both countries, they have political stability, and that was his analysis. they will go straight to that which is stable. Where is the risk and the political gamble in coming here or Barbados or St Lucia?]*

And so it is very vitally important that we understand, and the truth be known, that unless there is that stability, tax incentives, investment code, all the skills in the world, they are not going to come here. *[Interruption]* I agree and that is why it's incumbent that behaviour from over there is going to create that stability. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, that which also helps has to do with the fact that there must be a solid attitude at least towards it. An attitude that does not reflect the repulsion of people wanting investment, behaving as they did like in the BEAL Aerospace Deal. You remember how some Members over there behaved and that is not in anyway going to get us there. We have a tradition of at least consulting a variety of people, the environmental sector the public in all of that, and in relation to that one, I must tell you that all of that was done. But tell me, did they consult anybody when they did their deals with BARAMA and the other one, AROAIMA? They did not. **But** what is good for them is not good for the government and that is the problem

we have. We know it would have brought tremendous job creation, tremendous income, flying us high in the sky as a nation knowing its science and technology, even though lots of people would have come from overseas to man that launching site.

This is important in the context of the cues for marginalisation. This is in context too of having more money to redistribute to areas that, at this stage now, are pretty depressed and poor.

It is important also, Mr Speaker, that we understand there can be certain contradictions as regards what we call the redistribution of wealth, and, again I make this argument because I know very well that my friend, Ravi Dev, wants the best for Guyanese people, just like, of course, my good friend, Mrs Debbie Backer, but you must have, if an industry is doing well, government's intervention, very judicious of course, to ensure that where there are depressed areas, some money be taken out from that to go to those depressed areas, and that is why it is important that there be the continuation of this sugar levy - another Bug-bear of my good friend, Mr Ravi Dev .

It is important because, indeed, if it is accruing some profits at this point in time, and he is saying government must at least redistribute it to some of the depressed areas, where will we get it from? What are the industries that are profitable although the profit levels are very low? One of them, of course, is the sugar industry and if we have to, in a sense, extract \$1.2 billion for the purposes of ensuring that some other Guyanese live with a house over them, with their families, what's wrong with that?

We must have, as he says, a government that is caring to redistribute the wealth, but you can only redistribute the wealth from some where and it is not wrong to take from a levy like the sugar levy and even if we have to go and give Lingerers, Lingerers are also Guyanese and they are entitled to it too. I wish, Mr Speaker, to state that there might be certain contradictions but we all know, as Parliamentarians that the basic objective is towards a more

appreciative understanding, in a sense, a more desirable outcome of one thing more happening for our people. That of course goes for all Parliamentarians, I would hope. But coming back to the point that for the sustenance of this kind of end, the means must be that we Guyanese have to, in every respect, ensure that is going to fade away investors or chase them away, that it does not happen.

It is important because no matter what we do as a small nation, we are not going to, in any respect be dominant in the world out there so as to tell investors come here. Notwithstanding the attributes of Guyana, they might very well still go to Kosova.

I want to make mention of this. In 1993, just after becoming the Administrators of State, in Guyana, this PPP/Civic Government ensured that those vital changes were made from 116 out of 13 of the raps, and I have it here for Direct Foreign Investment, what they FDIC, we were way down the ladder, notwithstanding the previous administration had gotten the BARAMA deal and all of that, we were, in points out of a hundred, 19.8. We were with Zaire in the Congo, Botswana, Gabon, Cambodia, but that is obviously the distinction, it was given away, now we don't have another four million acreage to give another forest concession here. And we have some, as the Hon. Minister Satyadeow Sawh indicated, one wanting to come, almost here, then they read about slow fire, more fire. What did it do to Jilin? He emphasised what was done. Comrades and Parliamentarians that we are going to probably have this cross talk and say, well, fine, they did come and they are not now coming. But unless we understand that the best for Guyana can only come in the circumstances when, of course all the regulatory mechanisms which we have been legislating for, all the attitudes are right in relation to their adherence to labour laws and so on are done, we are not going to get the best for Guyana . . . *[Interruption: 'What about Free and fair Elections...?'* "Of course, there has been free and fair elections, but you know those who want to run by the rules. When the rules create a certain party victoriou they say no, those rules were unconstitutional. You remember the ID card, Mr Speaker. Yes, when

you go down, in relation to the last elections, and even their own telling them, yes, it reflects the will of the people, they beat that person up, and they talk about free and fair elections.” [Applause]

So, we have what it takes to bring it in, except of course that instability, which in my view is but a deliberate attempt to keep them out and if that is going to be the deliberate view you are going to constantly have on what you now regard as this perception of marginalisation as probably the reality, because we are not going to change as a nation, because there is not going to be the economic progress necessary for that change, and that is why, it is important, Mr Speaker, that we do appreciate that there is need for this political stability. It can come. The government has a special role to play, the Opposition has a role to play, Labour has a special role to play, the business community has a special role to play. That's my call. My call is for all of us excluding none. We do appreciate that indeed this is an effort that must include all. We are not going to, in any way, change the image and perception of investors out there, unless we, as a nation, start indicating to them, that we do have a certain way we do business at the political level, at the economic level and that does not include, in any way, being violent, having coarsen sensibilities, being uncivil. No, we must appreciate that we have lots more to gain when they come here, and even if we do not like them, we are going to be civil and courteous about it.

Mr Speaker, we have had inclusiveness being paramount during the course of this eight years of this administration as against the stifling oppression of party paramountcy. That kind of cross talk ensures that you have to go back sometimes, because to make distinctions, you have to go back when they were there and against inclusiveness being paramount, when as against that which was party paramountcy, we do have almost every little objective today. There is a certain dialogue going on neither between the President and the Opposition Leader, or the Minister and certain shadow opposition leaders and all committees. It looks like it's a government by Committees, sometimes you want to believe that the constitutional

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role of decision makers are being bypassed and that is why Mrs. Riehl the other day did make mention that that was a rather harsh statement for Ramjattan to make, but, Mr Speaker, it was not harsh, it was intended to be law abiding. If the Minister has under the statutes the power to do certain things he must take into consideration what the joint committees are saying, and not be governed by joint committees. And I didn't intend it in that perspective, but you must understand that inclusiveness has been a part of this administration every aspect of Constitutional Reform since we came into government they have been part of . . . [Interruption: 'You had no say in that.' "Who said we didn't have any say in that? We started the process, you want to compare it as against 1980 when everything the government wanted then you had . . ."]

It is important, Mr Speaker, that these distinctions be made, all constitutional changes were as a result of participation from the Opposition at a very high level, at a qualitative level, not like in 1980, when people having dissenting views would have been beaten up just out here, when they would be making symbols that were in every respect a denigration of the Opposition, yes, and calling Minority Leader. Well, we have restored them to Opposition Leader status.

Mr Speaker, we could have objected to it. What is important then, in concluding, has to do with the fact that Guyana. . . , it will be a long haul. I always would like to repeat this, we are not in a journey that has a destination a couple of miles ahead, and when we reached there, we are finished. We are going to go there in steps and it is indeed a long haul. We have come a far way from the derelict status we were in and of course that is not going to be satisfactory to lots of people because the status we are in still means, we have a far way to go. But, of course, Mr Speaker, it is not beyond our collective responsibility and endeavour to rekindle that spirit that can take us there. I have seen it, we might be cross-talking here, but I know in the hearts of very many opposition Parliamentarians, Guyana is first, just like it is for us and there must be this resurgence of an extremely

objective way that we do things, removing especially bigotry and prejudice. We saw a lot of it peeping out, when they say, well okay, in Region 4 is on \$338 net per capita in relation to that.

But do we know that, that is statistics and stilts because there is so much more coming in for Georgetown, so much that is centrally done for Georgetown, all the Ministries are here, the hospital is here, the Supreme Court building is here, millions of dollars are going into that. What are we saying, that means that Region 4 has only \$338 as against \$1,100 for some other Region?. It is important that we do not use statistics to create divisions and the prejudice and the bigotry, the intolerance that takes on sometimes monstrously, ugly proportions. We have to extinguish the fires but slow or more.

Mr Speaker, unless that is done we are going to be in for a lot more of which they say it is, marginalisation, not render abuse, respectable and violence the noun. We have to, in every respect ensure that there be peace and in that sense, that's the only and the surest way to have the happiness that we, Guyanese so much seek.
[Applause]

The Speaker: Thank you, Hon Member.

The Hon. Member Mr Raphael Trotman

Mr Raphael G. C. Trotman: Mr Speaker, I rise like those before me to make my contribution on the Budget as tabled by the Hon. Minister of Finance. But before I address the issues arising out of the Budget, I note that the Hon. Member, Mr Ravindra Dev was kind enough to include me in his maiden speech having finally broken his silence in this House. And I wish, with your leave, to pay him the same courtesy and therefore to reply to him.

I wish, in replying, to say that I differ, in that as a lawyer, which he was able to remind me of. I know that I make no pronouncements or I take no steps unless I am armed with empirical evidence to prove what it is I am saying. And so I would say to the Hon. Member,

Mr Dev that at the appropriate time, if that time arises, and I would join with him in ushering in that time, he should make his presentation and what he perceived to be the ethnic unbalances in the Security Forces of this country, and I wish to remind him of my party's position, and that is, that we can find no form of discrimination in the sense that recruits are not discriminated against. We are not aware that dietary requirements are not met, we are not aware that religious practices are not observed, but we are opened to hear from him at the appropriate time.

I wish as well with your leave, Mr Speaker, to reply to something that my learned friend and colleague, the Hon. Member, Mr Ramjattan, said I agreed with him, like I know all of the Members on this side of the House do, that political stability is a *sine qua non*, for development yes, as the Hon. Mr Insanally said yesterday. But, Mr Speaker, we must, in saying so agree that development is not a one sided affair, that it takes two hands to clap and we are not to be blamed for everything.

When the Hon. Member mentioned the BEAL Deal, I think he made a tremendous mistake. The BEAL Deal, Mr Speaker, as you know turned out to be a farce and we know that the persons who came with that deal did not pull out because of political instability in Guyana; they pulled out because they could not meet certain conditions and criteria in their own country. They were unable to satisfy certain State Department requirements and that is a known fact. *[Applause]* I need to remind him as well that whatever trappings and trimmings that deal may have come with, it was as far as I am concerned, Mr Speaker, nothing but a green heart shaft that would have been pierced, driven into this country had it been allowed to continue in its present or past form.

It is the Hon Member, Mr Ramjattan, I recalled writing extensively, quite publicly about the skewed system of the awarding of contracts where the contract for the building of the Berbice Bridge did not go as he wanted it to. That was not a matter of political

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instability; that was a matter of internal administration which he ought to address there. So, when he speaks, he should remember to quote all the facts because hypocrisy is not one of the attributes, rather it is not one of the things that I wish to attribute to my learned friend.

And so, this afternoon, Mr Speaker, I wish to speak on this Budget. In doing so, I note that like previous budgets, last year, before that, the Budget is unimaginative and quite superficial. At the outset we are compelled to inquire where is the vision, where is the dynamism, where is the verve and determination which one characterises governance in this Republic of Guyana and on behalf of the People's National Congress/Reform. I rise to convince you that these estimates are out of touch with the realities that we face.

They are wholly inadequate to tackle the myriad of social, political, and economical difficulties which confront us as a nation. These estimates, Mr Speaker, and it grieves me to say this, are plainly insufficient and unfortunately we are going to pay the price in the months and years ahead, because the root causes of our underdevelopment remains unaddressed. Unemployment, remains very, very high, trade and industry are stagnated, tourism remains a pipe-dream, the exploration of new markets and initiatives to sugar, rice and other crops; bauxite, gold and diamonds are not a priority engagement, though the new and Hon. Minister for Foreign Trade would have us believe otherwise.

There seems to be a contentment with playing a passive role whilst dynamic changes both internal and external overwhelm us. My colleague, the Hon. Mr Winston Murray described this as inertia and ambivalence and I wish to agree with him.

There has been in the last few months more upheaval in this country than there have been before the elections of March 19. Places like Albion on the Corentyne are calling for social justice. Imagine the plight of the residents of Enterprise on the East Coast alongside their Buxtonian comrades. Imagine De Kinderen, Linden, Essequibo

Islands, Regions 8, 9 and 1, as the Hon. Mr Ricky Khan pointed out last evening. This is the state of our dear Republic at the beginning of the twenty-first century, we are in peril and there appears to be no macro-plan for rescuing this nation. We continue to grope feebly and uncertainly in the dark, afraid to be assertive, afraid to take risk and afraid to take the proverbial bull by the horn, to yank this country out of the morass that it is obviously stuck in.

Recent events have confirmed what we on this side of the House have known for some time and have been saying that the PPP/Civic Administration on its own is incapable of giving effective governance to this country. I did see reported in today's newspapers comments made at a press conference by the Hon. Member, Mr Ramotar saying that his government and his party intend to broaden the base of inclusive governance and we welcome these statements, and we, of course, will withhold our praise for them until such time that these sentiments bear fruits.

And so it is, Mr Speaker, from Linden to Corentyne, the inability to capably manage the affairs of State is being manifested. The time has come for more inclusive government and we agree, the time has come for the openings of business. Why for instance, Mr Speaker, can't we as stakeholders be involved in the development and presentation of a Budget every year? I can find no worthy answer to the contrary. Why can't we as stakeholders lift the threshold? So that very important matters are not decided upon by a simple majority, but matters which, for example, go to the root of our development, which touch and concern our national security, our judiciary, education, to name only a few, should not be decided by a simple majority. And it is my plea this afternoon, that we take on board meaningful proposals, whenever they may come and from wherever they may come, which ensure that the development process is carried out to the benefit of all Guyanese.

Today, I propose to dwell predominantly on the issue of Legal Affairs of this country and in so doing, Mr Speaker, to show that

year after year, we have been met with disappointment after disappointment by the legal sector and this is reflected. I believe or rather a direct result of poor management. This sector has failed for a number of years to make a meaningful contribution to the national development drive.

This Budget has made little or no mention of this all important sector. We are hoping to see adequate representation of the government's commitment to the resuscitation of the legal sector and matters pertaining thereto. The law has been described from time to time as the cornerstone of any society and we know that without it, we are nowhere.

Last year, I made similar remarks and the retort was that I along with some others were engaged in a conspiracy to tamper with the work of the Attorney General by removing attorneys from those Chambers and depositing them at a certain law firm in Croal Street.

Last year, we were faced with a spectacle which happily is no longer in our midst. We cannot help this year but exhale and rejoice that we have been relieved of the irrelevance and offensive remarks that this House is formally subjected to and as you say in Guyana, *dis time nah lang time*.

Recently the nation was told quite unfortunately that it had lost because an amendment proposed to a bill was not passed. This amendment to which I refer was a notorious proviso, which this very House only days ago debated in a bill, but rather decided not to proceed with. What in fact, Mr Speaker, was lost or were lost were good faith, fair play and togetherness, these which characterised the Constitutional Reform process. Many persons in this House participated in the Constitutional Reform process, they sat as Chairpersons, they sat as ordinary members of the Constitutional Reform Commission of the Special Select Committees on Constitutional Reform and then finally in the Oversight Committee and there was always consensus.

The nation benefitted by the legislation in the form that it came to the House because at the end of the day, this is what the people of Guyana said they wanted. They wanted, Mr Speaker, to encourage consultation between the Leader of the Opposition and the President of Guyana in the appointment of a Chancellor and a Chief Justice. They wanted to encourage partnership and moreover they wanted to eschew unilateral and high-handed executive action. The vote therefore of this Constitutional Reform Commission was unanimous on the issue and for the benefit of anyone who may not be au fait with the meaning of unanimity in the CRC situation, it meant that the PPP/Civic, the People's National Congress, as it then was, the Alliance for Guyana and the TUF together with civil society partners, all voted unanimously for the recommendation that the Leader of the Opposition and the President should meet and identify a Chancellor and Chief Justice.

We were therefore surprised and horrified to hear that the nation has lost, to hear that is not what was right when it was before, like I said Members of the government side voted in favour of that very provision. And so it was not the people who lost, but those who attempted to tamper with the wishes of the people, they were the defeated.

Incidentally, Mr Speaker, while still on the Judiciary and in the very Bill which came last week the Constitution (Amendment) (No. 4) Bill 2001, there is a reference to part-time Judges, we urgently need to go a step further and make provisions in the rules for these Judges to be appointed and to function, because as we all know there is a paucity of Judges on the High Court and the Appellate Court benches and I trust, that the Hon. Attorney General will take note.

As I mentioned the Hon. Attorney General, I think it is also well known that my party has taken a position on his appointment. This position has nothing at all to do with his academic qualifications, with his professional prowess. In fact, we were so impressed with

his skills of advocacy at the Bar that he was elevated to the rank, to the privilege of Senior Counsel and appointed by the Hon. Member, Mr Hugh Desmond Hoyte, Leader of the Opposition. So we take no issue with the man but we have a difficulty with the manner of his appointment given the fact that he presided over as Chairman . . .
[Interruption]

The Speaker: Hon Member, the rules are very clear: if you are going to deal with the conduct of a Member of the National Assembly, you have to do so by a Motion.

Mr Raphael G. C. Trotman: Very well, Sir, as it pleases you. I am grateful, but I just wish to say that we are nonetheless willing to be convinced that he is capable and we will support any meaningful initiatives that he brings to this House.

This year's Budget presentation, Mr Speaker, entitled *Moving Guyana Forward Together*, was presented to us some days ago, page 36 of which, I find the words and I quote them for your benefit and, equally important, it says:

in the quest for peace and stability is the observance of the rule of law.

The Judicial system must be able to dispense justice swiftly, fair and impartially

for this is the essence of a system of good governance.

Unfortunately, Mr Speaker, nothing follows after those words and an entire page is left blank. Like I said before, we were disappointed that no meaningful proposals were set in this document as to how the Government intends to tackle this problem, how it intends to advance these ideals which sound so elegant, so noble and stately? We could not agree with these words anymore, Mr Speaker, and wish to commend to the Hon. Member, Mr Saisnarine Kowlessar, these words which were spoken by the great Blackstone;

and I quote:

that the law is a standard and guardian of our liberty, it circumscribes and defends it

Justice in Guyana, is fast becoming an empty concept. The liberty of the subject is not seen as paramount. It is an undisputable fact that the state of the legal system in Guyana is broken. Justice is too often denied to too many. This, is not entirely the fault of the government, but the government must stand at the forefront in any fight to restore the dignity of the legal profession. The government has to be the agency that cements the pieces together again.

Below page 36, as I mentioned, there is emptiness. The Minister, and by extension, the government has failed to fill in the blanks by showing:

- How the Supremacy of the Rule of Law will be restored?
- How after the damage of the last four years, the Attorney General Chambers will be repaired?
- How the facilities of Judges will be improved?
- How the process of litigation will be simplified and hastened?
- How the Deeds Registry will be made into a modern institution?

These are some of the questions which we are left to answer ourselves and it is perhaps unfair to ask the new Hon. Attorney General to give answers to these because, after all, he was not the person who presided over the affairs of that all important sector.

Nonetheless there has to be a system whereby some level of accountability is maintained and I would trust that he would have exchanged words with his predecessor, who unfortunately and I refer

of course to the erudite and very charismatic, Mr Raison. Mr Raison is not here to entertain us with his answers and I would not wish to appear as attacking him in the absence, but we would expect to hear answers to a period when he reigned supreme in the Attorney General's Chambers.

As I mentioned accountability, I cannot allow to escape the most recent of scandals which has reared its head in the Ministry of Legal Affairs. It is in my opinion an unacceptable paradox, that it is in this Ministry that this scandal has come, A ministry which hitherto has enjoyed an unbroken, unblemished record of uprightness and propriety. Where is the money for the printing of these books to come from? That question has been asked by no lesser person than His Excellency the President. Has the money been paid already? Why has there been no public tendering? Who it was that decided that no one in Guyana was capable of carrying these works?

This, Mr Speaker, is a bitter bite that flows from corruption and cronyism. This is the bitter bite that we have to spit out from our body politic before it corrupts us. So, Mr Speaker, when at the swearing in of us Members of this August body, the Hon. Member Mr Husman Ali made what we thought was an inadvertent slip of the tongue and he pledged and swore that he would honour, uphold and preserve the Constitution of the corrupt Republic of Guyana and then he quickly corrected himself. *[Laughter]* We, Mr Speaker, understood that the Hon. Member made a mistake and we did not chastise him for it, but, Mr Speaker, I could not help but wonder whether the Hon. Member was aware of something that I was not. But nonetheless, even today, I know the Hon. Gentleman and I would give him the benefit of the doubt. Something does not sit well.

What is even more offensive about his business with the printing of the Laws, is that this contract was ostensible signed on about the 13th or 14th March, 2001, during a period when the President had proclaimed - the Government rather - that it would put itself under a system of voluntary restraint and that it would enter into no contract

with any external person or agency. Yet we find that three or four days before general elections such a contract for \$41 million is executed with an external agency which remains elusive. No one seems to know who these persons are? What are their track records in this field of work? This is reprehensible and strikes at the very heart of the requirements for good faith which is so much needed at this point in time as we try to mend the ills of the past. One wonders what else would be hidden and waiting to be revealed.

Something in the meantime, Mr Speaker, does not smell nicely, something is amiss, but as Lord Denning was fond of saying, the truth shall come out. When therefore, the Hon. Minister of Finance made the upright statement about the rule of law, he must first look within and around him. There are those who are going to cause this government grave embarrassment and we wish to caution the Hon. Minister to be careful.

Mr Speaker, these Estimates, looking at them which we intend to approve are gigantic by any means of imagination and I urge this House to demand, like I said earlier, an account either from the Hon. Attorney General or whosoever may be able to give an account, of what has happened to monies passed? How well were they spent? What are the plans for the future?

We hope to see a strengthening of the Chambers of the Attorney General so that sound legal advisory representation to the government could be given and we trust that the habit of contracting out, except in only exceptional cases, would be discontinued. Already there are rumours which we choose not to believe that a certain predecessor in the office may enjoy certain privileges in this regard.

When will a qualified Solicitor General be appointed? It has been eight years since a Solicitor General has graced the Chambers of the Attorney General. When will the Money Laundering Act and Deeds Registry Act be put in place? These are matters that require urgent attention and, like I said before, we are willing to give our

support to their implementation whenever that comes. The Hon. Minister of Finance is cautioned therefore to have a full appreciation of the requirements of meeting the high standard expected in the maintenance of law and order. There are too many maladies that require urgent cure and the PNC/Reform expects that in the very near future promises made will be fulfilled.

- One such promise, Mr Speaker, made in 1999 by the then and erudite Attorney General, Mr Raison was that there would be an immediate establishment of a Law Reform Commission. We are now three years past and still in urgent need of a Law Reform Commission.

- We need to hear about the strengthening of the Judiciary, better remuneration for Judges, Magistrates, Judicial Officers and their supporting staff.

- We need to hear about addressing the perception and/or the reality of the extra judicial killings

- We need to hear the modernisation of the Police Force

- We need to hear about transparency in the process of tendering and procurement.

- When are we going to address these matters especially of course in the Ministry of Legal Affairs?

We need to hear about the regularization of Community Policing which I have indicated before is a good idea, but can easily go bad if left uncontrolled. Only today a citizen wrote in the Stabroek News, the letter column, that a Police Station built at Enmore is a waste of money. Yesterday we heard from the Hon. Minister Gajraj that a new police station has been built at Enmore, yet today a citizen from the area cries out that it is a waste and all kinds of ills are committed in this station.

When are we going to see evidence of preparation to the coming of the Caribbean Court of Justice?

Last week, we took a first step in passing legislation, rather to amend the Constitution, to cater for this Court, but we need to see that financial allocations are being made. We need to see that persons are being trained, we need to see that consideration is being given to who our nominees are going to be to fill the positions of Judges on the Caribbean Court of Justice. As always, we again promise to support these initiatives when they are being implemented.

Mr Speaker, I wish to say something particularly on the impact of a failing legal system on investment and growth, Hon. Members, Mr Murray and Mr Khan, on this side of the House have already pointed out the pitfalls and dangers of levelling the playing field or rather of not establishing rules for equal application to every investor, small and large, indigenous or foreign. Many persons including some in this House, herald the virtues of the economic growth of the Asian Tigers. Many, however, Mr Speaker, do not go further to give careful analysis as to why there was an Asian crisis known as a melt down. One of the common trends running through those failed financial sectors in East Asia was the presence of weak legal systems, laws were lacking and attitudes were bad and they paid the price. We need to wake up and address our own situation before we head in similar directions. We must therefore equipt the various arms of our legal sector to adequately address the economy we seek to build.

There are still rather too many complaints by investors of being treated unfairly, harshly, discriminately. The Hon. Member Mr Khan, even said that people were hustled. I have no evidence of that, but that is what he said. Some investors complained of not being entertained at all, that their inquiries are not even answered, that their trips to Guyana bore no fruit and that they got nothing for their investment and had to leave empty handed. We must have an Investment Code which addresses these and other matters. We must be able to post these rules and have persons abide by them. The

system must be in place to complete performance of agreements, to allow persons to recoup from bad agreements. This is where our courts have a very vital and important role to play.

Investors as you know, are loathe to invest in countries where the courts can offer little or no protection. And so we agreed that political stability is important but so too are other equally important matters which affect investor confidence.

