

Official Report

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2012) OF THE TENTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN

10TH Sitting

Friday, 13TH April, 2012

Assembly convened at 1.05 p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

WELCOMING FORMER MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT, DR. DALE BISNAUTH AND DR. FAITH HARDING

Mr. Speaker: Good afternoon Hon. Members. There is no major announcement. It is just to announcement this afternoon that we have as our guest the Hon. Rev. Dr. Dale Bisnauth, former Member of Parliament and Minister of Government and so we welcome him. Yesterday, of course, it was Ms. Cyrilda De Jesus. I am told that Dr. Faith Harding also is here, former Minister of Education, as our guest. So we welcome them. It is a pleasure to have both former Members of the House joining us this afternoon. Of course, we will be on our best behaviour and we expect that we will be engaging both of our erstwhile colleagues from time to time as we proceed with the deliberations of not only of this session, but in the sessions ahead.

Hon. Members, that is my lone announcement. Ms. Shirley Edwards should have joined us yesterday but she was, unfortunately, ill and so we expect that she will be joining us as our guest in the days ahead. Those are my announcements. Thank you.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

CLARIFICATION TO THE MINISTER OF HEALTH'S PRESENTATION

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the Hon. Member Mr. Carl Greenidge has indicated to me his desire to give a personal explanation on a matter that he feels that is affecting him and his character and I have given permission for him to do so. There will be, of course, no debate on his explanation which is expected to be very brief and to the point. Thank you. Go ahead Hon. Member.

Mr. Greenidge: Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. I appreciate your understanding and crave the indulgence of my colleagues.

Comrade Speaker, I am drawing this matter to your attention and to the House's attention because, as you have indicated, it caused me great concerns and, may I say, that it cast in a context in which it seems that a number of our exchanges, perhaps, got unnecessary acrimonious and strayed into areas that were perhaps a little distasteful issues in that they can sometimes involve impugning motives, and especially wandering to the area of ethnicity.

I would like to draw to the House's attention the presentations made yesterday by Dr. Ramsaran in connection with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Health's capital project pertaining to the specialty hospital. I do not have to recap what he said because I am sure that Members you can recall, but I just want to draw to the House's attention to that part of the presentation which suggested that the motive for the resistance to, or the rejection, of this project, at the level of the House, when the House was looking at Financial Paper No. 7, was because, or it was a contrast to, of how we would have treated projects from other places such as Cuba. I rise to speak on this matter because I was the person who spoke, perhaps, the longest and led, in a sense, the resistance to this particular item. So I think it has implications for me and my standing.

It may also be recalled that the former Speaker addressed this matter in a newspaper article in which he subsequently withdrew or tried to dispel any suggestion that my own motive was that of race. This is the former Speaker. In making his presentation, Dr. Ramsaran suggested that the circumstances surrounding this particular project were... other than what the House was made to understand. In other words, he mentioned that this project was funded by the Government of

India. In looking at the Estimates of 2011, I saw no sign of any funding from the Government of India. He suggested that the project was for the land preparation and let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the supplementary, the financial paper for Contingencies Fund, specifically referred to a design and study. The request for funding was something quite different and the House correctly rejected it. I think in those circumstances the presentation, especially given the context in which it was cast, was reprehensible. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I would ask that we remove the word “reprehensible”. I think Members should have the right to state their views and opinions. The Hon. Member stated his explanation where he felt that his character is being impugned in so far as his comments and decisions were painted in a racial context. So I am glad that we have been able to clear that up and that we have communicated to the Government and people of India that they are our special friends, and we are always grateful to them. Thank you very much.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MOTION

BUDGET SPEECH 2012 - MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 2012

“WHEREAS the Constitution of Guyana requires that Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of Guyana for any financial year should be laid before the National Assembly;

AND WHEREAS the Constitution also provides that when the Estimates of Expenditure have been approved by the Assembly an Appropriation Bill shall be introduced in the Assembly providing for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet that expenditure;

AND WHEREAS Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of Guyana for the financial year 2012 have been prepared and laid before the Assembly on 2012-03-30;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2012, of a total sum of **one hundred and seventy nine billion, six hundred and ninety six million, five hundred and forty six thousand dollar(\$179,696,546,000), excluding thirteen billion, and eighty four million, seven hundred and thirty five thousand dollars (13,084,735,000)** which is chargeable by law, as detailed therein and summarised in the undermentioned schedule, and agree that it is expedient to amend the law and to make further provision in respect of finance.” *[Minister of Finance]*

Assembly resumed budget debate.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we will now resume the debate for the Budget 2012. Our first speaker for today is the indomitable Hon. Member Mr. Basil Williams. I do not know what portfolio you hold in this Assembly, but we are looking forward to hearing from you, Sir. Proceed.

Mr. B. Williams: Thank you Mr. Speaker, as it pleases you, for those salutations. I too join in welcoming the emergent Members of Parliament. I trust and I am sure that their contributions would enrich the debate in this House and therefore advance the interest of the people of this nation. I know that they have had a rough initiation, especially in light of this budget, and how our honourable colleagues on the eastern side of the House have been behaving when certain truths are exposed in this honourable House. I should warn them that that behaviour is going to continue, but it is all, I would say, in good faith.