Mr Speaker, before taking my seat, I wish to say something on Border and National Security of our country. The Guyana Defence Force which I will speak on quite briefly, must be praised for the work it continues to do and has been doing since its inception in 1966.

My learned colleagues the Hon. Minister and the Hon. Mrs Backer, have already spoken on the Guyana Police Force, which some now want to call the Guyana Police Service, but the Guyana Defence Force has proven time and time again that it is independent and resilient and so it was with a great set of embarrassment that we had to endure the expulsion last June of a rig from water that we know to be ours. This, Mr Speaker, did not bode well for investment in this country. This had nothing to do with political instability; it had to do with the inability to cope with crisis situations as they arose.

In my opinion, Mr Speaker, must be afforded the requisite training and materials to carry out its mandate and we welcome the imminent arrival of the **HMS ORWELL**, which we have learnt is likely to be renamed after a certain county . . . [Interruption: 'Has been. ']

Yes, which is to be renamed the Essequibo and to become the flagship of the coastguard.

The recapitalization of the Guyana Defence Force must continue apace as the GDF has proven that it is strong and independent and can be relied upon to protect our territorial integrity and support the

rule of Law in Guyana. There is no need to continue the punishment of with-holding funding any longer.

We, Mr Speaker, have to join together as a matter of national urgency and importance in ensuring that the GDF can acquit its mandate in fine form. We are concerned, Mr Speaker, and rightly so, that the resources we are poised to exploit after the Hon. Minister of Finance would have been allowed to have his Budget and his proposals materialized, that those resources would have already been exploited. I refer to our gold, our diamond, ore, timber and marine resources.

We have heard in this House, during these Debates, about the large numbers of foreigners in this country, and whilst, Mr Speaker, we do not intend to be xenophobic, we have nothing against foreigners, we are concerned about the unregulated presence of large numbers of foreigners, who without licence, without permission, without regulation exploit our ores, cut our timbers, paved our roads from their country to ours. We welcome them, but they have to be regulated and the people of Guyana have to benefit alongside these persons.

Again, the Guyana Defence Force has to be allowed to play a critical role in this regard together with, of course, initiatives which I am told are underway in the Ministry of Home Affairs. So Mr Speaker, the People's National Congress/Reform recommends an urgent review of the situation and ask that action be taken accordingly.

We call on the government to undertake very shortly a defence review to critically assess our strengths and weaknesses and make preparations therefor. The recapitalization of the army must, as I said before, continue and not be done in an ad hoc manner. That is why a Defence Review is so urgently needed. Let us promptly establish the Defence Commission to examine these and other matters and, like I said, I join in supporting the Hon. Member Mr Dev, in calling for the establishment of a commission to look into all matters, just not ethnic balances or unbalances, but we need a holistic review

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of where we are. Legislation that was recently passed must be implemented in this regard.

Finally, we welcome as well the statement made by the Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs that he wishes to establish a Border and National Security Standing Committee of this House. We will support that initiative and we would trust that initiative would be quickly put in place.

Before I take my seat, Mr Speaker, let me once again join with those who have spoken, in saying that, we on this side of the House, genuinely and sincerely have the good of Guyana at heart. Like I said before, it takes two hands to clap and whilst, Mr Speaker, we may be accused of many things, there are many things of which we can also accuse those who accuse us as well.

Today, however, we choose not to accuse, but to hope, Mr Speaker, that we will together be able to move this country forward to betterment. Thank You. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you, Hon Member.

We can take the suspension now for half-an-hour, please.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING at 16:55 H

RESUMPTION OF SITTING at 17:30 H

The Speaker: The Hon Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs

Hon. Doodnauth Singh: Mr Speaker, – *[Interruption]*

[17.31 H - *Withdrawal of People's National Congress/Reform from the Chamber*]

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*All Members of the People's National Congress/Reform
withdrew from the Chamber]*

I wish to associate myself with the remarks which have been made with respect to the presentation of the Budget by the Hon. Minister, Mr Saisnarine Kowlessar.

Mr Speaker, I also wish to congratulate and I was about to say my learned friend, but protocol demands that I congratulate the Hon. Member, Mr Winston Murray and the Hon. Member, Mr Raphael Trotman, for the presentations that they have made to the Debate on the Budget. I am particularly pleased to say that in the presentation, the Hon. Member, Mr Winston Murray, referred to two matters which I would wish to deal with.

Continued in Part II

National Assembly Debates

**PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF
THE FIRST SESSION (2001) OF THE EIGHTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA
UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA**

Part II

9TH SITTING

2.00 PM

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Continued from Part I

Firstly, he adverted to the fact that the award of consultancy contract is an unnecessary mechanism and that on many occasions, it is totally unnecessary. I wish to advise Members of this Assembly that at the highest level a decision has been taken that no consultancy contracts will be awarded despite the recommendations of IDB and other International Agencies, that at the highest level, a decision has been made that unless it is absolutely necessary, no consultancy contracts will be awarded.

Secondly, the Hon. Member, Mr Winston Murray, referred to the Tender Board Procedures and he said in the course of his presentation, that it is necessary that there should be a level playing field and towards that end legislation mechanisms ought to be put in place. On hearing the presentation of the Hon. Member, Mr Murray, I immediately gave instructions to the Chief Parliamentary Council to ensure that a draft is put on my desk within the week, after he would have had the advantage of looking at similar types of legislations in similar Commonwealth Territories. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, I intend to put that before Cabinet as soon as I am satisfied that the draft takes into account all the necessary concerns which have been expressed. *[Applause]* and I would wish that Cabinet would approve and, that thereafter the legislative process will be put in motion to ensure transparency and legislative mechanisms for

the awarding of contracts. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, ex necessitate, the tools of lawyers and the requirement of the Administration of Justice and laws and Court decisions, but before I deal with those matters, when I took the oath of Office of Attorney General, I reminded myself that in 1961, I was a Member of the Attorney General Chambers and I served under three distinguished Attorney Generals namely, Mr A.M. Austin, Dr Fenton Ramsahoye, Sir Shridath Ramphal and Solicitor General Dr Mohamed Shahabuddin.. It was an honour and a privilege to have been a Member of the Attorney General's Chambers at that time. Some of my distinguished colleagues at that Chamber, at that time included Mr Bren Pollard, Mr Keith Massiah, Mr Kenneth George and several other persons who have attained excellence in the practice of the profession and even wider afield.. Regrettably, when I went to the Chambers on my appointment, I discovered that out of a complement of twenty lawyers, there were only six, two of whom were on contract. It is a sad state of affairs, I am fortunate in informing this August body that since then four lawyers have been recruited, who are not on scholarship because the scholarship students are required to serve the government and I have spoken to Dr Nanda Gopaul of the Public Service Ministry, requesting of him that all those scholarship students, who qualified and have to serve the government should be made available to the Attorney General's Chambers. *[Applause]*

As I said, ex necessitate, the requirement is for the ensuring that our laws are updated, that our law reports are available, and towards that end, I have been in discussion with the Chairman of the Law Revision Commission of Trinidad and Tobago, a personal friend and a former colleague, Justice of Appeal Guywa Persaud, who has assured me of his assistance and that my request for him to send to Guyana, an officer from his Chamber, to assist in the updating of our laws will be favourably considered.

In addition, Mr Speaker, I have been blessed in establishing a

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relationship with a former Attorney General, Dr Fenton Ram sahoie, who has informed me that on every occasion when he visits Guyana, which is likely to be twice per month, he will make himself available for advice, consultations and whatever assistance that is required of him to myself. *[Applause]*

[17:44H - Mr Stanley Ming entered the Chamber and took his seat]

Mr Speaker, there has been the allegations that lots of work of the State have been sent out to private lawyers, I myself have been a beneficiary of that system to a very large extent but I can assure you that I would wish that system to cease and one of the first instructions I gave to the Permanent Secretary of my Ministry was to send a memorandum to every government Department, informing them that constitutionally the Attorney General is the principal legal adviser to the Government and that his advice must be sought in every occasion when it was a matter involving a legal consideration. *[Applause]*

I can assure this Assembly as well, Mr Speaker, that as I said to the President, when he was in consultations with me for accepting the position of Attorney General, I informed him, that basically, I was an advocate and that I was not a lawyer who wished to be in Chambers, and that I will continue, as far as is humanly possible, to represent the State in every matter in which the State is involved. *[Applause]*

I wish to assure this House that it is in only exceptional circumstances that briefs will be farmed out to lawyers in the Private Bar.

I want to also express a desire which I would wish to put into effect, not in the too distant future, but within a short while. We are aware, Sir, that government's allocation of houseboats are being extensively done, and that the Ministry of Agriculture is required to

give leases to persons. At the moment the Attorney General's Chambers is not in a position to deal with those matters, but I would wish that in the not too distant future that the Attorney General's Chambers may be in a position to establish a conveyancing department, so that we would not take away totally from the Private Bar the revenue which they are able to collect at this stage but to be able to benefit from the establishment of that conveyancing centrum.
[Applause]

There are several matters, Sir, that require serious attention to establish as firmly as possible an Attorney General's Chambers which can speak of the excellence that pervaded the Chambers at a particular time. What I would wish to say, Sir, is this: it is a known fact that the hindrance to retaining and ensuring that lawyers join those Chambers, is the poor salaries that is paid to professionals. I don't know if I might be able to persuade the Minister of Finance and the former Minister of Finance now President to ensure that we are in a comparable position to attract professionals and retain their services in the Attorney General's Chambers.

[17:50H - Mr Jerome Khan entered the Chamber and took his seat]

Law Revision - Mr Speaker, it was stated that there was a Law Revision Commission, in effect it never functioned. I intend to ensure that a proper Law Revision Commission is put in place and that it is effective and to that end I have requested out of Trinidad all legislations that have taken place to ensure the wider field of legislative process than we have been able to achieve. I wish to assure this House that at all stages, I will have consultations with the executive and officials of the Bar Association.

I am happy to say that, at the swearing-in ceremony, both the President and the Vice-President of the Bar Association were present and it was a signal honour to me at that swearing-in ceremony to have had so many distinguished Members of the Senior Bar attending

that function. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, the Ministry of Legal Affairs is charged with the responsibility of the Deeds Registry and the State Solicitor's Office. I have not been able to meet with the members of that staff, but what I want to say to you, Sir, is that we all know of the allegations which have been made with respect to the Deeds Registry. Those of us, who have practice at the Bar, and even though I did not have a large conveyancing, I know of the difficulty that people have in obtaining transports and the allegations of corruption and impropriety at that Registry. I can assure you, Sir, that on the first occasion that I meet with the members of that staff, I will put down the rules clearly that every step must be taken to ensure the conveyancing mechanism is put in place and within a reasonable time and that if any official is found practicing as a lawyer, disciplinary and dismissal proceedings will follow immediately. *[Applause]*

The State Solicitor's Office - Sir, the Acting State Solicitor has complained to me that she is unnecessarily burdened with the preparation of legal matters in addition to her other duties. A decision has since been taken that all litigation matters will only be done at the Attorney General's Chambers. She will no longer be saddled with that burden. Sir, to enhance the Chambers immediately, steps have been taken to advertise the position of Solicitor General, Deputy Solicitor General and State Solicitor. At an interview I had this morning with Mr Miles Fitzpatrick on behalf of Stabroek News he told me, "Doods, that is a good idea you have, but nobody will answer the application because of the low salaries that are being offered and it would be necessary to have those positions filled by contract officers." Sir, all I could say to you is that whatever is necessary to ensure that the Chambers are adequately staffed, the necessary representations will be made by me to those concerned, with the expectation and hope that those in office will see the wisdom in ensuring that those Chambers are adequately staffed. *[Applause]*

Judiciary - Sir, with respect to the Judiciary, if I might remind this

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August body, there was in Trinidad a conflict position which arose between the Chief Justice of Trinidad and the Attorney General. The conflict was about the independence of the Judiciary and the role of the Attorney General vis-a-vis the Judiciary. The result of that conflict was that Commission of Inquiry was appointed, headed by Lord Mc Kay of Scotland and another member from India, the distinguished Jurist, Dr Singhche. I intend to look very closely at the recommendations of that report which has not yet been made available to the public, but which I expect would be made available to me through the good offices of my good friend in Trinidad, Mr Lawrence Maharaj.

Sir, I know that the Chief Justice was able to procure out of Trinidad and out of the OECS States the remuneration package for Judges in the Caribbean and in Trinidad and I know as well, Sir, that the Chief Justice took that personally to the President. What his efforts would result in, I am not aware of at this stage, but I know that the Chancellor and the Chief Justice have committed to enhancing effective dispensation of justice despite the difficulties we have in our jurisdiction. In fact I have been the brunt of the Chancellor's position in that I had appeared before her as Attorney General in an appeal and I was unable to respond to the arguments of the respondent and so I was seeking an adjournment and she said, "Mr Singh, no adjournment. When you come to the Court of Appeal, you've got to be prepared to argue." As a result I was able to waffle for the entire duration until the adjournment was taken.

If that system is put in place, Sir, it will ensure that the System of Justice, the Administration of Justice, the Rule of Law, and the Entitlement to which citizens are, that is, the fundamental right to have their matters dealt with fundamentally, within a reasonable time will be ensured. But at the same time, Sir, the mechanism for ensuring that proper Administration of Justice must be put in place, and I know that the Chancellor and the Chief Justice have assured me that they will do everything that is humanly possible to see that that is done. In fact, the Chancellor has said to me, "Mr Singh, as

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soon as you are settled down in the Office, I want to have a meeting with you and the Chief Justice.” So the Government is committed to the ensuring of the Administration of Justice, and I am grateful to my learned friend the Hon. Member, Mr Rajkumar for bringing to my attention that at the Sub-

Registry in New Amsterdam efforts have already been put in place to ensure its efficiency.

Sir, you will be aware of the fact that in the area of the refurbishment of several buildings, much has been done. Magistrates Court I know of, Supreme Court I know of. I believe there is recently established a Supreme Court of Judicature in Essequibo. Every effort is therefore being put in place to make sure that the citizenry benefit from the Administration of Justice.

As a practitioner, Sir, I have had to file proceedings seeking early hearings, attempting to have put in place rulings by court that persons who are indicted for criminal offences must be given a hearing within a reasonable time. To that effect, Sir, recently it has been brought to my attention by Minister Teixeira that in relation to juvenile offenders and young persons there is a long wait. She has requested of me, that I should take steps to ensure that a special Magistrate is appointed to ensure that people who fall in the category of young people and juvenile offenders have their cases heard within a reasonable time. In addition she has advised me that there is a facility which we have put in place so that they are not kept at the lock-ups, or the prisons or at the Salvation Army, but at this facility which she has available to house at least, I believe, about one hundred persons.

Sir, even before I sat down in my chair as it was, Minister Shadick came over to me, “Mr Singh, I want a special Magistrate for domestic matters.” I said that we don’t have Magistrates even for ordinary matters, how am I going to get a special Magistrate for you? She said, “But I want it.”

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Sir, I know that the Government is committed to ensuring that everything is done to address the grievances that citizens have. I was not a party to the Constitutional Reform, but briefly in my capacity as Attorney General, I was required and asked by Minister Reepu Daman Persaud to look at some of these provisions at very short notice with respect to a particular matter and you will recall it is in relation to the proviso, but at the same time, I looked at another provision which was that even though the age of Judges was extended, there was also a requirement that a misdemeanor in office can result in the dismissal of a Judge, if that Judge does not give a decision, and I expect that it will be a written decision, within a reasonable time. I don't know what time was specifically referred to. So here is another mechanism.

Sir, I want to bring to your attention the benefit of my experience overseas. I have appeared in a number of matters both at first instance and the Appellate Court in Trinidad. I have argued substantial matters before first instance Judges and within two weeks of the conclusion of the arguments, a forty to fifty page judgement was provided. I would wish that we would be able to achieve that sort of situation within a reasonable time. I don't want to say what is a reasonable time. But, Sir, that is what I would wish as Attorney General that we would be able to say to our citizenry, that your cases are heard from day to day and that in conclusion of that case within a matter of a week or two, at least an oral decision is given and thereafter put in writing.

Mr Speaker, what can we do as a nation to enhance the Administration of Justice? There are several things that we can do; I need not burden this August Assembly. That ought to be some kind of discussion at Committee with private persons.

Sir, I have looked at the relevant files with respect to the establishment of the Caribbean Court of Appeal, the files may not be up-to-date, at least those that I have looked at but one thing is certain and that is, Guyana has been a signatory to the establishment of the

Caribbean Court of Appeal and that as far as I am aware, steps have been taken to do these things:

1. To refurbish a building in Trinidad known as NIPDEC House of that for the temporary housing of the Court of Appeal.
2. A site has been identified and NIPDEC has provided the Estimates for the construction of that building in the vicinity of TT \$30 million. I am not sure how the financing arrangement would be going.

In addition, I know the rules establishing jurisdiction and procedure has been drawn and I would expect that at the coming Heads of Government Conference this weekend the Court and its establishment and its citing would come into effect, would be on the agenda.

As I say to you, Sir, the Government is committed. We recognised that in any society, there is a question of priority, in every society budgetary allocation is based on what revenue is earned and that if there is a crisis in this society, if there is a situation which results in the situation being considered not safe for investment, not safe for the establishment of the rights of citizens, not safe for people to be in their houses, then there will be no revenue earning capacity and neither will there be the ability to provide the services that a State requires.

Mr Speaker, as Attorney General, I don't wish to trespass on areas other than legal, but I want to assure you, Sir, in my capacity as Attorney General, I would at all times, be committed to giving of my best the legal expertise that I have acquired over forty-three years of practice. *[Applause]* The legal expertise that I entered upon even before the President was born, the legal expertise that I have had established and acquired throughout my practice in Guyana and throughout the Caribbean and that was said by the Hon. Member, Mr Trotman, my learned friend, that they don't challenge my legal ability

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and my expertise in any way and that it was a recognition of that legal expertise and ability that the former President Hugh Desmond Hoyte gave to me the accolade of Senior Council. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, I want to deal very briefly with a matter that was raised by my learned friend Mr Trotman *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Time, Hon. Member

Hon. Harripersaud Nokta: Mr Speaker, I move to ask that the Hon. Member be given fifteen minutes to conclude his speech.

Question **put** and **agreed** to.

Hon. Doodnauth Singh: Mr Speaker, I don't need fifteen minutes but I am grateful to Hon. Minister Nokta for requesting of you that time span.

Sir, it is the issue that has been raised with respect to the printing of the revised laws of Guyana. Mr Speaker, on assuming the Office of Attorney General, I requested of my Permanent Secretary that the file in relation to the awarding of the contract of the printing of the revised laws be given to me. That request was complied with and I have looked at the file, I have read it as carefully as I could, but because of certain statements which have emanated from other quarters, all I would wish to state at this stage in response to the Hon. Member, Mr Trotman's query, is that that contract in one of the clauses required:

the establishment of an irrevocable letter of credit and/or alternatively a deposit in an ESCRO Account fifty per cent of the award before any steps will be taken to have anything done.

Mr Speaker, I am very please to report to this August Assembly that no irrevocable letter of credit was established neither was any monies deposited in any ESCRO Account and no funds of the

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Government has been committed under the terms of that contract.
[Applause]

Mr Speaker, I don't wish to make any other reference because as you will appreciate that matter is being addressed and investigated in other areas.

Mr Speaker, I wish to say how very grateful I am for this opportunity which has been afforded to me by President Jagdeo. I want to tell you that I said to him that I will do several lucrative briefs in Trinidad and you have to compensate me, you have to give me a practice allowance. He said to me, Mr Singh, it is time for you to serve your country, some national service. I wanted to remind him at that stage that in 1961, when I joined the Chambers, it was the princely salary of \$380 per month and when I left nine years later, it was the princely sum of \$840 per month and that I had served my national service even before he came. [Applause]

The Speaker: Thank you Hon Member.

The Hon. Member Stanley Ming.

[18.08 H]

Mr C. Stanley Ming: Mr Speaker, I rise to join in this Debate in this Honourable House surrounding the Budget, as presented by the Hon Minister of Finance, Mr Kowlessar-- [Interruption] [Pause]

[18.09 H - Members of the People's National Congress Reform entered the Chamber]

The Speaker: Please continue, Mr Ming.

Mr C. Stanley Ming: Mr Speaker, I wish to mirror the sentiments as expressed by the Hon. Member, Mr Dev, in his opening remarks, when he said that this should not be a forum in which we seek to score points. I think it is important that we try our best not to do so. I

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have a very long memory of what happened to me the last time I tried to score points, which was some years ago, when I was attempting to win the Caribbean Championship while racing and that attempt ended in a crash at over 110 miles per hour after which I was given up as dead I have memories of trying to score points.

Mr Speaker, this House has been a learning experience for me and it is my intention to try my best to make meaningful contributions to the deliberations in some small way.

Mr Speaker, I am guided by an article I read in a recent review "The Guyana Review of 2001" which says that Guyana's historic Eighth Parliament has much to do and that this Assembly should be less of a talking shop, where the talk really does not matter and more of a place for the meeting of minds. At the bottom line it may be argued that the challenge is to create a new political culture of inclusivity and tolerance.

Mr Speaker, Guyana has many problems and faces many uphill battles as we fight to ensure the survival of our country and more so the betterment of our people. It would be fair to say that we are not doing well at the present time and I think it is important that we make an honest assessment of what is happening around us.

Mr Speaker, this reminds me of a story I once read where a Champion Boxer was defending his title and he was badly bruised and beaten, his face was swollen, his eyes busted and he went across to his corner and he spoke to his manager. He said, 'Boss, how am I doing?' and his manager said, 'Champ you are doing very well'. He said, 'Boss, you better keep an eye on the referee, because somebody out there is beating the hell out of me.' I think, Mr Speaker, we should not allow ourselves to be in that position.

I have been asked to concentrate and focus my comments on human settlements. Human settlements unfortunately, encompass a wide range of issues, but I am only going to attempt a few of them, in

the areas of infrastructure, services and job creation.

Mr Speaker, I am going to give my observations and comments in a frank manner without being personal and I hope to share some ideas, which may assist in guiding us as we seek to establish the way forward.

This approach has worked for me in the past in business and I hope it will work for me in this environment.

Guyana has experimented for a number of years with what was the going thing at that time, which we called Socialism. Delving into the history of the last twenty-eight plus nine years, does not do much for us as we seek to address our survival in the future. I can tell you because on many occasions, I was asked, why did I get into politics at this juncture of my life? I want to share with this House and its Members an experience I had back in 1991, when I met for the first time in person, the then President, Mr Desmond Hoyte.

I can tell you, I met him in an environment where I confronted him and his administration about several issues that concerned not only myself, but the people of Guyana. I can tell you, I was very blunt, I was very critical. Having made my comments, I offered a few suggestions as to how those problems could have been addressed and to give you some indication, I talked about education and the need to consider the re-introduction of private schools, to allow those who have the ability to exercise that option.

I also addressed the issue of the taxes and computers and hardware which at the time attracted an excess of seventy per cent of taxes, and I must tell you at the end of the evening after which I made... *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Would you pause for a minute? *[Pause]*

Mr C. Stanley Ming: Mr Speaker, as I was saying, at the end of the discourse, I made a few recommendations after some very critical

remarks and I must say, Mr Speaker, to the Honourable House, that within one week the then President and his colleagues, whoever they were in their respective Ministries, addressed the issues that I had talked about and within one week allowed the re-introduction of private schools, removed the taxes from the computer and the relevant hardware and reduced the taxes on some other commodities which were in the best interest of the Guyanese people, who were trying to make a living.

Mr Speaker, as I go on to the issue of housing in Guyana, which is a part of our development, I want to say to this Honourable House, that I stand here very upset at what has happened to the Ministry of Housing. I think it would be fair to say that my colleagues on this side of the House also expressed that concern. Unlike what some people might think, the Ministry of Housing is not the property of any political party, it's the property of all the Guyanese people, who work hard and contribute by paying their taxes for the construction and maintenance of such institutions [*Applause*].

Mr Speaker, as I said, I wish to make a few comments and recommendations for possible considerations. In my recent deliberations, on one of the Committees which has been set up between the President and the Leader of the Opposition, I discovered that in all Regions except Region 4, that the selections, the interviews and the dissemination of house lots, has been the purview of the RDCs and the NDCs. Mr Speaker, because of the many important issues of a more substantive nature that need to be addressed by that Ministry, I think the distribution of house lots should be left to the RDCs and the NDCs, to give the Minister and his Ministry more important matters to be dealt with.

Mr Speaker, the Ministry's responsibilities should encompass some of the following, if not all:

- Giving house lots is not about creating housing.
- Creating housing is a totally different process and what needs

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to be done within that organisation is to promote the construction of adequate, modern low cost, quality, housing.

To do that, we need that institution, to pursue and develop the necessary incentives for mortgages to be provided at low rates of interest, and these mortgages should allow the potential owners to purchase just not the houses but also the land, which will make it more affordable as against what we have now where they have to buy the land first for quite a substantial sum for those who are lessprivileged.

Mr Speaker, that institution also needs to secure finance from the various international institutions to promote the installation of quality infrastructure, and I stress the word *quality* because I remember a very old saying, which I keep on my wall, in my office and it says:

*The bitterness of poor quality is remembered long after
the sweetness of cheap price is forgotten.*

Mr Speaker, I would not venture into criticising some of the quality of the work that I see throughout Guyana, but I would just say, that in many cases, it leaves a lot to be desired.

Mr Speaker, that institution also needs to assist in co-ordinating and promoting new technologies and educating the population with regards the usage and acceptance of these new methods and technologies. As I stand here, Mr Speaker, I must tell this Honourable House that in many aspects of what we attempt to do in the development of our country, we are dealing in some cases with technologies and methods that are over fifty years old and in most cases, the old technologies are a lot more expensive and the new technology are a lot more long lasting and in almost every case less expensive. I will relate a few of those as we go on.

Mr Speaker, we have bridges that we are constructing around Guyana, I understand on the East Coast and the East Bank, there are

going to be over fifty-seven bridges to be constructed. All over the world today, bridges are constructed in prefabricated pre-dressed modular sector, the installation of which can be done in hours, rather than in our case weeks, months and sometimes years. This approach to bridge construction, Mr Speaker, is a lot less expensive and it provides the opportunity to inconvenience the users of those facilities a lot less inconvenience. Mr Speaker, the culverts we need to install throughout Guyana: There are new technologies and new materials to allow us to establish bridges and crossings in less than one hour as have been demonstrated in Guyana by technical people who visited some time ago.

The revetments of lumber we construct throughout Guyana using traditional methods the joints of which cannot seal properly, result not only in leakage and the ingress of moisture but also in further decay of the roadway, where those revetments have been constructed. The traditional materials are replaced by new materials which are used throughout the world in the form of sheet piling, which has moved to materials outside of metal such as plastics and other such sophisticated materials.

The reason for this, is because those materials come with over fifty years warranty as against less than five years with the metals, we are using at the present time, because of the corrosive nature of our waterways and the environment along the riverain and coastal areas. Mr Speaker, the water lines that we put down to supply our homes throughout the country are being installed in pipes in a haphazard manner especially in new development. I have seen on occasions where roads are constructed and sometime after machines come along, dig up those newly constructed roads, to put down the water pipes and other such utilities.

Mr Speaker, the developed world today, has very clearly defined methods and processes that ensure that these installations are done in a timely and very cost effective manner. Also, we use machines in Guyana and most of you refer to them as hymac. Unfortunately it is a

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term that we use very *incorrectly*, because hymac is a brand name. The piece of machinery we are talking about is an excavator or a back hoe and many people get carried away, because I know on occasions, I have not tendered for jobs that I think I might be eligible for because the tender documents specified the services of a hymac and not an excavator.

Mr Speaker, these are issues that we need to address because a lot of the times, we get short changed. I can tell you, and if you doubt, any Member of this House, you can speak with Mr Bryan Tiwari of B.K. International, who does not own as far as I know any hymacs, because it is for a simple reason, to obtain the productive capacity of one of the new machines that is used for excavating canals and drains, many of which Mr Tiwari owns in his company, to achieve the production of one of these machines, it takes more than eight hymacs to do the same job and is for that reason that he does not own them. The hymac excavator was last constructed over thirty years ago. It is not longer manufactured nor are the spare parts manufactured for that machine by the original manufacturing company. They are all off-the-market parts. I can tell you the availability of production time of any hymac and you can check it anytime you need is less than forty per cent of the available time.

Mr Speaker, the quality of lighting we use throughout Guyana and in most recent times, I must say I admired the lights on the East Coast Highway. But just last night, I was driving and I noticed some of the lights were already extinguished for whatever reason, but what was very disturbing, is that I understand from a document that I was reading, that there was an over- run in the cost of the initial estimates for installation, because of grounding wires to be installed and other such wiring.

Now, if you drive along that road anytime in the future, I want you to examine how that grounding wire was installed. It is installed on the exterior of the post and outside of the soil where within a matter of months, the terminals will corrode and that grounding wire

will have to be replaced. I strongly recommend that in the future, when such contracts are signed and agreed to that the technical details are of an international standard and that certainly does not meet international standards.

Mr Speaker, it is very important that as we seek to address these technical issues, we employ in the various areas of activity and industry, people that are suitably qualified and with the necessary knowledge, and we must ensure that we pay the kind of money and offer the kind of incentives that attract the best possible people, because if we don't, we will be left with what a friend of mine told me many years ago in England, that when you offer peanuts, you attract monkeys and when you have monkeys, you have antics.

Mr Speaker, I noticed not too long ago, during this week, an advertisement in the Stabroek News, June 24, from the Ministry of Housing and Water regarding low income housing construction. It is a re-advertisement and it talks about providing a list of equipment, machinery owned, number and types of such that will be engaged in the project, work load of the firm and several other issues. I want to say Mr Speaker, that I am somewhat confused and would need to be further advised as to what this advertisement really means, maybe I am not cognizant of the terms that are being used. Because in today's world, there are many contractors in the United States that I have visited, held discussions and worked with, who do not use any form of heavy machinery in the construction of houses.

Most of the construction today by firms that are constructing houses at the rate of one every three weeks, and I am talking about large homes, operate out of a pick-up with modern electrically-powered, hand-operated tools, and I think it is important that if we hope to increase the drive to create proper housing, that we need to establish what are the necessary pre-requisites to make that possible in a modern way.

Mr Speaker, the Hon. Minister of Housing told me in our

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discussions recently that for all areas except for Region 4, the demands for house lots have been met at the end of 2001, but because of the lack of availability of suitable land, there is a backlog of, I think, 1,500 for Region 4.

Mr Speaker, I want to point out that there are many areas of land which need to be pursued and reviewed to help to eradicate the problem of housing in Region 4, and I wish to offer that as you drive along the East Bank Road, as you leave Eccles, there are many lands on the eastern side of the highway, which currently belongs to GUYSUCO, and are under cane cultivation that need to be converted to housing for the people of Guyana. I say this without any reservations because if anyone flies over in an aircraft along that corridor, you will see that just east of those lands there are acreages that are many times greater, that have been lying fallow for a number of years, but because of limited access, they are not being utilised for the production of sugar cane.

Mr Speaker, incentives for private contractors and opportunities need to be provided for local communities to actively participate in the construction of new housing. A survey that was done for the government says that ninety-three per cent of the people that were interviewed expressed a desire to involve themselves in self-help in the construction of their homes.

Mr Speaker, this can be further enhanced and promoted and developed by reviewing the tariffs that are applied to several commodities that are used in the installation of infrastructure which are in the interest of not only what the government is trying to achieve but to make it more affordable to the small man that we are all trying to help. I think these commodities need to be revised, their levels of taxes, and I stand ready at anytime to discuss and to share the information with the relevant personnel as I have done in the past.

Mr Speaker, the allocation of house lots for young people and newly married people need to be addressed urgently, along with

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housing for the under-privileged and the destitute. Unfortunately the present system of allocation of house lots does not cater for that category, but it needs to be addressed very urgently.

Mr Speaker, as Guyanese, we also need to explore the operations of Habitat for Humanity, that organisation was invited to our country many years ago by the former President Cheddi Jagan. I must tell you that it has the support of Mr Jimmy Carter and famous people such as Oprah Winfrey, Maxwell House, who have contributed to the building of over 100,000 houses in depressed communities around the world. In the case of Guyana, with some support from government, we have already constructed with Habitat for Humanity in Guyana 111 units in areas such as Goedverwagting, Foulis, Melaine, Good Hope, Sophia, Eccles, Mocha, Diamond, Amelia's Ward and Wismar at the cost of approximately \$800,000 per unit, and this is a two bedroom concrete home which has a mortgage repayment of \$5,000 per month. The people that co-ordinate these activities receive tremendous support from governments around the world. I think it is time that we in Guyana give this organization the kind of support that it deserves to ensure their success and allow them the opportunity to build houses throughout Guyana at the estimate of over 200 units per year, if the lands are made available. Fortunately they have been promised this in the past but it has not materialised up to the present time.

Mr Speaker, there are issues of concern that have been mentioned by opposition political parties and I just want to comment on an item I read that pertained to housing. It says that an agreement was signed between the Government of Guyana and the IDB that a private sector advisory committee should be established to meet and discuss various issues. It goes on to say that the Committee should comprise three of six members elected by the Minister.

Mr Speaker, my humble opinion to avoid further controversy, is that this responsibility should be given to the various private sector entities that represent the private sector rather than any one person,

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and no insult is intended to the Minister.

Mr Speaker, I want to address the broader perspective of our country. What Guyana like many other Third World Countries lack at the present time are many things, but the main one that many members of the Private Sector have told me, is a lack of visionary leadership and clearly defined plans as to how we can achieve the goals that we all try to dream of.

Mr Speaker, the Prime Minister in his presentation talked about Guyana needing three to four decades to develop. I beg to disagree. People of Guyana whether we like it or not, will not afford us the luxury of time.

Mr Speaker, I have heard a lot over the years about the history of Guyana. The history of Guyana needs to be recorded so that we can refer to it when it is necessary, but the history is not what we are here about. It is about our future.

Many countries around the world like to see their country by the year 2020, one of these countries that I have been fortunate to visit in Malaysia, which up until 1969 was a basket case.

Mr Speaker, we need such a plan for Guyana, for the next twenty years, which could be categorised in five-year increments, so that once it is agreed upon by the various stakeholders that whichever government gets into office, that is the plan that they will pursue as we try to make our country a better place.

Mr Speaker, when I last attended the World Economic Development Congress in Washington, Mr George Schultz talked about the development of Third World Countries. He said that in many cases the IMF and the World Bank failed in their programmes and policies. He said, they came up with plans which they perceived should work and in 99.9 per cent of the cases they don't. He said that the only plan that would work in any country, is a plan that has been devised by the people of that country, embraced by those people and

supported by all facets of that society. [Applause]

Mr Speaker, in this regard, I want to refer to the statement made by the Hon. Member Mr Donald Ramotar, in today's article where he talked about his party supporting and pursuing bi-partisanship. I think it is a very commendable position, but I would like to say that we would need to take that one step further and extend it to tri-partisanship. The third party should come from social partners, workers' representatives, the Private Sector and civil society with their requisite skills. [Applause]

Mr Speaker, in that regard, we don't need to re-invent the wheel, because in Barbados since 1993, such a position has been taken, as we have, from which I can just read one paragraph, what they call a social partnership within legal establishment of the country, and it says:

The social partners desire through their associations in a social compact, to create a modern efficient economy which is able to produce high and sustainable economic growth accompanied by increased employment, to establish through low inflation, an equilibrium between prices and incomes and to achieve a society which enjoys a greater degree of inclusiveness in all its facets and where a conscious and deliberate effort is made to distribute the benefits of economic growth.

Mr Speaker, that speaks for itself. Guyana as we sit today, has few areas of comparative advantage and I name those in no particular order:

- Agri production and processing
- Eco-tourism
- Extraction and Exploration of our mineral resources

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- Forestry related industries
- Water-based industries
- I.T. related business and

Guyana to be permitted as a gateway into both South America, and the Caribbean and beyond.

Agri-production in Guyana, Mr Speaker, at the moment many farmers suffer from the fact that there is no processing or cold storage. The last time I spoke with several farmers at Parika, they told me that over fifty per cent of their crops, have to be thrown away because of spoilage and lack of proper storage.

Mr Speaker, in the case of water based industries, many countries in the Caribbean that support the tourist industry, at the present time, import water from as far away as France, *Pierre* the famous water that we know. There are countries in the Caribbean that have offered their business community incentives to attract that market because it was a niche market in this part of the world. Guyana is blessed with extensive water resources and we need to address the possibility of attacking not just the Caribbean but countries further afield. It is envisaged that within the next decade, there will be tankers plying the world's oceans transporting water just as they are transporting oil, because there are problems throughout the Middle East and even United States of water for farming and for domestic usage.

Mr Speaker, what we need to attack these areas of possible comparative advantage, are very clearly defined policies and incentives which should be clearly demarcated and defined in an investment code which has been long overdue.

Mr Speaker, I can tell you because I just had a visit from a major investor that has invested in Guyana already, who came even in the aftermath of the disturbances [*Interruption*]

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The Speaker: Before you tell us about the visitor Hon. Member, you need some more time.

Mr E. Lance Carberry: Mr Speaker, I rise to ask for fifteen minutes for the speaker to wind up his presentation.

Question **put and agreed to.**

Mr Stanley C. Ming: Mr Speaker, that investor makes it very clear what it is that his company and his group are looking for and I read from an article which was published in the **ECONOMIST** of May 1996 and it says:

The fact is, most of the world continues to be blighted by poverty and economic backwardness. Where things are improving, it is often too slowly. In many places things are getting worse.

And it goes on to say that:

Policy is what matters above all.

Many studies now show that market friendly policies work best. Secured property rights, reliable enforcement of contracts, a liberal trade regime, low taxes and public spendings are welcome to foreign investors.

Economists argue about how much weight is attached to one factor or another, but most have come to agree with this broad proposition: The key to growth is granting producers and consumers the economic freedom to face and respond to incentives.

The system that most conspicuously failed to provide this freedom was communist *central planning*.

Mr Speaker, government's role in investment should take mainly one responsibility and that is being a facilitator. That has been

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established as the pre-requisite in many countries that have been down this road before and wish regards Guyana becoming the gateway into South America and beyond. I want to share with you an article that was published not too long ago by Mr Smith Pereira, the former Venezuelan Transport and Communication Minister and Ambassador to the European Union in Latin Trade and he says:

Centrally managed state owned enterprises have reached their limits of incompetence throughout the Region. What we need is a radical change of mind of Government and business leaders that recognize the need for bold initiatives, rapid decisions, hemispheric agreements, and the coherent merger between infrastructure development and the new trade policy.

The challenge is clear, it is to go from poor dispersed and disconnected national infrastructural network, the modern colleges interconnected and dense regional infrastructural network linking the peoples of the Americas and the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Mr Speaker, that is very clear in what it defines that countries like us should be pursuing. I want to share with you, what has been happening in our immediate neighbourhood. I said in my last speech in this Honourable House, that Venezuela has been very aggressive in pursuing investment. In fact, they have already constructed a township called *LA HARTATIA* on our western border, where they can drive directly to our border. They have pursued major investment from countries throughout the world including Japan, Korea, Mexico, Australia and Israel.

As I said to you, the sum of \$50 billion will be spent over the next ten years in Eastern Venezuela. That sum of money will entail the Government of Venezuela moving in excess of 2.5 million of their people to that area, to be able to undertake that development, and as we speak that is already happening.

I talked also about the bridge that they will build across the Oronoco Delta, which is being financed and constructed by a Brazilian Construction Company at a cost of \$430 million financed by the Brazilian National Development Bank.

Mr Speaker, Venezuela achieved that in a relatively short time because in an article of February, 1998, they stated what they were looking for and just a few months after with the help of the Economist Investment Arm, the Magazine, they provided a forum where potential investors can meet in Venezuela with the various Ministries of Government and their social partners so that they can discuss the incentives and the conditions that were applicable.

In the case of Brazil, Mr Speaker, over the last decades they have pursued an aggressive policy of foreign investment. I happened to visit there on many occasions, and can tell you that all of the *Combine Harvesters* that are used in our rice industry here, in recent times, the modern ones, are made in Brazil by John Dere, and are exported throughout the world including the United States. They no longer make them in the United States because the Brazilian unit is as good as anything you can get. In case of investment in Brazil, Brazil has struck up a strategic alliance with the Japanese people and today, outside of Japan, the largest population of Japanese is in Brazil, in Sao Paulo and in Manaus and they number over ten million.

Mr Speaker, in the case of Trinidad, there is an Article in the New York Times of September 1998, that talks about a tiger in a sea of pussycats, and it says that the flight coming in from the United States are so jammed-packed with company executives, hungry for a piece of the action here, that reservations are hard to come by. Almost weekly, the government seems to have some new project to announce. It goes on to say that since the beginning of the boom less than five years ago, the fifty American Companies now operating here, have invested more than \$4 billion, a remarkable figure in a country with only 1.3 million people. Seeking to take advantage of cheap and abundant energy supplies, companies from Britain, Canada,

Germany, India, Norway, Spain are flocking there.

In 1997, Mr Speaker, the income per capita for Trinidad rose from US\$3,920 to US\$4,290. The Minister of Energy and Industry of Trinidad goes on to say in this article that:

Negotiations are on the way with Brazilian interests to refine iron ore mined in the Amazon and with other foreign investors interested in building an aluminum smelter here in Trinidad, Brazil, Guyana, Jamaica and Suriname have no shortage of raw materials required for such plants. It is a welcome bit of synergy when countries in the immediate geographic region have vast supplies of raw materials and Trinidad and Tobago can supply the energy.

It goes on to say that:

The \$1 billion dollar investment by one Company is the largest single investment ever made in the Caribbean.

Mr Speaker, in Jamaica just recently, we talked about developing roads. The Jamaican Government in an *Economist* article of 1999, advertised that the Government of Jamaica was seeking to invite private sector companies to undertake the development, construction, financing and operation of a highway that links Kingston, Spanish Town, Old Harbour, Manda Ville, Montego Bay and Ochoories to reduce the transit time between those cities by more than half.

Mr Speaker, around the world today, countries and their governments and their peoples are aggressively pursuing investment capital and they are doing an amazing job of it. The Phillipines as you know has been a problem for many years like Guyana, and has been an agrarian economy. Today, there are over a hundred approved agrozones in various parts of a Phillipines with over forty-four of them being operational. They cover over 15,000 hectares and they employ over half a million people. They attracted about \$4 billion

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of investment during 1997 and in the first month of 1998, they had over \$82.5 million of investment, which represented over a fifteen per cent increase in their expectations.

Mr Speaker, Malaysia, a country very similar to Guyana, which I happened to visit. In the decline of the Asian Tigers, they suffered some decline in investment and up to that time, they were receiving a billion dollars of applications per month, and in the decline it reduced to over \$400 million per month. Those are some of the figures.

Mr Speaker, countries like ours, including India talked about how we can get foreign investments and this is what the Minister of Finance of India said back in 1996:

How do we get \$10 billion a year? Not by sitting back in our armchairs and hoping that it will come to India. If we keep our environment friendly and hospitable for foreign investment, keep our rules simple and try to escort them into investing in India, we will receive a certain level of Investment, maybe \$2 billion a year. That we already have. But how do we get \$10 billion ? The gap will not be bridged by the laying back approach. We have to go out and promote India and bring them back to our country.

Mr Speaker, in the Stabroek News publication of just a few days ago, I see that a Company, from South Africa has made a tremendous proposal to Guyana. I think it is important that we pursue this proposal with some amount of aggression, because it gives us the opportunity of a modern paved highway, that will open our country as a gateway for things that we can possibly do through Guyana as against, Mr Speaker, providing a road which I read a few weeks earlier that will be unpaved and an all-weather road, because I can tell you as someone that is involved in transport and motor equipment, if you have such a road, and you attempt to transport container cargo on that road, we will have to build a new complement of hospitals and ambulances, because it will be impossible to control those vehicles on such a type of surface.

Mr Speaker, we need to establish those strategic partnerships and alliances because for our country to go forward, we need them. It is not an option.

Mr Speaker, we need to level the playing field - the conditions that are provided for some contractors to obtain their equipment duty free, while others are not given that option need to be addressed. We need to support micro enterprises throughout Guyana and to invite organisations similar to the **Gramming Bank** for the poor people in our urban and rural areas to be given the opportunity to develop their own business.

Mr Speaker, it is important, as the Hon. Minister of Education said, that it has been mirrored on this side that education of our people is of tremendous importance, because if we are not an educated people we will not be able to make decisions based on sensible judgement. There is saying, '*if you think education is expensive try ignorance*'.

Mr Speaker, the Budget needs to address the concerns of all of our people and I want to say that if this Budget seeks to address the issues of electricity, water, housing, industries, airport facilities, roadways, bridges, ports in a non-partisan, non-discriminatory and an equitable way, as a result of participatory dialogue, we will support it wholeheartedly.

Mr Speaker, I want to close in saying that we should make a dedicated effort to think about what it is we want to leave as a legacy for the future of Guyana when this simple life that we have here on earth comes to an end, and I am guided by a little poem that I got from someone which says that:

*When my time has come
It will not matter what car I drove
How much money I earn
But that I have made a difference
In the life of a child.*

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And in this case, I would want to say that it would make a difference in the lives of our children of the future. I thank you. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you very much Hon. Member.

The Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce

Hon. Manzoor Nadir: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, as I rise, I would like to thank the Hon. Member, Mrs Backer for lobbying for this job for me. The last time I spoke in the National Assembly, she was appointing me Prime Minister *[Laughter]* and lo and behold the President offered me quite a substantial position within his Cabinet. So thanks to the Hon Member, Mrs Backer for lobbying efforts. *[Laughter]*

Mr Speaker, I want to offer my congratulations to the Hon. Minister of Finance, Mr Saisnarine Kowlessar for presenting his first Budget in this new millennium. Even before I was appointed Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce, I was saying that I do not envy the task of the Minister of Finance to craft a Budget within the constraints that he has, after a general elections, after the problems of a general elections, the conflicting demands of the depressed communities, the running of the country in a new method, consensual method. He has to balance all of those interests, and he has done, I believe, a marvellous job in crafting a budget that will give us on this side *[Applause]* the resources in order to accomplish the task of providing a good living for all Guyanese.

Mr Speaker, while I am on the floor offering congratulations, the Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs also deserves our congratulations, commendation and high praise for a presentation study that informs us that he is an action man and showed us he has the experience to get on with the job. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, I had some very good compliments paid to me by

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the Hon. Members Jerome Khan and Mr Ravi Dev. Mr Jerome Khan thought it fit that he would go and read last year's Hansard and take guidance from my speech before he prepared his speech. I am honoured also that Mr Ravi Dev, the Hon Member Mr Ravi Dev also reached into my past speeches in the National Assembly and has now begun to champion the cause that I continue to champion on this side for a free and open economy. I just want to say to the Hon Member Mr Dev that you did not lose me from the other side . . . *[Interruption: "Doctor?"] [Laughter] [Pause]* because you cannot lose something you never had. *[Laughter]*

Mr Speaker, I sat as the representative of The United Force and I continue to sit as a representative of The United Force.

Mr Speaker, you would never find in the records of Parliament next to Manzoor Nadir. M.P., any other Party than The United Force. And Mr Speaker, there is the Hon Member Deryck Bernard speaking about Peter D'Aguiar. Peter D'Aguiar is now honoured that the PPP Government has taken the most right wing of politicians into their Cabinet to help implement some of the same programmes all of us are now talking about.

Mr Speaker, maybe I can start my presentation with the Manifestos of The United Force and how it is now in congruence with the Budget Presentation by the Hon Minister of Finance.

Mr Speaker, in his speech, the Hon. Minister of Finance mentioned, "we must attract massive investments to create jobs and from the Hon Members, Mr Winston Murray, Mr Stanley Ming and Mr Jerome Khan, this was a recurring theme attracting massive investments, and that was one of Peter D'Aguiar's own ideas. When I first read Highway to Happiness, he talked about massive investment in Agriculture to increase productivity, the promotion of people's enterprise capitalism. We saw the PNC moving towards that and today all parties around the world are embracing this as the way to go. We set the agenda in The United Force more than one generation

ago. So he is honoured.

Mr Speaker, there is even greater congruence, when you look at the Budget Speech of the Hon Minister of Finance. The Budget Speech mentions the areas of growth being information technology and Tourism. Mr Speaker, I want to quote from what I presented as Presidential Candidate for The United Force to the people and this is what I said, Sir, that in promoting jobs and investment, *T.U.F. will put in place the policies and create the environment to attract investment local and foreign in our economy. We have to build an information technology industry and an eco tourism industry, while giving support to manufacturing, mining, forestry and agriculture*

This is what is contained in the year 2001 budget.

Mr Speaker, what is important at this stage is the recognition by the government, this is the way forward. The Hon. Member Mr Stanley Ming mentioned an aggressive pursuit of investment and he said that India identified the investment need as \$10 billion annually. I had put the investment need for Guyana in order to create the jobs for the 40,000 to 50,000 people employed today as \$1 billion over the next five year (that is at the low end of the scale). If you want to create a job for the girls in Regent Street, buying and selling, it is about US\$15,000 to US\$20,000, and if you want to create a job in information technology and at OMAI, it is US\$50,000. So I am giving you the range and this is what I am doing, to contribute directly to policies to help the people from this side, bringing this into action.

Mr Speaker, the last time I spoke from that side, I said, we must admire the foresight of His Excellency the President in appointing a special Minister for International Co-operation and Foreign Trade. Listen carefully, the last time, I said, we must recognise the foresight of the President in appointing a special Minister for Foreign Trade and International Co-operation. Why ? Because the Hon Member Mr Ming said, we have to aggressively go out and pursue investment and this is the strategy, if you haven't seen it yet in the Budget and

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heard of it in the speeches. There are four different agencies that are actively going to go out and woo the investor. There is going to be the New Investment Promotion Agency, the Ministry of External Trade and International Co-operation; The Foreign Ministry still has the overall policy of the Government, the new Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce and the Office of the President directly. Mr Speaker, as we speak at this time, we have at least three senior members of government in different parts of the world negotiating trade agreements, talking to Investors to come here in this most difficult political climate that we have.