I would also like to welcome the Hon. Member Dr. Dale Bisnauth who was in fact the Minister of Labour who I shadowed for several years in this House. A gentleman of the highest order, no less so is the lady, Dr. Faith Harding - the lady of the highest quality. We welcome you both.

For not of a few years, we have been hearing this lamentation that we need to work together in the interest of developing Guyana; we hear it every year. The same lip service is paid to it but there has never been any meaningful engagement between the parties where the only issue on the table is looking to work together, whether we are sharing Government or whether we have wanted to cooperate on issues affecting the people of Guyana. I recall the former President saying that we have to learn to build trust, that was about eight years ago. Perhaps a question

should be asked of the Hon. Members of the Government side on how far they have gone and how are they going to rate where we are at right now in trust building.

Speaking for myself, I believe we, on this side of the House, have always been willing to engage the Government with *bona fides* in order to effect the transformation that this country requires. The Hon. Member Dr. Rupert Roopnarine, I concur in the sentiments that he has expressed on this same subject matter, but it is not too late.

The Hon. Member Mr. Whittaker told us yesterday, in terms of fiscal transfers of the various regions in this country, that everybody cannot get everything. I think that is a misnomer. We understand that. But what we do not understand and what we cannot appreciate is any treatment that reeks of discrimination in making fiscal transfers to the regions. We have noted consistently over the years that certain regions which the Government might consider to be favourable to it, in respect of their size..., as Region 1, for example, in this budget, has over \$600 million allocated to it, whereas Region 4, which has the brunt of the population of Guyana, has \$200 million. I do not know how it is going to explain that kind of disparity.

I have my reasons for the disparity, but perhaps they will address that. [Mr. Neendkumar: I see why you have gotten so low votes.] The braying has started, but I would not be distracted. Equally Linden and Region No. 7, they have all been given small portions of the national patrimony. We are saying that we must have objective criteria for making these fiscal transfers. We have been [inaudible] over the last decade with this Government which has been intransigent. It dilated on this matter; it is not interested in it, so that it could keep arbitrarily allocating moneys that are in disproportion to the people that they suppose to be spent on.

I do not agree with the Hon. Member Mr. Whittaker that he is helpless in this matter. It is something which can be done. It is something that could be corrected and he could have an objective approach to it. Then we were told that it is the PPP Government built the first secondary school in the Hinterland and dorms for the students [Ms. Teixeira: He did not say that.] That is what was conveyed yesterday. I believe that I have a memory like an elephant and if you want to challenge it, let us go. But I am saying to you and this honourable House that the People's National Congress Reform had open up the Hinterland. We built schools; we built hospital complexes; we built health centres and we trained medexes. We started

training our Amerindian brothers and sisters so that they could have serviced the areas. All the Government is doing is that it is just following a blueprint. It is following our blueprint and we are not sure that it is doing it in the proper way. The votes have reflected the views of the people of the Hinterland, the Guyanese people of the Hinterland, as to how the Government is dealing with them.

Then the Hon. Member Dr. Nanda Gopaul said that jobs could be had at anytime. When the students leave the University of Guyana, secondary schools and other institutions of learning they will obtain jobs, but that is a grave misstatement as to the employment state in Guyana. We know that all employment is massive, especially impacting the youths of this country. I do not know where Dr. Gopaul got that from. In 2002, a census showed that thirty-eight thousand Guyanese were unemployed and then another census, a Household Budget Survey, in 2006, showed that it was twenty-eight thousand. Now that was before the crisis in the world, in the global market. So we must add on more persons who would have been added to the unemployment market. It is not true to say that employment has been solved by this Government. It is not. This Government has failed miserably to provide jobs for the people of this country. I am saying that it does not come and tell us anything about a wages policy; it does not come and tell us anything about a manpower survey; it does not tell us anything about the unemployment rate. Check it. It is nowhere in the Minister of Finance's speech in this honourable House. It does not do it because it cannot. So that is what we had wanted to clear up before I move to my remit.

The first aspect that I would treat with is our justice system, shadowing the Minister of Legal Affairs, as it were, and the Attorney General. It is sad to say a quality justice system is not a priority of this Government. Our justice system is beset by shortages of judicial personnel, inordinate delays in criminal and civil trials, archaic courtrooms and inadequate facilities. Many of its branches, including the Chambers of the Director of Public Prosecutions, need to be retooled and rendered fit for purpose. Notwithstanding these *provisos*, the Hon. Minister of Finance deigned to tell us at page 53, paragraph 4.121, of the speech, and I quote:

“The modernisation of our laws, systems and facilities that support the effective functioning of our judiciary continues to take precedence in the Government's developmental agenda.”

The principal objective of all judicial systems ought to be a perfect delivery of justice to the people who will in turn embrace it. The High Court requires a complement of fifteen judges; instead it has nine plus the Chief Justice. There is no judge in the Family Court. The criminal session currently has listed two hundred and thirty-four cases before two judges - a physical impossibility. This area needs at least two additional judges in order to clear that backlog.