Mr Speaker, ... [*Interruption: 'You left home'*]

Somebody talks about being left home. We have an important task to build domestic commerce - a very important aspect. Let us go back to the Hon Member, Mr Ming, who talked about support from micro-enterprise, Mr Speaker, the development of micro-enterprise and the creation of a small business unit within the Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce is one of our priority areas. Already as part of a United Nations Development Programme, there is going to be a Micro Enterprise Unit within my Ministry and we are going to set up that small business unit. Legislation through the GEO Project through USAID is going to be coming to the Parliament and more important the institutions within the Ministry can help. The small investor act is going to be in place very shortly. And why? Mr Speaker, when an economy is revving up, it is not the big investor who will respond immediately to the demands. They take time. It is the marginal person, the cottage industry, the small businesses that respond in the time when there is the immediate need. They are faster to respond and in any market-economy this small business sector is very vital, between thirty to forty per cent of the industry.

Mr Speaker, so that small business unit, micro enterprise, as the Hon Member, Mr Ming has mentioned, we are tackling. And I want to commend him for the presentation he made because he made excellent suggestions. The one thing he hasn't been informed as yet,

is that since we got on this side of the House, we started making moves in those directions. I am sure when the heavy weight, the Hon Member Mr Xavier speaks to him, he will talk about what he is doing in terms of construction —*[Interruption: 'What do you mean'?)*

Mr Speaker, the Members of the Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce, and perhaps we should talk about Tourism in deference to Senior Members of that Industry who are present here tonight. The tourism aspect of that Ministry has now been put on the front burner. It is sad to hear my very good friend, the Hon Member Mr Trotman, mention about the stagnation in Tourism. But Tourism has had somewhat of a long gestation in Guyana, not very well supported by the PNC administration, supported in terms of token changes to name of the Ministry. I was happy to receive this morning from the task force created to advise on tourism, a report that would set the agenda (their recommendations for the Industry) within the next twelve months. Only this morning members of the Tourism and Hospitality Association in collaboration with CEPEC presented this report to the Ministry of Tourism as their idea for the way forward.

Mr Speaker, when we look at the Tourism Industry, it is a fledgling Industry and we have to do much more to support it. In terms of incubating industries worldwide, some countries like America spend eight to ten years and hundreds of millions of dollars supporting incubating industries and we, on this side of the House intend to put that kind of support behind tourism. *[Applause]* There are important policy decisions that have to be made. We need to define the product that Guyana has to offer; we need to give support to those who have extended investment in that Industry; we need to look at the training of people in that area and these are all now on the front burner of the Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce.

Mr Speaker, many conditions were enunciated about what attracts tourists, what attracts investments and primary in all of the necessary conditions, primary, is the political situation

...[*Interruption: 'Crime'*] . . . and the crime situation, I agree with you . . . [*Interruption: 'What attracts Nadir?'*]

What attracts Nadir is a commitment to serve his country, Sir. [*Applause*] and I have done so admirably for the past ten years.

Mr Speaker, the reports I have recently been reading that were conducted by the experts, put Tourism as the fourth largest foreign exchange earner today in Guyana. Tourism is the fourth largest foreign exchange earner in Guyana. And if we can have political stability and if we can 'out' the fires, we can achieve 110,000 tourists in the year 2001.

Mr Speaker, in 1994, Guyana reached its peak with respect to tourists arrival and already in the year 2001, the preliminary figures before the fires, before the slogans show a twenty-five percent increase in tourists arrival for the months of January, February and March, . . . [*Interruption: 'You didn't say that before.'*] I would say to the Hon. Member, Mr Speaker, I didn't see these numbers before but I am happy I didn't because at least I didn't want to come into a situation where things were getting better already I want to say to the Hon Member from Bartica who called on the Hon Minister to resign because of redundancy. That when I first listened to the Hon Carolyn Rodrigues in her first "One and One" interview, I said this is the Amerindian for the job. [*Applause*] And I want to assure the Hon. Member Judith David that as far as I can detect, Miss Rodrigues will be here for a very long time. [*Applause*]

Mr Speaker, we talked about a convergence of policies when I campaigned in the last elections. I said for the Amerindian Communities, what I have as paramount are settlement of land claims, recognition of new villages, increased stipend, revision of the Amerindian Act, transportation and communication improvement, the bringing of power and technology, better farming methods and introducing aspects of entrepreneurship to them. All those are in the preliminary plans that I have seen from the Ministry of Amerindian

Affairs. There is a convergence:

Mr Speaker, the Hon Member from Region 7, Judith David, I was so disappointed because she spent so long talking only of Bartica as if Bartica was Region 7. You and I, Sir, who know Bartica know that she was talking only of that area from the Market to **ALERT HOTEL** and from the Stelling to the Hospital - that is not Region 7. She didn't even go across to **AGATASH** or even go over to Carow or even talk a little about Skullpoint. She didn't even talk about them. Miss Rodrigues had to remind her of **BATAVIA**.

Mr Speaker, so there is a convergence of Manifestos here, and a call by all for co-operation, and as I sat here I listened to the other side, I heard the Hon. Member Mr Dev, I heard Mr Ming, I heard the Hon Member Mr Trotman, I heard . . . *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Let's have some order please, Hon Members.

Mr Manzoor Nadir: I have a microphone and politicians know that if you have a microphone, you can control the crowd *[Laughter]*

The Speaker: I thought I was trying to help you, Mr Nadir,

Mr Manzoor Nadir: Thank you very much, Sir, for your generosity.

Mr Speaker, all of them talked about let us work together, let us work together, well they are talking the talk and I am doing the walk *[Applause]* I wanted to ask them to join all of us in Guyana, let us work together to build. So, they aren't talking the talk really, they are making the noise.

Mr Speaker, I had intended to touch significantly on the contributions of a few Members including the Hon Member Mr Murray, the Hon Member, Mr Khan and the Hon Member, Mr Dev. I can easily dismiss them because there are more important things to tell the nation about what we have planned for the Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce.

I just want to say to the Hon. Member Mr Dev that he didn't really read the Budget. He just didn't read the Budget. You know, Mr Speaker, he mentioned about the issue of preparing for global competitiveness and paragraphs 1 - 5 of the Budget talked about that. Increasing global competitiveness - paragraphs 1 - 5 spoke about that. So, I wonder if the Hon. Member Mr Dev actually read this Budget.

Mr Speaker, the Budget contains sufficient directions for the economy. It is a difficult period in which to craft a budget and allocate scarce resources and remember we have the pledge from the Minister of Finance *no new taxes* and as I said to him yesterday when I was on the other side and people mentioned no new taxes, I said that we are not going to raise the old ones too.

Mr Speaker, I thought that what the Hon. Member Mr Stanley Ming said in his first meeting with the Hon. Member and former President Desmond Hoyte, he said in 1991, he confronted His Excellency Hugh Desmond Hoyte then and offered criticisms and then he offered suggestions and within one week the President took on board some of his suggestions. Mr Speaker, I have been making these contributions, criticisms and recommendations for the last nine years in this National Assembly. His Excellency the President and I, yes, fought over the allocations to the then Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Industry and I am now convinced that like Hugh Desmond Hoyte, His Excellency the President Bharrat Jagdeo has now taken on board good suggestions.

We talked about inclusiveness and here is the President reaching out to the most right of centre politicians. There isn't a person in this National Assembly who can more champion the cause of the private sector and Private Sector Development than people from The United Force and this is what His Excellency the President has done in thrusting this important Ministry, dealing with the private sector in my hands.

Mr Speaker, the other important term that came out from the Opposition were being a facilitator and that is what I intend to do, become a facilitator for the private sector, and the other was the lack of incentive in the Budget and this Budget is replete with incentive overtures.

Mr Speaker, the Hon. Member Mr Murray not only spoke of incentives, he wants to see transparency. When I got into the Ministry, I started looking at the granting of concessions for the tourist sector and what I saw was the technocrats in the Ministry making this calculation and doing therecommendation. Transparent, a policy was set out, they applied the policy, not on a one-by-one case with the Minister. There are clear directions on the book, calculating the concessions asked for and applying the twenty-five per cent as is the case. I have asked His Excellency the President and I am holding the Minister of Finance when they pledged that they are going to be liberal with incentives. If you look at page 41 of the Budget Speech, when we talked about incentives, the Hon. Saisnarine Kowlessar said, we would also be favourably disposed to granting liberal incentives - liberal incentives - and we have had the liberal use of tax relief to attract investment.

Not only is the investment code coming shortly, it has gone the extensive rung of consultation with the private sector since His Excellency the President met with the Private Sector at the Retreat, It has gone through the consultation, it now resides within the Cabinet Sub-Committee and will shortly be out for transparent implementation. *[Interruption: 'Is Manzoor speaking there?']*

Mr Speaker, the Hon. Member Mr Corbin never heard me sound so good. *[Laughter]*

Mr Speaker, so the issue of incentives is being frontally and aggressively addressed and as I said, if you look at the picture that is now being put in place, if you look at the road map for investment, you can see the highest level of involvement by the Government in

attracting investment. Shortly the Investment Promotion Agency will be put in place. The Ministry of Foreign Trade has been created, the Ministry of Tourism Industry and Commerce and the Office of the President. More resources are committed to aggressively seek investment. Mr Speaker, you and I have nowhere to go and we have all committed to work as a team in order to make Guyana an attractive place, not only for foreign direct investment but also for the local investment dollar, because you know, Mr Speaker, America is the single largest source of direct foreign investment and is also the single largest recipient of foreign investment. America holds the title of being both the largest source of investors outside and they receive also. And that is what we have to do - we have to support our local manufacturing sector because no amount of begging to hand out relief to the social sector is going to solve poverty, and the Minister of Finance, I want to, once again, commend him because very close to the paragraph on the Poverty Reduction Strategy, he linked the Government's intention to revitalise manufacturing, to stimulate exports, to attract the tourist dollar because in the end the sustainable reduction of poverty has to come from the earnings right here within Guyana. This is what we are supporting and the Hon. Minister of Finance has outlined a plan - the Budget is part of the tactic. A Strategy is the broader policy outline (those of us who have done the management) and the individual short term measures are called tactics. So the Budget includes the specific tactic to achieve the overall objective of making Guyana a place where all of us to enjoy our lives.

The Hon. Member Mr Dev talked about equitable distribution. Very early on page 1 of the Budget - I knew Ravi, the Hon. Member - did not read the Speech, the Minister of Finance talked or spoke about or wrote about equitable distribution of the wealth.

And so, Mr Speaker, I think I have laid the case that all of us should turn out and support this Budget that the Hon. Minister has so wisely crafted for us to achieve our tactical objective for the year 2001.

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Strategic Outlook for the Country. Only yesterday afternoon, four very experienced Ministers and a new one sat to look at the issue of addressing the cement shortage which I think we have under control. That's the team work we are talking about, external trade, industry, commerce locally, finance – *[Interruption: 'Jerome just talked about all of that']*

– Jerome was creating that proverbial storm in the teacup. The thing was under control and the final approval was done as early as Friday last.

Mr Speaker, Tourism, Industry and Commerce has a particular focus. In terms of Tourism, I have outlined that is the Industry, is the sector that we need to support. When we achieved 110,000 visitors for this year, the projection is that tourism will earn almost US \$90 million displacing rice as the third largest foreign exchange earner in the economy - when we achieve 110,000 visitors, and it will happen. I know our local tour operators have been suffering, they are complaining and Government has its ears on the ground, we are listening, we are going out to them. Shortly we are going to be making the on-the-spot visits to them because we want to work with them. This is not a case where the private dollar has to be scared of the Government, this is the case where the Government has seen the need that private sector-led growth is the only way to go, to reduce poverty and to help the Hon. Member, Mr Alexander, with an increased budget for the University of Guyana. Mr Speaker, I am happy that we can have University Campuses in Georgetown, in Berbice, in Linden, in Lethem, in Essequibo and those who can only see the opening up of a new campus as cutting into their turf are myopic - short sighted - let us see part of the longer vision.

Mr Speaker, only yesterday, I was speaking with an expert in the field of information technology who wants to bring distance education at the highest level to Guyana and those of you who spend two and three hours at nights surfing the net would know that all sixteen thousand courses of the MIT will shortly be available on the

net.

Mr Speaker, this is the integrated approach, the long-term vision that I have signed on to and I have signed on to it as part of the plans which I have been advocating for the last twenty years on this platform.

Mr Speaker, the tourist sector is going to replace agriculture as the largest foreign exchange earner, it will possibly even replace mining in the future. Fifteen years down the road we will look back at Hansard and we will say all those who presented to Minister Nadir that outlook on tourism were right. This is the way we have to go.

Mr Speaker, the other aspect of the Tourism Industry is putting in place the institutional framework and the legislative framework so that the private sector can lead in the development and we are strongly behind the Tourism Authority and money is in the Budget for it this year and I want to thank the Hon. Minister of Finance for allocating some \$20 million towards that activity and that is not the only source of income because there are other aspects of the Budget that we can draw on to help tourism. So the Tourism Authority is coming on stream and what has happened in countries where tourism is among the lead industry, is that the semi-autonomous agency led by the private sector takes the lead and we want to support that type of institution. Along with that legislation is going to come to produce standards in the industry.

Perhaps, Mr Speaker, at this point, I want to touch on a little bug bear and maybe give you some of the plans that we have already started discussing and will shortly put in place. *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Time, Hon Member.

Hon. Reepu Daman Persaud: I wish to move, Mr Speaker, that the Hon. Minister be given fifteen minutes to conclude his speech.

Motion **put** and **agreed** to.

Hon. Manzoor Nadir: Thank you, Hon. Members.

Mr Speaker, Legislation in place for standards: I was to move to the Guyana National Bureau of Standards, importers like the Hon. Member Mr Jerome Khan complained in the past that there was another level of bureaucracy in terms of the Bureau of Standards Inspectors and the port of entry and we have had discussions with Dr Ramcharran to remove that impediment to import. We are not going to remove the monitoring, but no longer will importers have to do two sets of documents, chase after two sets of stamps. We talked about freeing up the trade and what we will ensure is that the inspectors go and do random samples in different locations to look at the quality of imports. Along with that, Sir, the Bureau of Standards will help some of the exporters. Plans are afoot right now to have a mobile scale to test some of the equipment in the far-flung areas, because what they are finding, for example, when exporters for rice send 100 tonnes overseas, people claim they get 90 tonnes and we have no way of certifying that. Our scales are accurate and the government is providing the funds to the Bureau of Standards to have a mobile scale in order to certify industrial weights and measures so that our exporters can get the true value for the goods that they export.

Mr Speaker, Industry: I heard the Hon. Member Mr Dev talk about Industrial Development and I thought he was going to cast my mind back to the distinguished economist Bhagwattie of the 1950s from India who led the Industrial Development of India laying the foundation as early as 1947, for those of us who have done some of his readings. But it is not only Industrial Development which merely focuses on manufacturing machines to make machines, the other level of industrialisation. We are talking about industry and I, like the Hon. Member Mr Murray and all the Members who spoke on the other side, am concerned about the sluggish performance of the manufacturing sector in Guyana. What I consider the sluggish

performance? If you look, the Hon. Minister of Finance did acknowledge forthright that manufacturing was down 13.9 per cent and he clearly indicated the areas of growth and the areas of decline. Well we do not want to see any industry, any firm closed and that is why as early as tomorrow, we are going out in West Ruimveldt, I know I am a South Georgetown man and look at BASIF to see some of their problems because our manufacturing sector has to be given the same level of support as the Trinidad Manufacturing Sector, as the Jamaica Manufacturing Sector. We have to stand with our own people right here on the ground. Nobody else will stand with them, they will prefer to close them down. *[Applause]* So we know that is an area of concern, that is why significant resources, more than \$230 million is being allocated today for the provision of Industrial Estate to help our manufacturing sector, something we should have done a long time ago. Yes, I think everyone is committed to development and we have been talking the talk and here we have the Minister of Finance putting \$230 million odd (and one Hon. Member convert it to US and said US \$1.2 million). Well that is significant, let me tell you, Mr Speaker, if a million US dollars go on the ground on construction, at least sixty to seventy jobs will be directly created. The Hon. Member Mr Khan representing Region 1 steers to the sky, he can't compute that number so he looks to the heaven for help.

So we are going to work very closely with our manufacturing sector and the different Ministries that are responsible for subject areas to see what we can do to help our sluggish manufacturing sector, to save jobs not only in LINMINE and in sugar but in footwear and in garments. You know, Mr Speaker, I sat and someone said, no investment, lack of confidence. But since the Budget was presented - two Fridays ago - no less than half a dozen letters, we have received in the Ministry for persons wanting to resuscitate concessions they had five and six years ago for the tourist sector. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, one of the other reasons why we need to brace our local manufacturing sector, in spite of the difficult political environment in which they have to operate is that, we see industrial

expansion. Tomorrow DDL commissions a US \$3.5 million plant to do very importantly the extrusion of polyethylene tetrachloride bottles, in short, PET bottles. They are going to do that and we talk about bottling our waters. Well not only will we have the water here but the bottles could also be made right here. DDL has on its book over the next three years expansions committed to the tune of US \$ 15 million. And not only DDL, Mr Speaker, we look at BANKS DIH who only last week commissioned a plant to bottle Vita Malt which was imported from Europe and we want to congratulate BANKS DIH for so doing. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, what I am doing is demonstrating that we have to stand with Guyanese and we have to put Guyanese first, stand with them because Guyanese want to live in Guyana, they want to invest here, they must make their money, pay their fair Tax share and we must allow them the environment in which to enjoy their life.

Another aspect of the Ministry, Mr Speaker, is this issue of **Commerce**. In fact the Hon .Member Mr Murray is very right *[Laughter]* - he is very right - because if we go to Japan as the Hon. Member Mr Ming has done it, is the Ministry of Commerce and Industry that drives the Japanese economy, that is the Ministry that does it.

Mr Speaker, I was dealing with the issue of local commerce because when we open the market, when we liberalise, we have to be concerned with all those internal trade transactions and one of the important areas we have to deal with is the issue of **Consumer Affairs**. What protection are we as a government going to put in place to ensure that our consumers are not fleeced. Mr Speaker, I have mentioned the fact that we are going to increase monitoring, not only at the port of entry but at the point of sale. Mr Speaker, Consumer Affairs are very important and the Ministry has in train the installation of a twenty-four hour hotline to receive consumer complaints to channel these requests to the relevant agencies and to follow them up. Consumer Protection Legislation is coming. That piece of

legislation has done the rounds before and it has reached the Ministry. Mr Speaker, we are going to be sitting with the different Consumer Associations, and they have three of them now, and look at the Hire Purchase Legislation also.

Mr Speaker, mini-buses, taxis are important not only in terms of consumer affairs but we have to look at the issue of bringing them up to scratch to prepare for the inflow of tourists, because they have a vital role to play to transport even the tourists, very important, and like some other politicians.

Mr Speaker, a lot of work has to be done in this country - a lot of work - and I at this time have joined the team that have said to me that they want to build and not to burn. *[Applause]* I have joined the team that wants to include, that wants to hire, not talk about fire. *[Applause]* Mr Speaker, more Guyanese across all strata of our society need to get on board the ship to build Guyana, all Guyanese *[Applause]* from the south in Gunstrip to the Waini, to Cortours. The Hon. Member Jerome Khan mentioned the operators of Cortours, the tour investor and we have actively engaged them to help them with their plan. Only last Thursday, we had a significant meeting with them.

Mr Speaker, I reiterate, all of us have to get on board, we can't want one set of people to full the bucket spoon by spoon and some animal to come and kick it over . . . *[Interruption: 'I don't understand your parable' "Very simple. There are some animals that roam the city. They are not mindful of those who are putting up their cement in buckets to pull up. They walk without direction, aimlessly; they knock over the bucket, they cause additional hardship. We have to go and do the same thing all over again."].*

Mr Speaker, we at this time, as I said need to attract one billion dollars in investment to create jobs for the 10,000 young people that the Hon. Member Mr Murray said, had no hope. I want to commend the presentation of Mr Ming because he also offered some ideas for

the increased use of technology to increase productivity. What I tried to do, Sir, is to look at some of the specific issues that we in the Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce. *[Interruption: "Mr Speaker, he talked about an open-door policy to investment." 'Well why don't you talk about Highways to Happiness?']*

Highways to Happiness, we are bringing a tactic, he talked about a general strategy for economic development. A strategy has been outlined and a particular tactic has been dictated. He talked about struck by a inertia, general terms, nothing else, the rice industry bankrupt. Yes, in the rice industry like many other manufacturing centres, there is a credit crunch, right now, and there is a credit crunch, not because people have literally exported their money but because of imported inflation of high fuel prices. I can go through the numbers and show you. For every dollar increased in the price of fuel, persons have to find \$25 more in working capital and that has to be financed by overdrafts and we are going to lobby the Minister of Finance strongly to help those industries, not only rice, to deal with the credit crunch that is on right now. Rice is important, tourism is important, bauxite is important, sugar is important, OMAI is important. That is why His Excellency the President offered a one per cent rebate on the royalties from OMAI, if prices go below a certain level, so that the company can start exploring for more ore. In five years time we have to get a new ore deposit for that mine life to continue and here we have the Government offering more incentives, liberal use of incentives for that mine to continue so that the exploration dollar can flow into the country, and we are saying that is not good?

Mr Speaker, in this difficult time, in the short six months that we have to implement this Budget, I am calling on Guyanese to sign up on board a plan that can work so that we can turn the corner from a negative .8 per cent growth to realising that close to three per cent real output which the Minister is talking about and I want to commend, Sir, this Budget to the House and to the people of Guyana. *[Applause]*

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The Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Member.

The Hon. Member, Mrs Melville

Mrs Shirley J. Melville: Hon. Members, Friends of the Opposite side, I rise to make comments on the Budget, but before doing so, I would like to remind us about the Mission Statement:

Regional Development facilitates Economic Development of the Region and assists in integrating the Amerindian population into the wider society

Hon. Speaker, the Budget does not reflect means by which Region 9 could benefit and develop in an orderly manner.

In the section of agriculture, there is not a functioning base from which work could be carried out. We do have technical personnel in this Region, people can produce in large quantities Our country was been given Foot-and-Mouth free Certificate.

I would like to suggest that before infrastructure is done in the outlying districts, we need to strengthen our base at the St Ignatius Station. Our technical personnel are willing to work, but they need the tools. Their homes and offices need to be repaired and proper transportation provided. The demand for plants, knowledge and land preparation and other technical inputs are required by the various communities.

Fruits and vegetables are cultivated along with cash crops but there is no market. The New Guyana Marketing Corporation could arrange to assist in marketing. With cattle being one of the main activities of the Region, this agricultural base could introduce A.I. programmes and more outreach programmes at the same time.

Mr Speaker, our people are disappointed that agriculture has not been dealt with satisfactorily. We are overwhelmed by being Foot-and-Mouth free, but there is no infrastructure to sell our beef

[*Noisy Interruption*]

The Speaker: Hon. Members, please allow Mrs Melville to continue her speech uninterrupted.

Mrs Shirley Melville: It is quite ironical that in the past we could sell our beef because of not having the foot and mouth disease but now we cannot sell our beef because there is no infrastructure.

Mr Speaker, I will now move to systems. In Region 9, we have a united people. *Manor* means *together for an end cost*. However, in Region 9, selected persons are placed to work among us, who are not familiar with direction of development of the Region. Here we have the RDC structure on par with the Amerindian Touthou Council, an ideal combination to push development forward.

Mr Speaker, up to the time of the meeting of the RDC, on June, 2001, the REO has been in control of the Region.

Apart from being the Chairman of the Tender Board, he does the quotation, passes the quotation, purchases and verifies the purchases and signs for the release of materials to various projects.

The REO has refused to work with the Regional authorities. At the RDC meeting it was clearly outlined that the Regional Chairman is the authority of the Region. Up to date, the REO refuses to communicate when going out into the fields and to attend meetings. Recently, the REO went off to Toka, he did not inform the Regional Chairman, but said that he got directives from the Hon. Minister. Mr Speaker, simple courtesies could strengthen team work.

Mr Speaker, in the Budget, a vehicle was in third priority for the REO; an ambulance for the Hospital; and a vehicle for the Regional Chairman were bypassed. Monies were allocated for the REO. The REO has a vehicle already to do his duties and our Regional Chairman has none.

Mr Speaker, the REO, along with the Assistant Secretary for Finance and one other staff are the signatories to the district account for the NDC Funds. No personnel from the NDC is included.

Contracts: Contracts are not being given out to the residents of Region 9. Now, I would also like to suggest that we need in the Region an REO, who is sympathetic to the cause of the people of Region 9 to operate within the Region. That a vehicle be budgeted for the highest authority of Region 9, so our Regional Chairman would be able to perform his duties adequately.

Mr Speaker, our ex-Regional Chairman did not have a vehicle and this made it extremely difficult for him to perform his duties. We were very demoralised to see our Regional Chairman kicking the red dust and hitching a ride.

Mr Speaker, I suggest that the NDC be empowered because they need to be responsible for the town of Lethem. There needs to be less bottleneck systems. More revenue can flow within the Region, enabling the standard of living of our people to be uplifted. Should local contractors be included when contracts are being granted?

Education: I commend the Hon. Minister of Finance for an increase in the education allocation. However, this does not facilitate less frustration for our hard working and dedicated teachers. \$2.8 million was allocated for fuel and lubricants. There are few visits to the school. The Headmasters have a communication barrier with the Regional Education Officer. The St. Ignatius hostel was not visited for almost three years. At the same time there are sixty-seven students, male and female, who are staying at the dormitory at the St Ignatius Hostel and are being looked after by one female.

Mr Speaker, The PTA has embarked in getting more involved in the school affairs. There is need for a male assistant to be able to help with the male students. This would minimise the occurrence of certain incidents that plague our school children now. Also, in order

for a student to be able to be admitted to the dormitory, a better system needs to be worked out.

I would like to touch on Annai to clear the air about a statement that was made yesterday. Annai has a secondary school a headmaster who does not know which school, he is heading, closed dormitories, Paranapanema building is there but not functioning as a secondary school. Annai Resource Centre Building is being used for the Secondary School. There is an increase in drop-outs at the secondary school and this is because there is no accommodation for the students and their parents cannot have boarding fees and food sent to them.

The Headmaster is told from time to time to head the Secondary School as well as the Primary School. A decision needs to be made.

Before I move on from Education, I would like to make the point that school teachers from Yuenpara, have to walk one hundred and fifty miles to Garasabai and to fetch on their backs in warashi, school items in order to carry on school.

Another point is that Rupununi students from about ten years old when school is out, have to go to work in Brazil in order to be able to buy school items for the next term.

As I am here on this topic of education, I must mention that entering the commercial sector is new for our people and the Regional Chairman, but I would just like to clear the air on the North Rupununi District Development Board. It is a community-based organisation They have spin-offs like the Paimakwa Radio Station. There are some pressures being experienced at the moment. The interest is eighteen per cent by IPED for the people there in the revolving fund loan. The people find it very difficult to meet this interest rate and therefore the borrowers are decreasing in numbers. However, it is suggested that our Hon. Minister of Amerindian Affairs should talk with other women in the Central Rupununi, where there are two other successful revolving loan programmes on stream.

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Also one of the things that are very distressing to the people in the North Rupununi is that on the Radio Station, they are not allowed to transmit in Macushi.

Health: Hon. Minister our hospital at Lethem needs quite a bit of linen, mattresses, a wheel chair, security, better lighting system, nurses' room, furniture for a better kitchen and a phone line out so that nurses could call from within the hospital. There is an X-ray unit and we also have a technician there, however, there are no films. There is also need for a petty cash to buy vegetables for the patients, because this has been brought to the attention to the authorities and nothing has been done and workers have been penalised because of this. These issues were raised with the Regional Health Officer. There is need also to locate and install two computers that were donated to the hospital by an NGO. Drugs are expired before they could be sent to our villages.

Mr Speaker, I thank the Brazilian Government who attends to more than fifty per cent of the Regional medical needs through the FUNAI System, for example, in Rokamota, which is in the North Pakaraimas, if there is an emergency, our people cross the river, and there is an outpost on the other side of the river. If it is a very serious matter, they are shipped out with aeroplane. So for this, I would like to say that Brazilians are not only garimpeiros as we know them to be.

Security and Policing: I was heartened to hear about the plans of the Hon. Member, Mr Gajraj. At the moment, we are in a very vulnerable situation with regard to security and policing. Our border is very wide and we are under-staffed. To this, Mr Speaker, I suggest that the problems on the borders of Guyana and Brazil are mutual, therefore we could hasten to have a joint taskforce with our neighbours. Distance could be interchanged and each look after their respective borders. Our rural constables also who are the rural captains could also be given a stipend for this additional task. A manual is also required because none of the rural constables are

fully aware of their duties. Before I move from this, I would like to say that I cannot forget our mothers and friends, who have been picketing for so long and have not had their voices heard, the *Women in Black*. There is no country without mothers so, I suggest that some legislation be put in place for mini-buses.

Tourism: Our Region is situated at a very strategic point. Lots of visitors from overseas as well as Georgetown, would like to visit the Region. The cost of an airfare at the moment is US \$200 and for the more adventurous US \$94 and US \$105 overland. There is need for more programmes in eco-tourism and a foreign language, such as Portuguese. In these measures, I suggest that consumption tax on aviation fuel for flights to the hinterland could be reduced. I noted in the Stabroek only yesterday that aviation fuel has gone up. I suggest also that Eco-tourism and Portuguese be added to the school curriculum. I would also at this point like to commend the Private Sector in Guyana for their contribution towards tourism. However, they need help and I was very happy to hear the Hon. Member, Mr Manzoor Nadir mention that we have to remember that when we sell these packages, we are also selling our pot holes, our bad communication system, water problems, which we need to fix because, as Mr Manzoor Nadir said, tourism has quite a bright future in Guyana.

Electricity: In the Budget I see monies have been allocated for power extension. We have the hydro dam, Moco-Moco, we have blackouts, we have a vehicle being rented daily to transport workers, three trips per day, at a fee of \$3,500 per trip. This was passed by the Tender Board. There is a vehicle to be repaired owned by the Lethem Power Company. I suggest that persons on the Board be qualified for the various positions-technical persons are very much needed and managers who could deal with the important assets of the Region. The vehicle could be repaired and used to transport workers.

Lands: Mr Speaker, this is a delicate subject but one which needs

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to be dealt with for the continued existence of our people in our beautiful Guyana. This has been a cry for too long. People are not satisfied of what is being demarcated for them in terms of the allocation of land in Region 9 with special regard to houselots. Residents of Region 9 are very frustrated. People living in the Region for under five years have as much as seven houselots to one family.

Mr Speaker and Members of the House, we are aware that under the International Human Rights Laws, the rights of Amerindian people are recognised and guaranteed. Guyana ratified the International Convention on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination. According to the Convention on the elimination of racial discrimination, it states that parties are required to ensure that members of indigenous peoples have equal rights in respective participation in public life and that no decision directly relating to their rights and interests are taken without their informed consent.

Mr Speaker, I suggest that the time has come for this issue to be resolved in a very matured and professional manner. Our people can contribute more to the country by being an equal part of the society. I suggest more transparency and less secrecy when dealing with the people's application for Region 9. These applications should be given priority because as the saying goes, charity begins at home.

Roads: To my knowledge, we have seen in the past Budget allocations of funds for roads, Lethem does not have proper secondary roads and equipment are not made available. We have a garage built for approximately three years which is not being used, our equipment and vehicles are controlled by the REO and located on his premises. Funds from last year's budget have not been released to the NDC to repair secondary roads. An unsatisfactory working relationship exists between the REO and to NDC.

Mr Speaker, this year's Budget reflects that funds are allocated for the following roads:

Karasabai to Uremparu

Choka to Karasabai

Manari to Parashara

Lethem to Masara

Before I deal with this, I would like to make mention about a road that has been built from Karasabai to Tipuru. Mr Speaker, this road has been built by the Community and children from the age of five were involved in this exercise and it is only fair that some form of monetary compensation be granted to these adults of tomorrow.

Mr Speaker, I looked at the Toka to Karasabai and would like to ask the Hon. Minister Nokta if an environmental study has been done of this so needed road, which requires the blasting of the mountains. The construction of the road between Banari and Parishara, only a year ago, is a danger, a hazard and we believe this is due to the lack of technical expertise. In the rainy season the Masara Village on the road from Lethem to Masara, is an island like many other villages in the Rupununi. This road was started before the rainy season.

Mr Speaker, before I close I would like to say that, there is definitely the need for more participation from a wider section of our community in the preparation of the Budget. The people are in more of a position to be able to prioritise projects.

In closing, I plea to my colleagues to think of issues raised. Give our people equal opportunities to build their capacities as citizens, so they could regain their dignity and status as any other Guyanese.

Mr Speaker, I thank the Government of Guyana, past and present, the British Government, the Canadian Government, the American Government, the Brazilian Government for their inputs into capacity

building in the hinterland of Guyana.

And now we have a base to build on. To our present government I suggest that given the right environment we could contribute more at the national level, and we state once more and for all that we have no intention of living in the past but we are very concerned where we are now and what we can do together for the betterment of this land and its people.

Hon. Speaker, I thank you and may God bless Guyana.
[Applause]

The Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Member.

The Hon Member Mrs Pauline Sukhai.

Mrs Pauline R. Sukhai: Goodnight, Mr Speaker, Goodnight colleagues of the National Assembly. Mr Speaker, as I rise to make my contribution to the debate of the Budget 2001 presented in this House by the Hon. Minister of Finance, Mr Saisnarine Kowlessar, I want to congratulate him on the broad spread of our country's financial resources across Guyana.

I also want to say that I appreciate and would like to thank the hard working staff of the Ministry of Finance, for I am sure they have worked long hours in the preparatory stages in the production of this Budget.

This year's \$64 billion Budget is geared to continue the reconstruction of our country, with greater emphasis on improving expansion of infrastructure, improvement in the social sectors, creating the climate for attracting investment, the reduction of poverty, among many other issues, which the Budget will enhance. Guyana, Mr Speaker, is a small country, and I wish to say and also to quote from the National Budget from page 43, 7.2. It states:

Nation building as we know is by no means an easy task,

especially for a country like ours with a difficult past.

Mr Speaker, I must submit, the task of nation building hinges on the harmonisation of our relationships among each other, displaying genuine conviction to promote development, effective efforts and leadership from and by our national leaders to move our country forward. This, I feel is an important responsibility of all of us here in the National Assembly. The political climate, we all agree, is very hostile and the People's Progressive Party government demonstrated that political maturity is an essential factor in breaking the divide that tends to work against the best interest of our country; and I say this because our government has had a very difficult time in trying to mend the broken fabric of this country.

Dialogue, Mr Speaker, will always be the most effective means by which to explore solutions for our differences and wanton destruction, protest and more-fire will only bring pain, sorrow and hurt to all of us in this nation, particularly, I speak, for the vulnerable members of our society.

Mr Speaker, in my presentation, I want to highlight a few areas that will focus on the issue of poverty reduction and government's programme to address this major issue.

Rural Development: I am sure in dealing with this sector I will be able to make comments on both Region 9 and the constituency which I represent, Region 1. *Investing in Opportunities for all Guyanese* will be the topic which I have chosen from the Budget.

Poverty, Mr Speaker, is put on a high agenda by our government. We acknowledge and admit that this problem is still one of the major issues that will have to be addressed, that will have to be a priority in our overall development and a comprehensive approach will take us through the fight to reduce the scourge which has plagued our land over the last three decades and more.

The Budget Speech, Mr Speaker, on Page 34, clearly states and

I quote:

The Government intends to build on the Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper.

Mr Speaker, it went on to say:

An attack on poverty must focus on creating opportunities for all Guyanese.

This statement, Mr Speaker, I am sure was overlooked by the Opposition, because from the debate taking place here and from the contributions that I have been listening to, it seems as though we would wish this government to attack poverty along the divide of ethnicity. But I submit that that is not the way that my government, our government, the Guyanese government, ever addressed that issue. *(Applause)*

Not long after the presentation of the Budget in this House, our government in collaboration with our society, and I dare say, I did not see much of the Opposition attending, but the Government in collaboration with civil society launched the consultation process that will take the Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper to Guyanese.

Mr Speaker, in relation to some of the outrageous assertions coming from the other side, as it relates to the level of poverty, I wish to share some data. We are aware and I am sure that all the Members of the National Assembly should be aware of the recent study conducted by the IDS headed and co-ordinated by one of our Professors, Professor Clive Thomas, and this is what his study revealed, and I quote:

Head count measures of 36.6 per cent of the population live in absolute poverty and 19.1 per cent in critical poverty.

I want all the Members to listen very carefully to this finding, because we continue to misrepresent the facts in this House, Mr Speaker, the study went on to say and I quote:

This is a significant reduction in the result obtained in the 1992, 1993 HIES and LSMS Surveys.

If one of our leading economist can tell this nation he found in his study that it was a significant reduction, I dare say, we have to inquire how this reduction was achieved, by what means and by which government. This decrease in the incidence of poverty is attributed, and I want this to be recorded in the Hansard, as a direct result of the policies and strategies, that were implemented to improve the lives of the people over the last years by the PPP/Civic Government [Applause]

Mr Speaker, further, I wish to share some other data on the same subject and I take the information from Table 4 of the Report, *Poverty, Head Count Measures, Geographical areas. 1992, 1993 and 1999* and this is what this Table revealed,

Rural coastal areas in 1992, 1993, the percentage of poverty, absolute poverty was 45.1 per cent. In 1999, that figure dropped to 39.8 per cent.

Under critical poverty, the figure in rural coastal was 27.9 per cent and by 1999 that figure dropped to 18.1 per cent.

This shows that rural coastal areas had a dramatic decrease in the incidence of poverty across the coastal plain of our country.

However, the second one I want to deal with and share with this House is rural interior incidences of poverty and here is where I think all of us including the Opposition should have very great concern

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In 1992, 1993 the percentage of population in absolute poverty was 78.6 per cent.

In 1999, it was 78.4 per cent

I am saying this, because it is important for our rural hinterland community and for our policy makers and decision makers to take stock of how well we are doing as it relates to development in hinterland communities.

Mr Speaker, this data attested to the fact that poverty is most prevalent in rural interior areas of our country and lest this House thinks that I want to bring shame to our country and to our hinterland I am not doing so. And I want this for the records, to be recorded in the Hansard, that this here is revealing and therefore, I am perplexed sometimes when main opposition leaders, who are here today, some of them sitting in this House, seem not to appreciate the government planning and the way they focus their resources to certain sectors, certain areas in our country. Mr Speaker, I have observed how villages in the rural coastal areas, where critical poverty is only 18.1 per cent, raised hue and cry about being marginalised and depressed. Where is the voice from the Opposition trying to defend those communities in the hinterland that are most depressed and are in need of great assistance from this government?

Mr Speaker, this revelation is touching the Opposition, it is touching because they have seen that as politicians, they pandered to certain groups in this country, that wish to twist the aims of government, so that resources both financial and material can be adverted away from the hinterland where they have had less support.

Mr Speaker, I want to remind this House that the Opposition who sits with us in this House have had the mandate of forty per cent of the electorate or a little more, and they too have a mandate to the Guyanese people to represent all Guyanese and not one special sector of the population that has allegiance to them.

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Mr Speaker, I want to caution that this exercise of perpetuating mis-information to the House by the Opposition must stop, because it does nothing good for our people. They are in a better position. They do not identify with the vulnerable so they can twist the things around to suit them, while at the same time sacrificing the lives of some of those people, who are the most vulnerable in this society. That is why, Mr Speaker, I show them by a scientific, informed study that they should direct themselves to help government to treat, to plan and to divert resources to areas that most need them.

Mr Speaker, our government feels that one of the solutions to reducing poverty is to diversify our economy. *[Interruption: 'That is why you are driving a Prado.'* "Mr Speaker, while I drive a Prado, I have special, particular interest in my fellow poor Guyanese and as one Member in the House stated yesterday that there are many fly-by-night politicians, representatives of the people, who I am sure will not last long because the conviction of the nation is not there with them"]. *[Applause]*

Continued in Part III

National Assembly Debates

**PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF
THE FIRST SESSION (2001) OF THE EIGHTH PARLIAMENT OF GUY-
ANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE RE-
PUBLIC OF GUYANA**

Part III

9TH SITTING

2.00 PM

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Continued from Part II

Mr Speaker, getting back to diversifying the economic base which our government feels is one of the paths down which we should go, I want to inform this House that the PPP/Civic Government the learned and very articulate Minister of Finance, intends to allocate and spends \$425 million to stimulate investment in information technology. Only yesterday, Mr Speaker, I heard one Member of the Opposition, the Hon. Member, Mr Khan, one of the reformers or reformed, who spoke about government dumping a few computer hardwares into schools. He also accused this government of not having information technology development strategy that will guide the programme which is pronounced in this Budget. Mr Speaker, I was listening to him and I was hoping that he had read and examined the Budget carefully, but to my amazement he did not see that our government (and the Ministry of Finance) is currently negotiating a large loan with the IDB to start to develop this strategy. Of course, our government does not miss anything, our government has foresight and vision. They do not do things apart from each other or separate, they go step by step in a process that will take us forward.

Mr Speaker, dealing with IT, I want to say that the Budget ushered in opportunity for the enabling environment by encouraging expansion and competition in the field of telecommunication and this again will complement the direction for improving and stepping towards information technology which is the gateway for us to enter

international information system, international market, e-commerce and to provide the facilities at this first stage for any of our young people, young businesses and even to create the environment for investors to have a little bit more progress and speed in terms of their process and struggle towards investing.

Mr Speaker, I said, I wanted to speak a little on rural development, Mr Lance Carberry, I wish to say that I am the bed-fellow of rural communities, I have travelled across this country in the rural communities almost all my youthful life. I am growing a little older now and I still find it very enjoyable to go and work among the rural communities in this country, something that you have not found the taste for as yet. I hope that when our government and Mr Minister of Tourism begin to develop and to expand eco-tourism that you might find the taste then to go into a rural community and the hinterland. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, I need to turn to some of the strategies which this government hopes to help to encourage rural development. I want to point to the fact that one of those programmes which is planned is the Rupununi Diversification Project. This is not only mentioned here in the Budget but it is also mentioned in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, which hopes to stimulate development in Region 9. I was appalled yesterday, when the Hon. Dr Norton spoke about opening the roads to the Rupununi, not addressing the mining problems of the hinterland, looking at the forestry sector, and then I was happy to hear the Hon. Mr Ming, only a few minutes ago saying that opening up of more roads have a vast number of opportunities that we Guyanese can benefit from. And he wasn't speaking, I hope only of private business, I think he was probably speaking also, of those local Guyanese who lived in the hinterland.

I also found very interesting, the presentation of the Hon. Mrs Shirley Melville. Indeed, I must admit that in her maiden speech, she was quite good and I congratulate her, because she seems to have a hands-on knowledge of her Region. However, I rise to draw to the

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attention of this House that we hope that she will begin to see the reasonableness in supporting the Regional Democratic Council, the REO of that Region and also this government in bringing much more scope to development in Region 9. She knows the problems, she has some alternatives which she has raised and I am sure that like our good friend from the TUF, who is now a Minister on our side she too will see the logic in giving this government much more support in bringing relief to the hinterland communities. *[Applause]*

While she heaps praises on NGOs, the Brazilian government and others, I would like to submit that it would be amiss of me, if I do not bring to the attention of this House, that it is our government, the People's Progressive Party/Civic Government, which made lots of investments, huge investments in infrastructure, broken down infrastructure that was left as a legacy of the PNC period. We could have spent those investments in infrastructure, in rebuilding health huts, in rebuilding and refurbishing schools or new projects, if we did not have to spend those funds in areas which you, the PNC have run down.

In relation to Region 1, Mr Speaker, I wish to submit, and here I speak as a representative alongside the Hon. Mr Ricky Khan, of the people of Region 1, and I need to say that in Region 1, and I am going to show how greatly in need Region 1 population is. It says, from the Report that I quoted earlier, that eighty-nine per cent of those people living in Region 1 were under absolute poverty. *[Noisy Interruption]*

The Speaker: Order, Hon Members. Hon Members, let's have some order please.

Mrs Pauline R. Sukhai: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I am amazed to also share that in Region 4, twenty-seven per cent of Guyanese live under absolute poverty. Look at the disparity. Today four distressed communities in Region 4 are receiving priority intervention actions from this Government. And, why, Mr Speaker?

Because protests now seem to be the greatest measure of twisting our government hands.

Mr Speaker, while I do not condemn protests when it's legitimate, I want to say that prudent, keen and responsible politicians will begin to look outwards. Region 4 is only one Region and our government from the time we came into office have represented Region 4 with utmost sense of importance. Of course, I too like the Hon. Member, Mr Ricky Khan, would like to say that Region 1 needs some attention. My government-side of the House, I will not fail in my part as the representative of the residents of Region 1 to make demands for them. And therefore, I wish to say that the Hon. Member, Mr Khan's submission yesterday was justified.

Indeed, Mr Speaker, while his demands, his requests and his articulation of the issues of Region 1 residents was in order, I also wanted to draw to the attention of this House, that this government, for over eight years has brought back semblances of hope to that Region. *[Applause]*

I want to note that by 1990, Marbaruma was a slum, Matthews Ridge was a slum, Moruca, Santa Rosa were depressed, really depressed areas. Today, Mr Speaker, I want to say, and I invite them because I go there too, and I am sure the Hon. Member, Mr Ricky Khan, has invited them. Mabaruma is now a progressive township. *[Applause]* It is a township for that sub-Region and there is electricity there, there is water, there are better roads. I see business progressing, no longer is Kumaka a zombie town. I see the steamer going back there, at least twice per month and I know that the Private Sector in aviation is also transporting people to that Region. Mr Speaker, that Sub-Region is back on its feet.

However, Mr Speaker, I was perusing the Budget and the allocation towards the various headings and sectors for Region 1, and like my colleague on the Opposite side, I would have liked to see a little more investment in agriculture. I would have liked also

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to see probably not in this Budget, but in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, more proposals for the development of that Region as it relates to sectors, like the fishing sector, the agricultural sector, bring it to commercial levels, mining and forestry also.

I would also like to see, maybe in future budgets, monies and finances being allocated to empowering the residents, the youths and the children. In fact, I am not denying that this government is going to pump in more than \$203 million in the delivery of education, but if side by side, economic opportunities are not given equal attention, then I would not want to submit that maybe our government will be losing those investments, because right now there is a lot of unemployment in Region 1.

So, I do hope that my analysis of the Budget is not used wrongly, and tomorrow, I will see in the newspapers that the Member of Parliament on the People's Progressive Party Government's side was critical of the Budget presented by the Minister of Finance. I am saying this because it is a legitimate concern as a representative of the people of *Region 1*. I think I have a duty to those residents and not a duty to only commend the government, give the government credit but to also provide options, opportunities and ideas that can be later brought on board so that *Region 1* can also benefit on an equal basis as other communities. I say this because I feel the programme for *Region 10*, under the Linden Development Programme, will cater for, and have impact on the 35,000 population that live in that *Region*. There is going to be a revolving loan fund under the name LEAP, which will provide finances for the residence of Linden and its environment, and members of *Region 10*. It will also provide training to go side by side in the thrust of developing local entrepreneurs, private business and so on, and therefore I do not think that we are presenting for *Region 1*, as good a programme as was presented for *Region 10*. I do hope that when my dear Hon. Member from *Region 10* gets up to speak, she will be able to give this government credit in the efforts that this government is making to help *Region 10*, and that she, Mr Speaker, will be responsible and

ensure that support from her support-base is used to benefit and to work with this programme, that the monies will not be left sitting in the kitty and not be utilised or the programmes would seem to be so great that they will not be implemented. Therefore, she will come back in the House the next year and say, 'my residents in Region 10 is depressed and marginalised'. They are being given a glorious opportunity to bring themselves on par to other communities along the Coast. *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Time, Hon Member.

Hon Reepu Daman Persaud: Mr Speaker, I wish to move that the Hon Member be given five minutes to conclude her speech.

Question **put** and **agreed** to.

Mrs Pauline R. Sukhai: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, over the last two days of debate, many of the speakers on the other side seem to imply that the government is deficient and does not recognise groups of people whose causes they have championed. I wish to say that they should be cautious when they try to imply such a notion. Gone are the days when members of the population of Guyana have to feel allegiance so as to have their problems addressed.

Mr Speaker, will our leaders allow the culture of selfishness to become pervasive in this society, putting themselves and self-interest before nation? Mr Speaker, we need to examine ourselves, all of us, and not fall in the trap of dividing our people further. And I say this for the benefit of the PNC.

Mr Speaker, I was appalled in this House, when the PNC left when the Hon. Attorney General was making his maiden presentation. It is appalling to know that leaders of this country can behave so immature and childish - when they cannot get their way, they sulk, they stay away and they cover under a sheet.

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Mr Speaker, I would like to hear in this House for the next five years, less rhetoric, less misinformation from the opposition. The Guyanese people are watching us, they are measuring us, the government, on the prudent management of our economy over the last years. Even though we have had pitfalls, constraints and limitations both man-made and natural, I want to say that this government has a very good intuition of addressing the economic ills of the county in a very equitable fashion.

Mr Speaker, I now add my support for the Budget and ask that those light-minded Members in this House and those of us, who are reasonable enough work in this very short period of six months for the implementation of the projects and programmes as pronounced in the Budget 2001. Thank you, Mr Speaker [*Applause*]

The Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Member.

The Hon Member, Mr Andy Goveia.

Mr Andy Goveia: Mr Speaker, when Budget time is here, the people of Guyana are interested in hearing something in the Budget and one of the main thing the people of Guyana is interested to hear is the Income Tax threshold. It was amazing to think that the Minister of Finance could come to this House with a Budget that does not address the Income Tax threshold.

Mr Speaker, after the Armstrong Award, the lowest scale worker in this country, the Scale I workers in the Public Service earned \$19,000 per month. As far as I could remember, probably in the history of our country, this is the first time that the lowest paid worker's salary in this country moved above the threshold

Mr Speaker, it means that the Minister of Finance is asking that every single worker of this country pay tax. Yet we hear so much is spent on programmes for the poor. Money from Canada, money from England, \$500 million, \$1 billion and if the Minister of Finance was to raise the threshold to \$20,000 per month, he will be giving

the greatest contribution to the poor. He will be giving \$1.2 billion back to the poor people of this country. *[Applause]* I don't understand how we could work on this figure and talk about the poor and we have an opportunity to give \$1.2 billion back to it and we don't.

Mr Speaker, over the last seven years, the PPP have talked about investment - foreign investment- in this country. It doesn't reflect that in this Budget. The Minister of Finance produced this Budget for \$64 billion approximately, and the Minister of Finance is taking \$41 billion from the workers in PAYE. I can't believe that the Minister of Finance, who talked about all this investment would come to this House and talk about all of these programmes for the poor and will not up the threshold of the poor worker of this country.

I will give you an example, we talk about LINMINE you turned on your radio and you hear the Bauxite Industry produces and gives nothing to this country, it's a burden. Then most of the workers that used to work at the same Bauxite Industry were retrenched. Thanks to the Hon. Prime Minister and they sought employment at OMAI. A worker at OMAI, worked for one hundred and thirty-two hours per fortnight. The union went to the Ministry and said to them, let the workers pay tax on eighty hours, give them tax relief of fifty-two hours and the bush allowance. Could you believe that a Government that talks about helping the people in Region 10 refused that request? That request would have only helped the economy of Linden, that tax-free money would have been circulated in Linden and would have helped the people of Linden. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, we talk a lot about helping depressed communities and poor people. Let us be serious, let us start helping the workers. I looked at this Budget and I went downstairs in the library and I read form 1997,1998, 1999, 2000 and we hear a lot of talk about new jobs. The Minister of Finance in 1997 said that he was creating ten thousand new jobs. It can't be found: it never happened. I must say this Minister of Finance did not mention numbers, he only made promises.

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Mr Speaker, something that surprised me on checking the Estimates, the Hon. Member, Mr Collymore complained about his staff today. Whenever you have a question that something goes wrong in the Ministry, the first person they complain about, is their staff. I will tell you, one Ministry had \$200 million, Ministry of Fisheries. The rest of them had basically hardly anything and yet from these same Ministries' staff, we take their hardworking, sweat money, we tax them heavily. I would like to say, I think, the workers of this country be some of the most taxed workers of the world.

Mr Speaker, talking about poor people, talking about the lives of people in this country, there is a topic that upsets me and I know a lot of facts on it. I know the Hon. Member, Mr Baksh is waiting for this.

We talk about giving the poor, everybody house lots, we talk about improving conditions of the workers and giving them house lots. The Ministry in 1998, boasted that they distributed 30,000 house lots and I quote from the 1998 Budget presented by Mr Jagdeo, the Minister of Finance:

This Government is committed to the distribution of 30,000 house lots.

In 1999, it was also reported by the then same Minister Jagdeo and I quote from his Budget:

We will distribute 10,000 house lots this year. More than that \$200 million has been budgeted to upgrade and develop the sites and services to facilitate the speedy implementation of the Housing Programme.

In 2000, I quote:

This year, we will prepare over 20,000 for distribution.

Mr Speaker, I want you to listen to me, in addition to a US \$30

million loan to undertake the low income settlement project, we will be spending approximately \$1 billion to upgrade and regularise squatting communities.

Mr Speaker, according to the Budget presentations in 1998, 1999 and 2000, the Ministry of Housing has distributed 60,000 house lots. I congratulate the Minister on his achievement. The average amount of money paid by a person for a house lot is \$11,500; some have paid \$8,000; some have paid \$58,000 and some have paid as much as \$70,000 in the high income house lots.

Mr Speaker, this money has come from the poor workers of this country. In 1998, in the capital budget, Ministry of Housing spent \$126 million on capital projects. In 1999, they spent \$60 million on capital projects; in 2000, they spent \$650 million in capital projects. These figures I got from the Budgets. In all they have spent G \$ 936 million on capital projects over 1998, 1999 and 2000 for housing and upgrading squatting communities plus a US \$30 million loan project. I want to remind you, the Hon. Mr Baksh, it is easy multiplication, the Ministry of Housing has distributed 60,000 house lots at an average of \$11,500, they collected \$690 million from the people of this country.

Mr Speaker, through you, to the Minister of Finance. I looked through your Budgets carefully, I took your budgets to financial experts to check and I cannot find any where reflected in your Budgets the amount of \$690 million paid by the people for house lots and collected by the Ministry of Housing

Mr Speaker, like other Members of Parliament, I have travelled and visited nearly every squatting area in this country, the one in Essequibo, wherever you call. I will ask today for an inquiry to be launched into the Ministry of Housing for the money spend on the capital projects.

Mr Speaker, I will say something to you, I have never seen such

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mis-appropriation of funds, by this government from the ordinary people's money than I have seen in the Housing Department.
[Applause]

I will say to the Minister of Finance, I will not support your Budget with you putting a cent more into Housing until the money of 1998, 1999 and 2000 have been investigated and a report is being brought to this House.

Mr Speaker, I use the Ministry of Housing figures, I use the figures in the Budget, so that the Ministry of Finance could get those figures very easily. Today, as a Member of this House, I am asking for an investigation in the capital projects of the Ministry of Housing and I would like to see detailed information on the \$690 million collected from the people for their house lots. How were they spent and where? Where the money gone?

Talking about money being spent in this country, Sir, I have a problem with authorities. Believe it or not, and there is a famous authority in this country that comes under the same Ministry, the Water Authority.

Mr Speaker, in 1998, \$140 million was spent on water projects; in 1999, \$616 million was spent on projects including a famous one; \$76.5 million was spent on the New Amsterdam project in that year; \$75 million was spent on the Coastal Water Supply Project; \$455 million was spent under the Water Supply Technical Assistance Rehabilitation Programme. In 2000, \$1,146,700,000 was spent on the same Water Supply Technical Assistance Rehabilitation Programme; \$146 million was spent on the famous New Amsterdam Project in that year; \$20 million was spent on Rural Water Assistance Programmes and if the Hon. Member, Mrs Shirley Melville, was here, she would surely have been able to help me out, because no money was really spent in Region 9; \$160 million was spent on the mining water systems; and \$91 million was spent on major water systems.

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Mr Speaker, the New Amsterdam people are worst off than before the project started and when we asked Mr Singh, Chairman of the Water Authority, he said that project has three stages and we could not get the benefits on the programme until all three stages are finished. Well, Sir, I have news to tell you, the programme has finished, he cancelled it and sent away the contractors. The people of New Amsterdam have no water but \$219 million were spent.

Mr Speaker, we talked about the coastal areas, over \$60 million have been spent on the Coastal Water Project and I reported it to the Chairman of the Water Authority today that Belfield gets water one hour per day. An area ten miles out of this city, Lusignan, only gets water north of the public road. Buxton gets water only north of the public road, Golden Grove only gets water certain hours a day.

Mr Speaker, the nicest example of the water programme is, and I am sorry the Hon. Member Mr Belgrave is not here, because the President of this country was asked last year to open a water well at Tucville. At the opening, speeches were made, beers were shared free to the people and, Sir, six weeks after the engine of the well - the pump of the well - was removed and the people of Tucville have no water coming from that well. Mr Speaker, I highlighted that the Ministry of Housing accepted money for house lots. In the area, not too far away called Sophia, the water authority was asked after the Ministry of Housing had taken their money, had not given them titles, had three or four people given one house lot, had broke down some small houses, turned around and told those people they had to pay \$10,000 if they wanted water connection to their houses. It is unthinkable that the Minister of Finance would come to this House and say that he is giving the Water Authority more money.

Mr Speaker, again I am asking not only for an inquiry but an investigation into the Guyana Water Authority. I am also asking that the Manager of the Water Authority - the head of the Authority - be sent on leave. I heard from the grape vine that he is leaving the country. This is a serious story. Mr Speaker, through you, and as a

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Member of this House, I am asking you seriously that an investigation be put into Guyana Water Authority.

Hon. Minister of Finance, your Water Authority is one example of a bad authority, but you have others. You have the Gold Board which the public knows about, you have the Forest Commission which the whole public knows about. I am asking as an elected Member of this House that an investigation be put into the Guyana Water Authority. *[Applause]*.

Mr Speaker, before I close, I will short-spot for the Ministry, because this Ministry never brought a programme, has never stated a policy, has the minimum of capital amount of money spent on it, but yet everyday in the newspapers, you see some picture or something about the Ministry.

I would like to ask the Minister through you, Sir, how he decided on how much money would be spent on sports in this country? It has been a magic, you decide it. We have heard in this House before of pipe-dreams, about a stadium being built somewhere behind Diamond. We have heard about a football story and yet our existing facilities like the National Park, they have an international 400 meters track, three lawn tennis courts with the capacity of making three more, a hockey field, a football field, a rugby field, a tarmac where netball and basket ball used to be played. It is in its worst condition ever in its history since it came to existence in this country.

Let us look at D'Urban Park. D'Urban Park is now an alligator pond and now the Ministry of Housing is burnt down, I don't know what it will turn to. D'Urban Park had an athletic track, a grass track for motor bikes, two football fields, a cricket field, a rugby field and look at its condition. D'Urban Park was developed to be a sports place to service the people of South Georgetown. We can't talk about sports and we can't talk about dreams unless we spend money on our facilities, repairing the sports hall floor is a good enough thing, but let us be serious about sports, let us learn the lesson of our

World Champion 'Six Head' Lewis, what he went through before he left this country.

I am saying to you, Mr Speaker, the Minister of Finance honestly can't tell me how he decided what amount of money was being put into sports.

Mr Speaker, looking at this Budget; I tried to do so in four ways. The bread and butter situation of individual of this country, his salaries, and I found one thing, this government has decided not only to take away the sweat from the workers but now they are asking for the blood.

I looked at it, too, for the workers' comfort where I could see if they were given a house or a house lot, where they could have somewhere, a decent shelter to call their own. All I saw is corruption. I looked at the necessary things in their lives, like water and they have to pay dearly for water in this country, because we have a water authority that billions were put into and they have not delivered the goods to this country.

Then I looked at the relaxation of a person in this country, where he would go and walk in the National Park or D'Urban Park without getting bitten by an alligator and I saw nothing for them.

Mr Speaker, I would like to say to the Minister of Finance, he has brought to this House a very hopeless and dull picture for the poor people of this country. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Member.

The Hon. Minister of Housing and Water.

Hon. Shaik K. Z. Baksh: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I didn't expect much more, Mr Speaker, from the Hon. Member, Mr Goveia. I didn't expect it. His usual ad hoc approach to analysing the Budget and incoherence. . . Let me set the record straight.

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Firstly, he is mistaking GS&WC for GUYWA. The first thing is that, he hasn't read the Budget properly nor the Estimates because the water for Georgetown including Sophia comes under the Guyana Sewerage and Water Commissioners and not GUYWA. So he is mixing up this thing. He does understand it.

Mr Speaker, firstly the Sophia water, I want to tell you that in Georgetown, water has improved so much, all of you are having good showers with pure water every morning. Over the last five years, Mr Speaker, we have spent \$3 billion in improving the water and Sewerage Systems in Georgetown - \$3 billion. When we took office in 1992, the water infrastructure was virtually demolished, virtually collapsed. This was the state of affairs, and we have improved water and if you go to any part of Georgetown, you get a good supply of water. We have moved the expansion of the water; programme to Sophia, we are spending \$60 million to ensure that all the poor people in Sophia get a good supply of water – *[Interruption: 'Water ain't coming in the house'. "With house connections, yes, it's on stream right now. We have completed the transmission lines and we are now running individual connections in all parts of Sophia. If you go to Block "R" by the tannery, the first floor, you get water in the shower"]*

Mr Speaker, the GS&WC has done a very good job managing the water resources of the city of Georgetown. And let me go further because there is a lot of misinformation the Hon. Member has been speaking in this House in the usual way.

Payment for water: I want to tell you that we have a new tariff structure from the 1st January, 2000 for water and it exempts fifty per cent of the poor people of Georgetown, not a penny more will they pay for the next five years in tariffs. This is what this Government has done. We have a targeted subsidy to the poor people of Georgetown.

Mr Speaker, the question of charges for house connections is

across this country both in the GUYWA's areas and the GS&WC areas. It is a cost to the Government to bring in the service connections and we charge \$10,000, that is what they are paying for the house service connection.

Secondly, with regard to Georgetown water, we have drilled a well in the year 2000 at Tucville Terrace, bringing relief to nine hundred households in East La Penitence, Tucville and Guyhoc. *[Interruption: 'You are not talking about the pump? "And this is a technical problem, we must understand there is a technical problem as would happen with any well in this country. What has happened there, is that the pump fell into the bore-hole of the well. [Laughter] That is a technical problem and we are finding a technical solution to that problem, and very shortly, we will get a contractor to retrieve that pump and motor which fell into the well"']*

Mr Speaker, I want to announce also that great things are in store for the citizens of Georgetown in terms of improved water supply over the next five years. We are currently spending \$200 million and I want this to be in the news - over \$200 million to put in pipelines in South and North Ruimveldt and in Agricola and yet they say, they have been marginalised. Tomorrow, I am going to visit the works in progress. The contractor is already ditching and the contract for over \$200 million has been awarded to Courtney Benn. No discrimination and no marginalisation. Mr Speaker, the Hon. Member has not been educating himself and he should visit these areas. If he has an interest, he would see the massive works in Sophia where water is concerned.

Mr Speaker, In South Georgetown, over the next five years , with the coming into being of the IDB Programme II for GS&WC, we would be spending \$5 billion to further improve the water and sanitation system in the City of Georgetown, that is, approximately over \$1 billion per year for Georgetown. That is the good news that I bring to the citizens of Georgetown today

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Mr Speaker, the GS&WC has moved a far way and when you receive your bill, you will see the new computerised billing system at work.

Now, we come to the other aspect, that is, in terms of the GUYWA areas. The Hon. Member has made a point about expenditure. Yes, there has been massive expenditure funded by the donor agencies, the European Union, the IDB, the World Bank and so on, because we have in this country six major projects, some on stream and some to be implemented very shortly. We have the Pouderoyen major water project covering all the villages from Versailles to Anna Catherina. We have the Rose Hall project on stream right now. It should be completed this year and it will cover all the areas from Gibraltar to Orangestein, all the villages without exception, the villages, black, blue white or green.

Mr Speaker, we also have the LBI - the major scheme. The major scheme at LBI, we are awaiting a "*No Objection*" from the Caribbean Development Bank and we are hoping that construction can start very, very shortly and that would take in all the villages from Industry to Victoria – *[Interruption: 'What about Region 7? Talk about Bartica. "Wait, I am coming, be patient. Comrades be patient"']*.

Then we have the Eccles major scheme and that will take in all the villages from Eccles to Timehri. Mr Speaker, these are major schemes for which we have already procured the necessary funding and this is the new approach to the coastal water infrastructure strategy, building water factories across the coastal belt have been started with four of those water factories as I have mentioned.

Then we come to Region 6 - New Amsterdam major water supply project - and it is not \$298 million, it is not \$219 million. Over the last five years, we have spent G \$ 1.1 billion. And you should go and visit New Amsterdam, the water treatment plant, the storage facilities and see what we are doing now. We have already

laid all the pipelines in the entire town of New Amsterdam - all the pipelines have been laid, the project is ninety per cent complete but we have had problems with the contractor and we have terminated the agreement with the European Union Contract, and we are now having another contract to complete the works in New Amsterdam and when that project is completed within the next three months or thereabout, the entire New Amsterdam will have treated water, a supply of high pressured treated water in New Amsterdam.

This Government cares for the poor people of this country and we link water to poverty - a strong linkage between the provision of water and the financial resources we put into the water sector, to the alleviation of poverty to the people of this country.

And now by request, we come to Region 7, because the Hon. Member from Region 7, she cannot distinguish between a well and a bore-hole. *[Laughter]* That has been jocular, but at the same time, I am being serious. The Bartica water supply system depends on surface water from the Mazaruni River. We do have a water treatment plant and a very old distribution system which we inherited from the PNC government. We have now procured enough resources through the World Bank. As a matter of fact, a senior engineer from the World Bank has paid a visit to Bartica and shortly, we will get the "No Objection". All the designs have been complete. We are going on to contract for the entire distribution system to be replaced. We are hoping to start the new distribution system during the year 2001. And furthermore, the distribution system will go all the way up to four miles Bartica to ensure the 1,000 house lots that we have distributed to the people in Region 7 and Bartica get a good supply of water. *[Applause]*

The Hon. Member is not being quite honest. Give praise where praise is due. Also what we have done, because of the Geomorphology of the Bartica area, because you don't get water, because of the rocky nature of Bartica, we have decided to spare some money to see whether we can put a bore-hole in, not a well, a bore-hole to

see whether we can have any trace of water, because we know the situation regarding the pollution which the Hon. Member quite rightly spoke about caused by mining activities. So we put the bore-hole, it's a cheaper way to ensure that there is water. If water is there then we go to the other expenditure of putting in wells.

Mr Speaker, we have a very massive programme in this country running into billions and billions of dollars. Right now, in all the regions, we have sixty-nine projects on stream and more than fifty per cent of those projects are completed.

Mr Speaker, in Region 2 the projects include the last phase of the transmission lines from Zorg-en-Vlygt to La Union and Tamau Tamada to Queenstown. These will be completed which means that the entire Essequibo Coast would have been completed in terms of the transmission system and also the distribution system.

In Region 3, we have projects at Wakenaam on stream right now. Leguan is to be started shortly; the contract has been awarded, and in De Kinderen, we will have a full supply of water and distribution in the pipelines this year, I can assure you.

Mr Speaker, that was a temporary measure and bear in mind the De Kinderen and Met-en-Meerzorgareas come under SILWIF and not the Guyana Water Authority but during the course of this year, we shall be taking over. I will tell you more about that because I see you are paying careful attention to what I am saying. We will be taking over not only the SILWIF areas, but we will also be taking over the LINDEN Water Supply from the 1st September of this year and we have provisions in the Budget to support that.

In Region 4, all the villages on the lower East Coast, we have been laying pipelines, the reticulation system has been prepared for the major LBI Scheme when it comes into being and the areas covered would be Victoria, Golden Grove, Nabaclis is in progress right now, Haslington, Lusignan, Vryheids Lust, Mon-Repos, LBI,

Beterverwagting, all the villages – [*Interruption: 'You skipped Buxton.'* “*Buxton has had its supply since 1999. Sine 1999, you have had new pipelines laid in Annandale and Buxton.*”] In Region 6, these were well in place in 1998/1999/2000 for your information, Hon. Members. In Region 6, we have many, many projects we have just completed the main transmission line.

For those of you who are not familiar with water technology, let me enlighten you. You have to have the main transmission line. If you don't have that, there is no need to put in the distribution network in preparation for the main transmission line. We have just completed the main transmission line from Joppa to Adventure and also we're doing a main transmission line from Edinburgh to Cuthbert on the East Bank of Berbice. It means all of those villages within that area will be covered and will have a good supply of water. The Hon. Member was very selective in the Leeds area. I want to report that we have a well at No. 47 Village and we have also another well at No. 57 Village. You are getting a supply of water, on one side, it is a far higher pressure. On the other side, it's a lower pressure. We accept that, the Guyana Water Authority will be looking at the crossings and we are also looking to integrate the two wells at No. 47 and No. 57 and when that is completed, you will have a very good pressure at Leads area also.

Last year, I myself went into some of the communities. You know, I am community-oriented. I went to several communities there and I can tell you the support I got from the Afro Guyanese villages in Region 6 ... I have gone to Lancaster, Liverpool, Alness, Manchester and Ulveston. When I go there, the people said, “*Minister give us the pipelines and we will help the village to lay the pipelines* and they did it in record time. All of those areas have a good supply of water, right now - five villages.

Mr Speaker, in Black Bush Polder, we have major projects going on there for all the areas, Accessary, Johanna, and the Hon. Member talked again about misdirected views, distorted perceptions.

They talked about the Zambia areas. I want to report that the laying of pipelines have been completed and shortly we will be serving house connections at Zambia, as well as the other parts of Mibicuri and Johanna and later this year, Accessary and Lesbeholden will be completed.. So, Mr Speaker, their's is a kind of perception, we believe in balanced developments. In the water sector in particular, we have been moving and moving, but because of the state of infrastructure which we inherited, it will take time. There are many Indo Guyanese areas which don't have water. At Lusignan and at Mon Repos, right now, this is the point.

Now, Mr Speaker, I come to hinterland water, because we have a very strong and focused policy for hinterland water supply and the very fact that the Hon. Member, Mrs Melville didn't say a word - one word - about water in Region 9 speaks a lot. *[Interruption: "It means that water in plenty. The water is high. It speaks a lot because there has been a take off, a virtual take off of water in the Hinterland."]*

In Region 9, to date, as I speak now, thirty-one out of the thirty-three hand-dug wells have been completed from Baitoon to Aishalton. Twelve four-inch wells have been drilled and two six-inch wells have been drilled at Lethem. Now at Lethem, we have had problems with the contractor. The Hon. Member was arguing about getting contractors from the Region, and we gave the contractor from the Region an opportunity, but he failed. That is not to say that we would not give another person from Region 9, the opportunity but what has happened now? We have awarded the contract to another contractor and during the course of this year, within the next three to four months, we are hoping that the entire distribution network in Lethem will be completed, ensuring that all the population in Lethem is served with a good supply of water. And we will extend the supply of water to the new housing development. The Hon. Member just alluded again, and I don't know where she got that information from because the Ministry of Housing and Water has one Housing Scheme established at Lethem providing for over six hundred house

lots and we would be ensuring that they have a good supply of water in that scheme.

Mr Speaker, in Region 1, we have completed the entire distribution network as it extends to Wauna. The Hon. Member will attest to that fact. We have also refurbished the pumping stations.

In Region 8, at Mahdia, we have just completed two wells, but I must report because of the geological formation, the wells are low producing and we have to install hand-pumps. In any case, we have already awarded a contract for Mahdia to do the entire distribution network because we are trying to source another supply of water from a spring in the area. So we will have overhead source of supply as well as the other distribution network.

Mr Speaker, in Region 10, we have already completed ninety per cent of the water system at Ituni and as I have reported before, we would be taking over the Linden water supply from LINMINE by 1st September of this year.

Mr Speaker, there is no doubt that this Government has a vision for the water sector of this country, that is, to provide universal access to safe and affordable water within the next five years.

We have a remarkable record. UNICEF Report 2000 has shown what they called the Water Coverage for Guyana, is one of the most outstanding in the Caribbean and in Latin America. The money has been well spent, ninety-three per cent coverage of water in Guyana compared to other Latin American countries. That is the reason why the donor agencies are pumping more and more money into the water sector. I want to report that we have US \$30 million of which are grants. It shows the confidence that they have in this Government, managing the water sector in this country.

I come back to the Hon. Member, Mr Goveia, because all of these monies given by the donor agencies, they have audits, and if he goes back, do your research, go to the 1999 Auditor General's Report

and you will see, every single dollar being accounted for and the donor agencies of course have their auditing mechanism, systems to ensure accountability in the spending of their funds. I want to assure this Honourable House that we have all the records which can be audited and which the Auditor General can audit for the two utilities, the Guyana Sewerage and Water Commissioners and the Guyana Water Authority. So none of those records have been destroyed. So the Hon. Member has been more than dishonest when he said that a fire destroyed the buildings and that all the documents for audit have disappeared. That is not true.

Housing Sector: Mr Speaker, the Hon. Members Mr Murray and Mr Bernard said, they will give credit where credit is due and that they will support the government's programme where it should be supported and I commend them for those statements, but hearing from Mr Goveia, he has detracted completely. Mr Ming gave a very insightful contribution and this is what we need in this country. Mr Goveia has been coming to my office very often and we have been dialoguing, we have our own dialogue to advance the housing sector in this country. This is the way we must manage the various sectors, we want the contributions and the contributions made by the Hon. Member Mr Ming has come out of our discourse at the Land and Houselot Selection Committee. Many of the points he has made, I share, and we will make efforts to see how we can implement some of them. But let me go into some of them because as you know, we have a very dynamic, expansive housing programme in this country. *[Applause]* This is a record for the Commonwealth, probably for the world and I am hoping that we enter the Guinness Book of Records.

Yes, an outstanding achievement, the housing programme is not only about houselot distribution. It is side-tracked, that is the beginning of a process to provide shelter and settlements to the people of this country. I am not going to go back into the past, I want to go into the future and I want to deal with the very constructive points and I now see why you placed the Hon. Member, Mr Goveia as the shadow Minister of Housing.

Mr Ming has stated that low income housing construction, that we need to advance that further and at a quicker pace. He is very right about that. We have been having several interventions, he has mentioned using the new technology, we have gone ahead with that because GNIC has already built six demonstration houses at the Tuschen Housing Scheme, using the prefab system, the simplex system devised by the Cubans, a very successful project so far. And again, we have "World Homes" who came in here from Canada and using the prefab system, they have built a number of middle-income houses at Diamond. So, we are looking at the opportunities, how we can accelerate the building of the low income houses in this country. It takes too long to build a house in Guyana, but then we have to contend with the problem. This is the fundamental thing, the building culture in this country, a lot of people don't want the prefab system. They want to see a house built in concrete, they don't even want to use wood. No, this is the reality, this is the research that has been carried out, but we have several interventions:

One intervention is the demonstration houses. We have many people now who have been granted houselots to put up demonstrated houses – [*Interruption: 'What kind of house?' "Concrete house"*]

The second intervention is the Habitat. As he has mentioned that is one intervention, but I want to correct him here, because we have been supportive of the work of Habitat for Humanity, and as a matter of fact, I want to state that, I offered Habitat for Humanity two hundred house lots to set up a habitat village, but they have not responded to that offer which was made over one year ago.

Again, through Mr Ming, I am offering forty houselots for the Habitat for Humanity at the very poor communities of Enmore/Haslington, where we have a large Housing Scheme going up there. So I am presenting that offer. That is the challenge.

Now, also, Mr Speaker, the Ministry itself has started, with the private sector, Government/Private Sector participation. We are

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not moving ahead to construct houses which will be supported by the Mortgage Finance Institutions through a revolving housing fund. You can see it in the papers, it was advertised. In all the Regions, in several of the Housing Schemes, we will be putting up some low income houses to boost further the housing drive of this country. --
[Interruption: 'Bartica?' "Bartica will get their share also"]

Mr Speaker, I also wish to report and as the Hon. Member, Mr Ming has stated, we have provided all the documentation for the Committee in terms of our system - well documented. I have heard no comments from Members of that Committee about the documentation which we have provided in terms of allocation, processes, systems, procedures, criteria and so on. But I agree with him as I have told him that with the next fifty thousand house lots which we will be distributing over the next five years, we will be revising our criteria to ensure that married couples also come into it and qualify for house lots.

But one point of correction here again, because single persons and married persons without children can qualify for house lots right now, they can qualify for a middle income house lot without any restrictions. It is a more high priced house lot, but we also have a category called special cases where the Housing Officers visit the homes of people who might be destitute or have other problems of overcrowding and so on and they can qualify for house lots. But we want to make it a criteria which can apply universally across the Board. This is what we intend to do.

Mr Speaker, I also want to say that the Hon. Member, Mr Ming, commented further on the Region 4 situation, but I do not want to comment further on that because it is at the Committee stage and the system in place in Region 4. It has been discussed and there are strong arguments why it should remain as it is, but I wouldn't want to go further than that but await the consideration of the Committee - the House lot and Land Committee - on that aspect.

Mr Speaker, I see Mr Ravi Dev has left, I also want to correct the point which Mr Ravi Dev had made and that is, that forty per cent of the cost of building a house, can be said to come from the consumption and other taxes. This is so erroneous. He said that some business people had given him that information, but I don't want to attribute that to the Hon. Member, that he does not support the housing drive. It is just an error on his part. I think he wants to support it, he recognises the good works, the government has been doing in housing the nation and he wanted to make a contribution in that regard. But I want to say, that we have zero rated the consumption tax, no taxes are paid on timber for building of houses. Cement is only ten per cent consumption tax, electrical is only ten per cent and twenty per cent, plumbing is ten per cent consumption tax and fifteen per cent on duty. Paint - to paint a building it is only ten per cent. So my calculations tell me, it is far below forty per cent. I estimate for a low income house in this country, the consumption tax would be more like ten per cent.

Now, Mr Speaker, there are several dimensions of the Housing Programme. – *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Time Hon. Member.

Hon. Reepu Daman Persaud: Mr Speaker, I move that the Hon. Member be given fifteen minutes to conclude his speech.

Question **put** and **agreed** to.

Hon. Shaik K. Z. Baksh: Yes, the whole question of promoting the housing drive is linked also to creating the facilitating environment, and that is, providing access to finance. This is very, very important - providing access to finance. We have done several things, we have passed legislations, amending the New Building Society Act, so that other mortgage finance institutions can qualify for fiscal incentives enjoyed by the NBS and as you know the interest rate of the NBS is far lower, relatively lower than those charged by the

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banking system. Also to give longer period of repayment, so that the mortgages can be more affordable between twenty to thirty years.

Mr Speaker, I am happy to announce that several banking institutions have applied to be qualified as mortgage finance institutions and shortly we shall be certifying two of them that is, the Citizens Bank and the NBIC because I want to see, as Minister, more competition in the Housing Loan Market, to facilitate those thousands and thousands of people out there.

Mr Ming has made another good point that, institutions should merge the mortgage loan to cover both land and house, a good suggestion which I support and I would want to take that up with the banking institutions in this country - very good suggestion. These are the kinds of suggestions we want from this side of the House, constructive, and I will surely follow-up that. So we are creating the facilitating environment in terms of giving greater access to finance.

Mr Speaker, because of the problems we have with expediting titling to the lands the Act provides for the Minister of Housing to sign a letter of assurance in the interim pending the passing of transports and I can tell you hundreds and hundreds of persons across this country are not making use of this opportunity. *[Interruption: 'Except Sophia' "On a point of correction, Hon. Member, several persons from Sophia, they have already got their letters of assurance. But for Sophia, I want to tell you that we have moved such a far way in terms of giving titles to the people of Sophia"]*

Mr Speaker, last year, we processed and delivered in excess of five thousand titles in this country, a record of achievement. This is despite the problems which we have at the Deeds Registry. I want to be quite frank, there are problems at the Deeds Registry, but we have a reform programme under the IADB to take care of that and we have to accelerate the reform programme at the Deeds Registry, but at Sophia, we have four out of nine areas which have already

been gazetted and later this year and early next year, the residents of those areas will be given titles. Those areas are:

Section A

Section B

Thomas Fields, and

Block R. Sophia

[Interruption: 'North Sophia cry']

Mr Speaker, I want to respond to that also. North Sophia is a special case because we have in North Sophia squatter settlement, sixty more houses than houselots. We have been discussing with the Committee. The Hon. Member, Mr Goveia must know this, we are not acting unilaterally in Sophia or in any of the Housing areas in this country. We have a participatory approach, joint decision making on the allocation, and in that area we are trying to have a relocation plan worked out, but it takes time. There is a relocation plan and we will work hard. I want to assure the resident of Sophia that not one person will be dispossessed. We will find houselots, if not in Sophia, in other housing areas in the country.

And again, I want to mention with regard to Sophia, that in terms of payments, we understand the number of poor people in this country, and we have been giving time. He talked about payment for houselots, we have been giving time to pay - two years, sometimes three years, to pay for the houselots in Sophia and in other areas of this country because this is a poor country. We are not pressing people to pay up, we have a collection due date, of course and we are working hard to try to bring in the collections in a very humane way. This is a Government of the people and for the people. *[Applause]* That is the reason why we are doing that.

Mr Speaker, in terms of what the Hon. Member Mr Goveia has

said about capital projects, he is again erroneous, with respect to the year 2000, \$400 million and not \$650 million was spent on providing for infrastructure. In all the housing areas in the squatter settlements in this country \$400 million was spent, \$650 million was voted. I want to assure the Hon. Member, that the records for the expenditure of the 1998 capital works, in 1999 you will see all the records in the Auditor General's Report. Do your research, Hon. Member. Go and read and you will see how the money is accounted for. I want to read this statement from the Permanent Secretary who is the Chief Accounting Officer of the Ministry of Housing in terms of documents relating to the Ministry of Housing:

The Ministry of Housing and Water is not a sub-accounting Ministry, this means that all expenditure transactions are completed at the Ministry of Finance; it also means that all source documents used to compile accounting records are submitted to the Accountant General's Department where they are stored. These documents include invoices, vouchers, cheque orders et cetera.

The Ministry on the other hand store the ledgers, inventories and other record books.

The Auditors from the Auditor General's Department collected the Ministry's record books in February, 2001, in order to commence the year 2000 Audit. Consequently all documents pertaining to the Ministry's Audit are in tact at the Ministry of Finance. *[Applause]*

This is a note from the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Housing.

Mr Speaker, this dynamic housing programme of the PPP/Civic Government is for all the people of Guyana and there has been a fair distribution of houselots in all the Regions of this country. As I stand here tonight, I want to tell you also that there has been quite a balance of distribution of those houselots. We have to move forward fire or no fire, burning down of the building or not.

We have already moved into new locations, I have a dedicated group of committed professional staff at the Ministry and we shall soon be on track to ensure that all the people of this country benefit from the housing drive and the housing programme without exception, without discrimination, all of them and they look forward to the Ministry of Housing for services which are due them, which we owe them. I want to assure this Honourable House that we will meet our targets, we will proceed.

The LIS Programme will not be affected and the LIS Programme has not come on stream, it is now coming on stream. Disbursements will start in another month or two. Mr Speaker, we have fourteen areas, this will make a significant difference in the Housing Programme in this country.

The Hon. Member, Mr Ming, again, has made the point that we ought to use the new technology and so on .

We have to get external funding. We have now procured US \$40 million which will be used for that purpose. We have fourteen schemes and the schemes are:

- In Region 7, the new scheme in Region 7 the Four Mile housing scheme.
- In Region 10, the Amelia's Ward, one of the largest schemes in this country.
- In Region 3, we have the Tuschen housing scheme, the infrastructural work will commence August/September.
- In Region 4, the new scheme at Diamond/Grove comes under the LIS Programme.
- In Region 5, the largest programme is the Hope experiment, Waterloo Scheme, which will fall under that programme, and

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- In Region 6, the largest scheme will be Williamsburg/Hampshire.

Again we have selected all the largest schemes so you will see a tremendous impact on that.

Apart from the \$40 million, I must state that we are in the process of procuring a loan of US \$32 million from the IADB for the electrification programme and eighty per cent of those areas to be covered will be the Housing Schemes and the squatter settlement in this country. So all of those people - thousands upon thousands of persons - residing in the squatter settlements, in the Housing Schemes should look forward to a supply of electricity over the next five years.

So, Mr Speaker, in concluding, I see the tension with which the Hon. Members have been listening. I hope they have learnt about this magnificent housing drive, the magnificent Housing Programme of the Government and what we have been trying to do. Thank you very much. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Hon. Member.

The Hon. Member Mrs Rajcoomarie Bancroft.

Mrs Rajcoomarie Bancroft: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I would like the Members to give a careful hearing to what is taking place. The good thing about it is I am really happy to speak now, when I have listened to some of the Members over there and some who never visit Region 8.

Region 8, and Mahdia more particularly, is in the Middle of Guyana. Most people fly to Region 8, but when you go to Sub-Region 1, *is then we does prove who is who*. There is only one Hon. Member that I have respect for in this House, and this is the Hon. Member Mr Nokta because he is the only man that walked the same path where I walked. *[Applause]*

I want to highlight a few things in Region 8. I want to start with mining being the main industry but the Hon. Member Mr Baksh, just finished housing and water and I want to just finish it off.
[Interruption]

The Speaker: Finish it off or finish Mr Baksh off. *[Laughter]*

Mrs Rajcoomarie Bancroft: Mr Speaker, finish the topic off.

Water - Mr Speaker, I am really amazed, you know why? I live in Mahdia and last year, there was a publication in the papers that two wells were dug at Mahdia. Is this so? The article continued that one hundred and fifty residents of Mahdia were having water through the pipelines. I say to this House, that is a lie, because the Hon. Member just said, he has Mahdai for distribution in this coming Budget and when I read the Budget there was nothing for the Water Project.
[Interruption]

The Speaker: Careful with your language, Hon. Member.

Mrs Rajcoomarie Bancroft: Housing - I will tell you what, when the Hon. Member Mr Baksh went to Mahdia, they did give house lots. The fact of the matter was that the house lots were given. I would like this House to know that what was given is a pasture that is owned by two members who have not given permission to use their lands, Mr Francis and Mr Kelly. The fact of the matter is that it is so blown up, that a Housing Scheme Drive is in Mahdia, maybe for political gains, but it is nota fact. Mahdia has no housing scheme. Apparently those houses were built out of glass. So I want this House to understand that I have nothing against the Budget and all that is allocated, but when we come here I want you to say what is really happening in Region 8. I know Region 8 like the palm of my hands, because I have walked the entire hinterland of the North Pakaraimas, despite my size, it doesn't prevent me. *[Laughter]*

Mining - I want to come to the major industry, and I listened with

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concern when the Hon. Prime Minister, Mr Samuel Hinds said, that they are making provision for all the people, small and large, but, Mr Speaker, I want this noble House to know that is not so.

Mining in Region 8, is taken over by large companies and so the small man is shut out. No pork-knocker cannot pick up a spade or a batel and walk into no backdam, because you are hearing, is golden star concession, OMAI concession, Mekdeci concession and please note that no revenue is given to Region 8.

Everybody goes to Region 8, it's like the Cinderella Region now and they are extracting. I want to make a recommendation, Mr Speaker, that any business, any sort of investment goes to Region 8, I think the RDC deserves a revenue from it. *[Applause]*

I am not finished on Mining - Mining has polluted Region 8, because we have illegal Brazilians. Mr Speaker, while the Brazilians are there, don't let us bow our heads in the sand, they have created a lot of problems for Region 8. They have come to Region 8 and they have brought - you know what?

We have a term, as a Member of the AIDS Committee, we call those people the CSWs and we have a rise of HIV/AIDS coming out from Region 8 due to that activity.

We have the KAIMUSE, few people here know about it. I don't know how many people know, but what I know, I live there, I live just behind one of the KAIMUSE, because we have all the Discos and so on. It is since the Brazilians invaded Mahdia that Region 8, more particularly Mahdia, that that kind of situation started to develop and that caused so many problems healthwise. Our young females ... teenage pregnancy ... because you know what the Brazilians do ... just come and use them - *Girl I love you* - and the fact of the matter is, they signed their names and so they have been given concessions. They are illegal in the country. I would like to know what the Government is doing about that.

Security - Mr Speaker, I would like to touch a little on security. As you are aware Region 8 is bombarded by the Brazilians, as such we only have four Police Stations in Region 8. One is directly at the Border and that is at Orinduik, we have one at Monkey Mountain and one at Kato that is, fifteen miles off the border and we have one directly at Mahdia. There is also an airstrip at Eagle's Mere. I don't know if the Government of Guyana knows about that and the transactions that take place between Ayangana and Eagle's Mere. I think whichever department is responsible for that should investigate the matter and see what is happening to our dear Amerindian brothers and sisters in the Cheong Mouth area and the whole border line. Only recently we had a shoot out in Waipa. The Orinduik Policeman had to run to save his life because the Brazilians were well equipped coming down from Karbaropai. So the fact of the matter is that when we come here, even if we play politics outside, I think we should bring facts to this House and we are dealing with facts. *[Applause]* Things that affect the lives of the people and I am not talking here because I want clap hands or I want high praises, I am here to represent Region 8 on the whole. *[Applause]*

Tourism - We are talking about eco-tourism and I guess that everybody here knows that Region 8 has the magnificent Kaieteur, the Regional Democratic Council, from 1997 to this year I was a member, and we have a rest-house still at Kaieteur, but you know what the National Parks Commission did? I don't know who gave permission, perhaps the Hon. Member, Mr Nokta can say. They took the house and I am saying, if the Regional Democratic Council, so labelled the Local Parliament, then they should be given the permission to make their own decision because they are the people who know.

The reason why we are here, is because people placed us here to represent them and when we come here, I think, people should listen to the grassroot people and don't just jump - Georgetown, Regions 4, 6 and 5 is not Guyana. *[Applause]* Guyana is 83,000 square miles as I know it as a child going to school. I think it still

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stands and I happen to be a first class citizen because I was born here. So I would like to know what is the position with our House.

Administration - Now, I want to talk a little bit on vacancy in the Administration of Region 8. The fact of the matter is, I note with concern that every time the REO comes to Georgetown, you hear that the financial statement wasn't properly prepared and it has to go and come and go and come. I don't work in the accounting unit, but what I know for sure we don't have qualified staff. The point I want to make to this House is that, I am wondering if there is an attractive package for a staff to go into the hinterland to work for \$20,000 in a gold bearing area, where you have to pay \$400 for one gallon of rice and you have to pay \$2,000 for one gallon of gasoline? It is best you tell the woman to pick fair because quite a lot is happening in Mahdia. No, I am telling you this because this is what is happening, we are here to speak the truth. When a female goes to Region 8 to work the next thing you know, she can't cope with it and she leaves. Whatever she plans to do, that is life. I would like to know if the Public Service Minister can pay some attention to increasing the package for the hinterland employees.

Agriculture - I note with concern nothing was voted in the Budget for agriculture. I don't know how many people in this House know that Kato used to produce white potatoes - gone are the days.

The fact of the matter is, Region 8, Sub Region 1, has very fertile land especially in the valleys, Kaiwa Valley, you name all the valleys - Cheong, Kaiwa. Paramakatoi, Kurukubaru - they are all very rich. But you know what is the problem, it is so good to take food to our Amerindian brothers. I have nothing against that, but you know what is better, if we can help them. The Government, should I say, should build roads where they can link the entire Sub-Region, not only by footpath but by vehicular trail. Because gone are the days where the people use to plant, everyday planting the same thing at the same time, so they are reaping the same thing at the same time and it wastes.

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Transportation - Sir, I don't know how many people know the geography. You can go with a mini bus to Mahdia, but you can't go with a mini bus to any part in Sub Region 1. You have to go with a plane. I don't know how many people here know about plane, but I know for sure, one Hon. Member knows \$20,000 for one seat. GAC has gone, far beyond to the people of Region 8 - God rest the dead, Dereck Leung, another saviour has gone. If you are to charter a Cessna, you have to pay \$120,000 and an Islander maybe \$200,000 and if you have to do the diversion, well. . .

As I said a couple of months ago, some people cannot see Georgetown, it only happens when they become a patient and that is when they are coming out by an emergency flight, to help them if the plane goes in time. So when we come here to debate and say how much was allocated, I think we should do the right thing. When we are doing Budget, I hope the planners are taking notes, that if you are going to buy something for Region 8, please include airfare.

When I looked in the Budget, I saw they gave Region 8 \$600,000 to buy furniture for two rest houses, Orinduik and Mahdia. I would like anyone of the teachers here to work out the mathematics. So tell me how \$600,00 are going to furnish two houses when one flight is \$400,000 and that is the skyvan.

We are talking about care, we so care, I know that we care, but I wonder for whom we care? – *[Interruption: 'That is the problem']* They care for some people, as for me, I am a black sheep, I really don't care, but I know that my loyalty is for this country and moreso Region 8.

Education - Mr Speaker, I would like to touch a little bit on Education. The fact of the matter is that I have seen in the Budget the proposals to finish the Mahdia Secondary School and all of that. I compliment that. That is so good, but what I would like to ask this House, is that the students of Paramakatoi High School, who live there and who do not live there, that this Government and the Minister of Education

pay some attention to have airfares on standby for those students. For too long, we have had those students struggling to walk with a warashi on their backs. So, I am asking this noble House that some kind of consideration be given to the Students of Paramakatoi High School.

Light - The fact of the matter is that I have looked at so many things in Region 8 and I want to talk about light. In the Budget Speech, page 31 it has "Power". Then I note with concern, they have loans given to the Government of Guyana and how much was given for the illumination of Region 6 and other coastland areas. I would like to know what amount because I haven't seen it in the Budget as given to Region 8, more particularly Mahdia to be illuminated. I thank you, Mr Speaker. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you very much Hon. Member. I hope that as we go along, you will learn the appropriate expressions in the House.

The Hon. Member Mrs Shirley Edwards.

Mrs Shirley V. Edwards: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker before I go into my short talk this evening, I would like to tell the Hon. Member, Mrs Bancroft that I know about Mahdia. I was teaching in Mahdia. I was a qualified teacher at Mahdia Government School and I know about Mahdia. So just to say that nobody knows about Mahdia ... Philomena Sahoye-Shury was in Mahdia.

Mr Speaker, I rise today to give support to this 2001 Budget that was presented by the Hon. Minister of Finance, Mr Saisnarine Kowlessar.

Mr Speaker, this Budget was compiled and presented at a time when the economy and the Government were under a lot of pressure. I must congratulate the Minister for working under such stressful environment. I have perused this Budget and I must compliment the PPP/Civic Government for presenting a *tax free Budget*. *[Applause]*

and also for making funds available for all sectors of the country.

Mr Speaker, this \$64 billion Budget will benefit every Guyanese citizen.

Mr Speaker, I would like to say, in fact I am saying that the PNC has two new words in their vocabulary now, *depressed* and *marginalised* – [Interruption: *‘What about discrimination?’* “and *discrimination.*”] I would like to say that these areas that they are talking about were depressed before the PPP/C Government came into power.

Mr Speaker, I could make an example of Lodge Housing Scheme and Meadow Brook. There was a famous yard named Kailan Yard, that had over two hundred people living in a two flat building in the PNC time. Isn't that depressed? It so happened that a fire burnt them out and the Minister of Housing gave them land in Sophia. They are all now living in Sophia. This is what was done by the PPP Government. [Applause]

Mr Speaker, let me talk about the road in Lodge. We used to call Princess Street the abortion road. You know why? There were big pot-holes. Cars never used to come in there – [Interruption: *‘Abortion legalised’* “ *Well, that is why the road is good*”]

Many people had to bring their sick out on their backs to Mandela Avenue because no cars would come in there. Then I wrote several letters when the PNC Government was in power. The Prime Minister at the time was Mr Hamilton Greene, he came and he visited the area, but he did nothing [Interruption: *“He is you all boy”* “ *He was under the PNC at that time, he did nothing, he just walked through the road, looked at it and he did nothing.*]

I wrote another letter to the President of this country. At that time, he was Mr Desmond Hoyte and he also came and did nothing. [Applause] Now, I would like to say this, Lodge is a PNC stronghold,

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ninety-nine per cent of the votes from Lodge goes to the PNC. The few that comes to us, they steal them too. But that is what had happened.

In the PPP/Civic's time, I took the President, Mr Bharrat Jagdeo, the Minister of Works, Hon Anthony Xavier and also the Minister of Home Affairs – *[Interruption: 'Why the Minister of Home Affairs?'* “ *The Minister of Home Affairs had to go there. You know Why? Because the Councillor Mr Desmond Moses came with a gang of people who are not living in the area and who knows nothing about the area to picket. Imagine this government is trying to do roads for the poor people in that area and then they send the people out there to picket. That is what happened"*]

Anyhow, Princess Street was done, thanks to this Government; D'Urban Street was repaired, thanks to this Government. Norton Street is on stream, it is not finished as yet.

Mr Speaker, the only street that the PNC Government did was Hadfield Street because you know why? Because GBC was in Hadfield Street and they had to go there to do press conference and make press statements and all other different things. So that was the only street that was done during the PNC time in Lodge, not another one.

Mr Speaker, Lodge Housing Scheme is also a PNC stronghold. What was done by the PNC in Lodge Housing Scheme? Nothing was done for the people in Lodge Housing Scheme. There is a brand new nursery school built by the Government, the Enterprise Primary School building was extended and repaired. Actually a brand new building was put there . There is also the Enterprise Nursery School. I took the then Minister, Hon. Rev Dale Bisnauth at that school and he did over the building. Nothing has been done for the people. They claimed they were being marginalised. They marginalised the people, not the PPP/C. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, they are talking about discrimination, I could tell you about discrimination. I am a qualified teacher, who has a Senior Cambridge Certificate. Who knows about a Senior Cambridge Certificate would know that I had one. The PNC stole it. When I made an application for a job, I had to take my certificate and my birth certificate and they claimed that they were lost. Yes, the PNC government claimed that they were lost, then they kicked me out because I refused to join the PNC. I was kicked out from the teaching profession. *[Noisy Interruption]*

The Speaker: Hon. Members, kindly allow Mrs Edwards to proceed, please.

Mrs Shirley V. Edwards: Mr Speaker, this is discrimination and marginalisation. Lodge was a depressed area, it is now coming out of the dumps because a lot of people got houses through the Ministry of Housing.

Water is another thing. We never knew what was water. We had to dip water from trenches go to far places and fetch water, alligators running out from the trenches to us, and now we have water. When we got water for the first time my grandchildren went under the shower and bathe for the entire day because they never experienced a shower.

They are talking about marginalisation and depression and this is Lodge, where they get all the votes. They never visited Lodge. Now, thanks to this caring Government that we have everything.

Following the historical Presidential Business Summit in October, 1999, the Government of Guyana made a commitment and an issue was agreed on that would stimulate the business sector and create more job opportunities. The Government will continue to support growth of small industries. This Budget is a clear indication of the Government towards the nation as a whole.

Mr Speaker, I forgot to mention one other thing, the gymnasium

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was built during the PNC time by the Venezuelans. It was locked from the residents, the young people in Lodge could not go in there to play. It was locked and there were security guards. Thanks to this Government, the gates are open, all the children can go in there and play, they can stay late at nights or until early in the morning. That was only for high class people in those times.

Mr Speaker, I could go on and on about a lot of things that were done during the PNC time to the people that they claim are their people – *[Interruption: ‘Our people are all of Guyana, all Guyanese.’ ‘Well you have marginalised all of them in your time.’]* *[Applause]*

A new health centre was built in Lodge – *[Interruption: ‘Where? Which part?’ ‘Hadfield Street, Lodge, near GBC, the people are enjoying a new health centre in the time of the PPP Government.]* It has staff and there is a visiting nurse that comes around to the residents in the area, to the children. They also give tests for blood pressure and diabetes. Things are set up on the road in Lodge. Lodge got a great boost since this Government is in power.

Mr Speaker, I commend this Budget to the House and urge that my fellow MPs on the other side would do the same. Thank you. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Member.

The Hon. Member, Miss Sandra Adams.

Miss Sandra M. Adams: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I am grateful for this opportunity to make my contribution to the 2001 Budget in this House. Be it as it may, I stand strong and tall to represent the Region that put me here to represent them. This was done by the people in Region 10, who exercised their franchise at the polls in March 19, 2001, elections. So, with no doubt in our minds, I wish to quote from the Budget Speech from page 1, subsection 1.3, line 6:

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We are single minded in our resolve to establish a society in which no one feels excluded from the mainstream of development

And I will go on to the bottom of it where it says:

reduction in the foreign debt that has facilitated higher expenditure in health, education, housing and pure water, among other areas; and a significant reduction in poverty.

Mr Speaker, the recent protest in Linden speaks for itself. The people of Region 10 felt excluded from the mainstream of development, so they protested. It has nothing to do with politics or slow fire, but Lindeners and Region 10 feel left out.

Mr Speaker, we hear from the other side of the House about significant reduction in poverty despite all the SIMAP foodstuff and equipment the Hon. Member, Mrs Philomena Sahoye-Shury took to Linden and gave them to her own supporters.

This is the first time in the history of Region 10, that poverty is at its highest level and even in giving public assistance to the poor and needy in the Regions, there is discrimination. Discrimination not on the side of the Officer or the Board in Linden, but discrimination coming from the Office.

One letter was sent to Linden to the Officer there and the letter came from the Office of the First Lady. I don't know if there is such an office. Then the other one came from the Office of Human Services and Social Security, I will refer to these cases.

One, Mr Ramnauth who owns a car, who owns a farm and who is in a capable position to maintain himself came with that letter from the Office of the First Lady and it was sent to tell the Officer that he must be qualified for public assistance.

The next one is, Sita Bigreene, who removed from Linden

Constabulary area and is now living on the West Coast and she now returns to Linden to collect her subsistence every three months. Now, she was told that she was not entitled anymore for subsistence, but because she came with a letter which demanded that she must be given subsistence, she continued. Mr Speaker, is that what we call discrimination because there are people in Region 10 and in Linden . . . [Interruption]

The Speaker: Hon. Member, I think you are here long enough to know that when you refer to documents, you must be able to present them.

Miss Sandra M. Adams: Thank you, Mr Speaker, I have the documents here from the Office of the Regional Democratic Council with the information.

There are people who really need public assistance and cannot get public assistance because there is some apparent situation, where they are either not accepted or they are put on the back burners to wait until they are ready. Mr Speaker, I see an Anthony Xavier on the list, I hope he is not our Hon. Minister. [Laughter]

Mr Speaker, I wish to refer to the Budget Speech again, page 2 paragraph 1.4, the second to last line and I quote:

Above all, we must encourage and attract massive investment to create jobs. These are some of the challenging tasks that we will confront during this third term.

Mr Speaker, if this task has now become challenging for this government because they are now in office for the third term, Linden and the whole of Region 10 are in serious trouble. By saying that, I wish to refer to another section of the Budget Speech which my other colleague from Region 10 will deal with to some extent, but I wish to make a comparison by dealing with page 24 subsection 4.5

line 3, dealing under *Re-engineering the Economy, Restructuring of the Traditional Industries* and I quote:

At an estimated cost of US200 million, it calls for the building of a new factory at Skeldon and the modernisation of the factories at Albion and Rose Hall.

And then I turn to page 25 subsection 4.8 and it deals with rice:

once again (and I repeat,) once again this year with the planned expenditure of over \$1 billion

and then I turn to page 26 and I deal with subsection 4.10:

both the Government and the stakeholders in the industry will have to continue to implement measures to cut costs further, improve the marketing arrangements, and ease the financial strain on the Treasury.

4.11 says:

The Bauxite Committee has been exploring various options

and further down it says,

The Government is prepared to work with the community to arrive at a consensus on the future of the industry.

Mr Speaker, the reason why I referred to those subsections, is that if the government feels that they can play with the lives of people of Linden or at Region 10, I wish to say that they ought to think again, because the government is making monies available in the sugar and the rice industry, but for Region 10 and for Linden, they are saying that we have to seek or explore more options to make the industry become more viable and the community now has to work with the Government before they can look at something viable for the industry.

Mr Speaker, how could a caring Government seek to allocate

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money in the Budget for sugar and for rice but for the bauxite industry there are other means that they have to seek? Is this because we voted PNC/R, so that they cannot do anything for us? I refer to what the Hon. Prime Minister said when he went into the Berbice River, it is that you voted for PNC/R, so we can't do anything for you.

Mr Speaker, since all the fancy talk about now looking or still looking for investment and for the people, we are willing to turn to agriculture in Region 10 and I wish to quote on agriculture for Region 10, not one dollar is being budgeted in Region 10 or when scrutinising the capital budget for agriculture in Region 10. The Region's interest is best served by creating the condition for a larger number of people to be involved in the agriculture sector. It therefore needs a programme for an access road to be built, to open agricultural land to people who are interested in pursuing agricultural activities in Region 10. Therefore access roads must be built in areas where lands are available to allow our people to farm. Loans must be made available at low interests rates for the development of farm inclusive of livestock. The Government needs to create the condition and facilitate the construction of processing factories for agricultural products such as chicken and pork et cetera.

Money was given or allocated in the 2001 Budget for these people and for the Amerindian Communities. How are we talking about assisting our Amerindian sisters and brothers and we are not seeking to help them.

Something is wrong with your information because I don't know what you are speaking about.

Mr Speaker, let me refer to the health sector in Region 10. The Budget for the health sector in Region 10 is \$104.9 million. This gives per capita on health \$2,689 compared with nearly \$4,500 for Region 6. Interestingly only \$14.95 million will be spent on drugs which is \$383 per capita; just to note that some tablets cost more than this figure. This begs the question of the type of service the

health sector can deliver. More glaring than above is the allocation for food, a mere \$.6 million was budgeted. Are we feeding birds? Just to mention Region 6 got \$38 million for food. One may wonder why I am referring to Region 6. Well, on examining the following it would appear that this Region was given real special treatment.

Mr Speaker, if I should quote from the Budget comparisons of what is proposed for Region 10 against what as approved for Region 10, we will see, Region 10 proposed in the 2001 Budget \$280.7 million and approved is only \$115.8 million, which when you subtract \$50 million for water that was not proposed by the Region, the Region only have \$68.8 million.

Mr Speaker, when you do capital Budget analysis, Regions 2, 3, 5, and 6 are the Regions that benefit the best of the capital Budget and Region 10 is in dying need of more development. The people in Region 10 are in a situation that is declining instead of ascending. The Government is paying lesser and lesser attention to Region 10.

Mr Speaker, if I get a letter to health, Region 10 to be productive and increase productivity in all phases of work, the health of our citizens are of paramount importance. It is of major concern to us that as a matter of urgency, the health care facilities within the Region must be improved. Therefore it is imperative that there be qualified and competent medical personnel, staffing the health facilities and for there to be an adequate supply of drugs.

The emergency and accident unit at our main hospital in Linden is in a sorry state and urgent attention must be given to this institution to improve the capability to deal with emergencies. There is also need to improve the ambulance service within our Region. Mr Speaker, when you look at Region 10 in terms of what is happening at the hospital, it is sad to say that my mother was a victim - may her soul rest in peace - of the hospital situation and emergency, when the hospital could have blackout and no generator to turn on any of the electrical appliances in there, and patients taking oxygen or otherwise

dealing with any electrical appliance have to suffer.

No proper vehicle for the Health Care Department in Region 10. The workers of the Health Care Department are suffering in terms of executing their duties. The Region has one old land rover that was given to them since 1998, since then they don't have another vehicle to execute the duties of the Health Service.

Mr Speaker, Region 10 suffers a lot at the hands of the present government and for whatever reason, Mr Speaker, I wish to say that the people are not supposed to, because we are all Guyanese.

Mr Speaker, I wish to refer to Housing and Water. I am sorry that the Minister is not here. \$50 million was put in Region 10 just to make it look good, as far as I am concerned, and that is to give to LINMINE, and then another \$40 million was put in the Ministry of Housing Budget allocation for LINMINE again. Are we giving LINMINE monies for water in a piecemeal fashion or are we going to allocate a reasonable and proper sum of money to LINMINE to deal with water. Now we are hearing talk that GUYWA was supposed to start in operation from the 1st June, it is now postponed for the 1st September, but already even though there is no other money in the Region for LINMINE or for any other source, already in the Region \$97 million is there for GUYWA. Why the money is there already and LINMINE which is still operating, still generating and still supplying water to the community does not have any money? We are left to ask and the Minister should answer that question as to why they are dealing with monies allocated in such a piecemeal fashion.

Mr Speaker, year after year, \$400 million plus has been allocated for new, and upgrading existing housing schemes in the Ministry of Housing's budget and of that sum the Minister should be ashamed to say how much has been spent in Region 10, since he has been the Minister of Housing in that Ministry. Mr Speaker, we all well know that in Region 10, there has not been one house lot distributed for the

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past three years, not one house lot. This is all because of various problems that come from the Ministry and from the Lands and Surveys Department. It was distributed, I wish to contend or wish to compete in seeing that document that distributed that house lot because not one through the RDC which is the legal authority to deal with house lot distribution was distributed.

Mr Speaker, I wish to deal a little, since I am on that, the RDC is calling on the Government to mandatorily increase the subvention to the Mayor and Town Council of Linden to a minimum of \$25 million per year so that they could carry out their works and thus fulfil their mandate to the people of Linden. A meagre sum of \$9 million and all the specifications of what should be done with it cannot do what it is supposed to do for the people of Linden.

Mr Speaker, as we all know it is so important, yet less attention is being paid to Region 10. Thanks to the British Government, who saw Linden as one of the areas where they think education was really needed. Linden, as it is at the moment, has become a pilot. All the projects or most of the projects coming or pilot projects coming to Guyana, are being sent to Linden but the plane is not taking off. We are probably related to GAC.

The Education Department and Region 10 saw the need for a Resource Centre and I quote from the capital Budget proposal that was sent by the Region to the Ministry of Finance - Construction of a Resource Centre in Linden to the total of \$28 million to facilitate teacher training, community literacy, guide programme and early childhood programme. Construction of Practical Instruction Centre at West Watooka for the purpose of access of technical education for clusters of schools in Linden.

Mr Speaker, the reason why I quote this is, I hear talk of campus and campus and campus, University at Linden. The Region has budgeted and asked for such centres to be established and to be built in Region 10 and was denied the right to even have their own

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Resource Centre. Not one cent was allocated in the budget to deal with any of these centres. Are we talking about higher levels of education? But all the monies instead are being budgeted to the Berbice Campus, Linden is left for last. The Education Department also proposed and asked for money to build themselves their own building, because if you are not aware, may I inform you that the building in which they are, is not their property, they can be thrown out on the road tomorrow. If we do that, you are going to hear that the owner of the property is bad, but they have budgeted and asked for money to build their own property, but for whatever reason none was given to them.

These big people are also cramped, three and four officers are in one office. A building with five rooms houses almost thirty officers. How could that fit work? Some have to be in, while some are on the verandah taking breeze, while some are downstairs talking with friends. Well, if the educators are being forced to work under those conditions, what happens to our children?

Mr Speaker, in conclusion I wish to deal with the dying need for a vehicle or vehicles in the Region and when I am speaking, I wish to make reference to our Minister of Local Government, who knows fairly well that the last time Region 10 got a new vehicle was when the People's National Congress was in Office and that was in 1991. [Applause] Since then, no new vehicle and I wish to underline the word new, no new vehicle was sent to Region 10 for use by the administration. The Chairman, the Vice-Chairman or the Officers of that Region have to try on their own or they have to hire.. How long do we have to wait? The Hon. Minister have changed several vehicles since he is a Minister, so why can't the Region enjoy some of that kind of sweet? What happens to others who really need. Region 10, for those who do not know, have trails to go through to the interior, have rivers to go through, and they cannot do their job efficiently and effectively because they are trapped for transportation or they have to use out the little sum that was allocated to them to hire a vehicle. The Minister of Local Government ought to do better

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in that regard and I think he will acknowledge that.

Mr Speaker, before I take my seat, I wish to say to the Government of this country, Region 10 is not as easy as it seems, so get your horses ready for a ride to development for the people of Region 10 will demand this development. Thank you. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you very much Hon. Member.

The Hon. Member Mr Odinga Lumumba.

Mr Odinga N. Lumumba: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker let me use this opportunity to congratulate you on your appointment and also to inform you that I believe that your presence will certainly improve the quality of the debate and discussions in this House. I also want to congratulate the Minister of Finance, Mr Saisnarine Kowlessar, for his excellent and precise presentation. In addition, I must congratulate the Member of Parliament Mr Winston Murray for his excellent presentation even though a few creative recommendations were lacking. Also my friend and Hon. Member of Parliament, Mr Jerome Khan, showed some signs of maturity in his presentation and I am sure in time, he will understand and appreciate the role of being an opposition member for the next twenty-five years.

But, Mr Speaker, the response from my brother and opposition leader, my brothers and sisters in the opposition, to me lacks certain practical approaches and certainly do not reflect the expectations from those they represent.

Mr Speaker, this noble House is not a fish market nor is it a party centre. It is a place that is being esteemed to fulfil the wishes of the poor, the hungry, the working class, the business class, the young and the elderly.

Mr Speaker, we are not here to condemn each other, but to work for the betterment of all our citizens and it is clear to me that when

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we decide to work together, we gain results. A good example is the Joint Bauxite Committee and the Committee on Depressed Communities. Mr Speaker, we have made progress on these two Committees. We have made progress because there are commitments on the part of those Members who represent both sides of the House to do things that make sense for the growth and development of this country. [Applause]

Mr Speaker, the Budget cannot be viewed in isolation of the material conditions of our country. This Budget is a working Budget, it is constrained by the political instability that has tormented this government by the notion of *slow fire and more fire* and maybe soon *extra fire*. But, Mr Speaker, with all the background of our problems, we will still continue to address the needs of our society regardless of race, colour or creed.

Mr Speaker, the Opposition speaks of discrimination. I remember last year, the Hon. Minister Mr Henry Jeffrey asked the Opposition Leader, Mr Hoyte to bring to Parliament any credible case of discrimination. The PNC/Reform as a Party and as an Opposition has failed its constituencies because up to now they have been unable to bring a practical case of discrimination to this House. [Applause] We must discontinue, we must stop, we must not continue to divide this society based on ethnicity. If you have a case of discrimination, you must document it and bring it to this Honourable House. [Applause]

Mr Speaker, on most occasions when the PNC talks about discrimination, they refer to community A and Community B and we can go to these same communities, in particular the Afro Guyanese communities and point out that these same communities lacked services under the PNC regime, whether it be Golden Grove, whether it be Buxton, whether it be De Kinderen, they lacked those services when the PNC was in power. I grew up as a child in Buxton and my friend Mr Kadir knows that and on many occasions our new brand shoes broke on the road because there were no proper roads and no

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proper streets and today in Guyana, Mr Speaker, all the roads in Buxton have been fixed except those that have been dug up by the supporters of the PNC. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, who discriminated against who? From 1985 to 1992 in Guyana, no water, no schools, no roads. Who discriminated against who?

Mr Speaker, we speak about Linden. Let's talk about who represents Linden and who represented Linden from 1985 to 1992. We tend not to go back in the past but if the Opposition continues to talk discrimination and about marginalisation, we will have to go back and bring the records out. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, the opposition likes to talk about executive lawlessness and I want to give you some examples of recklessness and executive lawlessness. My friend and Member of Parliament, Miss Sandra Adams, has said that there is not enough money in Region 10. Region 10 doesn't need anymore money. Region 10 returns money, 1993 - \$3 million; 1994 - \$40 million; 1995 - \$19 million; 1996 - \$64 million; 1997 - \$45 million, 1998 - \$31 million; 1999 - \$74; 2000 - \$45 million; \$276 million was taken away from the poor people of Region 10. *[Applause]* Who is discriminating against who? Who is incompetent? Mr Speaker, I want my brothers and sisters to analyse these facts.

We speak about discrimination and I want to address this issue of discrimination. Let's look at Education. I am very sorry the Member of Parliament, Mr Bernard, has left here. He said earlier during the debate that there was a lot of emphasis on buildings, and that is on human resources. The Minister pointed out that we are going to double the amount of trainees this year, but should we train people and then have them teaching under calabash trees, in swamps and in the rains? There must be balanced development.

Mr Speaker, they speak of discrimination in this country, let's

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talk about Education - the PEIP Programme. Under the PEIP Programme, a total of 106 projects comprising infrastructure or rehabilitation - Georgetown alone - not Port Mourant, not Lusignan, Georgetown alone accounted for forty-six or close to fifty per cent of the total amount of those schools. Examples of African communities, Beterverwagting not Beterverwagting in Essequibo, Beterverwagting on the East Coast; Cove and John, East La Penitence, F.E. Pollard, Friendship/Buxton; I am sure the Hon. Member Mr Kadir knows about Friendship/Buxton: he went to school there, Ithaca, J.E. Burnham, North Georgetown; I will continue, I don't want to miss, Paradise, Plaisance, Queenstown; Sophia; South Ruimveldt and I can go on and on.

Mr Speaker, they speak about discrimination. Again in education - Secondary School Reform Programme - twenty schools have been repaired or rehabilitated.. Please listen, I appeal to my brothers and sisters on the other side to gather these facts and tell us or tell this nation if this is discrimination. Twenty schools, 35% in Afro Guyanese Communities - St John, Campbellville, Beterverwagting, Charlestown, East Ruimveldt, New Amsterdam, Kwakwani; 35% East Indian Communities, 15% mixed communities, 15% Amerindian communities. Mr Speaker, how can anyone logically call this discrimination? I dare the opposition from their twenty-eight years to show me any balanced development in the history of this country.

Mr Speaker, the Opposition speaks of discrimination and I want to emphasize this because the instability in our society is based on these false assumptions by the Opposition, these false claims, the stirring up of racial problems, so we need to say to the masses that these claims don't exist.

The Hon. Minister, Mr Shaik Baksh spoke about water earlier and I want to talk about Georgetown. Ten years ago in Georgetown, you couldn't get water, the water had worms, the water had rats, the water maybe had dead cockroaches stuck in the pipe. People from Georgetown had to go with buckets and pull carts. This is not

East Berbice or West Berbice or Corentyne, this is Georgetown. People had to pull carts for water but our memories are short. Today, in Georgetown, the drilling of four wells increased the supply, installation of trunk mains on the eastern highway, completion of transmission lines at Sophia, nine miles of pipe lines in queue for water supply, construction of 500,000 gallons storage facility, rehabilitation of twenty four sewerage stations and, Mr Speaker, that is not all. I am now going to give you bam-bye, over \$6 billion to be spent during the next five years, a 500,000 gallons storage tank and the construction of two iron removal plants.

Mr Speaker, I need to go again on this question of discrimination. The PNC/Reform puts dogs on Police in Sophia, the PPP/C puts water, roads and schools in Sophia. [*Applause*] Is that discrimination? My brothers and sisters should apologise to this nation for such behaviour.

Mr Speaker, we talk about housing, over 5,000 house lots in the Amelia's Ward area, 500 have already been allocated. It was the former Regional Chairman of Region 10, Mr Harewood, who gave out the house lots and give jail men, thief men and overseas residents house lots. Bring the facts up.

Mr Speaker, the PNC suddenly wants the world to start from 1998 - Guyana began in 1998: Guyana did not begin twenty-eight years ago, everything is from 1998. Mr Speaker, they spoke about the lack of vehicle in Region 10. I remember when the PNC gave the Hon Prime Minister a three-wheeled jeep to work with in Linden.

I just received a document. The Speaker said I must produce the document and this document says, receipt of loan from the GNCB Bank, the government bank, 1990 to 1998, Afro Guyanese receiving loans - 1,332; Indo Guyanese - 140; ninety per cent verses ten per cent. Is that discrimination? These records speak for themselves.

Region 10, from 1988 to 1992, the PNC/Reform spent \$157 million; in 1993 alone the PPP spent \$103 million. *[Applause]* But yet it is the PNC, the political party that cares for Region 10; from 1988 to 1992, the PNC spent zero, not a cent, not a dollar on youth and sports in Region 10 - not a dollar - not even one hundred dollars - not even a penny, zero on pure water and environment, zero on housing. The PNC/Reform did not realise the people of Linden wanted houses, they thought they were supposed to live in air. Were the people of Linden supposed to live underground? Were the people of Linden supposed to live on trees? Zero, Mr Speaker.

In 1992, the PNC spent \$7 million on roads. In 1988 to 1992, the PNC spent \$20 million; the PPP in 1993 spent \$24 million. Mr Speaker, do I have to continue with this embarrassment? The PNC/Reform has lost the will to represent the people of Region 10. *[Applause]*

Miss Adams spoke about what we did not do in Region 10. I said earlier, this House should be a place for debate and for serious discussions. If you look at the American Congress and the British Parliament, you will notice that they make amendments, they make proposals, they deal with facts.

Region 10 - Education - new nursery schools at Wisroc, Canvas City, Kwakwani, Amerindian Hostel at Wismar, Health outpost at Kumaka. Mr Speaker, I can go on and on, these are documents that I can pass to the Opposition. The Opposition don't take time to read.

Mr Speaker, the Member of Parliament, Miss Adams spoke about LINMINE. I will tell you that the PNC's contribution to LINMINE, in particular under the administration of Mr Desmond Hoyte, was to lay off hundreds of workers, to terrorise union leaders including 'Reds', to pull gun on workers.

Mr Speaker, the PPP's response to LINMINE has been the following:

US \$25 million for subvention from 1995 to 2000 and LINMINE is the only government corporation that has been subsidized by this government. Sugar and rice are not subsidised. Let that go on record. Mr Speaker! Mr Speaker! Mr Speaker! *[Noisy Interruption]*

The Speaker: Hon. Members, please have some order.

Mr Odinga N. Lumumba: Mr Speaker, Mr Goveia spoke earlier but he wanted an inquiry on the account of the Minister of Housing. I agree but at the same time we must also have one on the gold account under Hoyte and the years he did not bring it to the Auditor General. Let's have all three together. *[Applause]* If it is in order, let us move a suspension of the rules of the day and let all agree to have these three here, Mr Speaker. I dare the Opposition to rise and second the motion. We have nothing to hide.

If you ever second that motion it will be the last time Mr Hoyte will have you in Parliament. I am protecting you from Mr Hoyte.

The Member of Parliament spoke about the roads in Linden. This government has spent millions of dollars on the roads in Linden. Everyone knows that the roads in Linden were dams. We have fixed all the main roads in Linden - millions of dollars. Does this Member of Parliament walk in space? I don't understand, we have spent millions of dollars on roads and yet the Member of Parliament issaying that she doesn't know about it.

Mr Speaker, this Government is a caring Government. This Government has now decided to rescue the youths who have been pillaged by the PNC/Reform. We can go into communities and communities which were denied the rights to have a community centre, which were denied the right to have a ground.

Mr Speaker, I am going to go into Afro Guyanese Communities - we can go to Den Amstel, we can go to Stanleytown, we can go to Hopetown, we can go to Golden Grove, we can go to Paradise, we

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can go to Haslington, we can go to Beterverwagting. Where was the PNC/Reform? Why you did not provide for your so-called people. Even a basket ball court? Foul! Foul! Mr Speaker.

His Excellency President Jagdeo has provided millions of dollars so that young people can benefit from twenty-one joinery workshop, fifty-six computers and research centres, two craft centres, twenty-seven home management centres, eleven economic centres, one hundred and forty-two pavilions, sports grounds and sports centres, thirty-five community centres, forty-four agriculture projects, thirty-two transportation projects, twenty-five multi-purpose buildings.

The Comrade from Bartica, has she left? She told me today that the multi-purpose building in Bartica is going beautiful. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, twenty-nine contractors were selected this week for projects in Region 4 and for the first time in Region 4, even under the PNC administration, we have a fifty/fifty ethnic balance. Even under the PNC administration Afro Guyanese did not reach thirty per cent, this government has ensured that there is a balance and let me say this that this project, youth choice, any member of the PNC can look at the books, they can go to the Auditor General. They can go to lottery and every project and contract, there have been public bids. If we buy a piece of sand, it was public bid, every single thing was a public bid and every person . . .

In closing, Mr Speaker, I am appealing to my brothers and sisters on the other side that if we intend to move this country forward sometimes we have to work together and sometimes we have to be positive. If we have problems with the Budget, a particular problem, we should be intellectual enough to propose amendment, propose change, propose suggestions. All you have heard for the last three or four days, except for a few Members, is a whole lot of complaints, this is not right, this is wrong.

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A Budget presentation is not about complaining who got some stipend yesterday, who didn't get this yesterday. It is about analysing the Budget, the future of this country and coming up with programmes and projects; and we need to provide some guidance to those in the Opposition.

Mr Speaker, my brothers in the Opposition, I still love you even though you have some short comings. Thank you so much. *[Applause]*

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. Reepu Daman Persaud: Mr Speaker, I beg to move that the National Assembly stands adjourned to Thursday, 28th June, 2001 at 14.00 H.

The Speaker: Hon. Members, the Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow.

Adjourned accordingly at 21:35 H.