The Court of Appeal is a similar story. Instead of five Court of Appeal judges plus the Chancellor and the Chief Justice, there is presently two plus the latter two. That is where we are. This is wholly unacceptable and shows a palpable lack of political will on the part of the Government which is also unconcerned about the two highest rank judges acting for years.

Our court rules must be modernised. Certainly, the courts in the criminal session in which jury trials are conducted, in serious criminal matters, should be equipped with computers, tape recorders and microphones, in addition to audio visual facilities. Presently, only the Chief Justice's court and the Court of Appeal have audio visual equipment. Our judges should be able to look at and observe witnesses as they give evidence so that they could determine the veracity of the witnesses; their perceived credibility, so that they could observe them in the manner in which they give the evidence - how long they will take to answer a question. But instead, the judges have to spend much of their time writing notes as witnesses speak; bowing their heads down and unable to look, at the same time, at the witnesses in order to glean what is, or not, correct.

The Chamber of the Director of Public Prosecutions, also, appears to have lost its way. It must regain its focus. The Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) holds a high constitutional office with the requisite security of tenure. The DPP must exercise her discretion in initiating prosecutions judiciously. When she gets it wrong lives are destroyed forever, and compensation is not forthcoming. The DPP's Chamber must adopt the best practices. It cannot harbour within its curtilage lawyers in private practice. This will engender the anomalous situation where a lawyer representing accused persons could access the evidence of his clients in the DPP's Chamber. This could further leads to his clients' charges been inexplicably withdrawn or given plea bargains to the disadvantage of their co-accused. Justice must be seen to be done.

A family member who instigates a serious criminal charge against persons must not be able to get a fiat from the Director of Public Prosecutions to be given to another family member to prosecute the persons that he or she has instigated the charges against. This is a *non sequitur* as we say in the language of the law. So the DPP has the challenge to restore the confidence of the Guyanese people in that office. The Chamber must increase its complement of lawyers and retain them in order to deliver justice to the Guyanese people. In order to retain them, they have to be remunerated properly; they have to be provided with the conditions and remunerated packages that will cause them to stay in the department. But, as I said, Mr. Speaker, we cannot have private practitioners wanting to run with the hares and hunt with the hounds because that will lead to grave injustice. We tend to think that these things cannot affect us, even those in the Government but they will be surprised. Many of them, in fact, should not be surprised if they find that the DPP has centred her attention on them for whatever reason. So they will need safeguard, just like the ordinary Guyanese persons in the street. So I think they should harkened on to me and listen carefully and use their good offices to ensure that in the event they happen to pass that way, as the Commissioner of Police, Henry Greene, for example, they would have justice.

The Hon. Minister of Finance, at page 53, paragraph 4.123, posited: “In 2012, amounts totaling \$2.1 billion are budgeted for this sector.” I close my quotation. To be exact, this is the final year of the Government of Guyana Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) Justice Reform Strategy Programme and a sum of money budgeted this year is \$500 million. This will make a grand total of \$2,103,264,000 which is spent over a four-year period. So we are really at the end of that period. It must be one of the great mysteries of all time that so much money could have been spent with nothing to show for it. Our justice system is broken. After \$2 billion is spent, I enjoin the Hon. Attorney General to show us what value for money we have after all that spending. Do not come and tell me about the law was revised from 1976 to the present and that we have law reports, because I know all that is there are sample law reports, and until the expert from London is brought back so that he can get on with his business and produce the reports, nothing will be done. It is a clear case of no value for money which is spent.

We must make our justice system efficacious. One sure manifestation that would be guaranteed to every person coming into contact with the system is due process. As you know, the Americans

like that term. Every American understands that term “due process”. In Guyana, it means a fair hearing within a reasonable time before an impartial tribunal. My honourable sister and Member, Mdm. Priya Manickchand, when she spoke, reminded me with her contact with the system when the Hon. Member filed a motion to the High Court stating that there must be no criminal trial in this country unless it is done in chronological order of committal. I am reminded of that. What was the effect of that? The effect of that was that my learned friend contended that Mr. Benschop case cannot be accelerated. That Mr. Benschop has committed, after so many other phantom committals...As a result, the order made caused Mr. Benschop, who had no evidence against him, to stay in prison for five years. When the matter went to the Court of Appeal it was promptly overturned. After Mr. Benschop was dubiously released, suddenly the case was overturned so that no other person now would be affected by the chronological orders of sequencing. I am saying that we must not manipulate the justice system in a manner because we are in a position to do it.

We must avoid trial by ambush. What does this mean? It means that a man who is charged with criminal offences in the year 2006, based on a certain factual matrix, must be certain and have a reasonable legitimate expectation that whenever this slothful system decides to bring his case for hearing he would be confronted by that same matrix.

1.35 p.m.

He must not be presented with an entirely different set of facts against him six years later. In other words, one is trying him by ambush. I enjoin the Judges of this country to use their offices to prevent things like these from happening. It cannot be fair for one to rework an entirely new case to bring it up to the high court before judge and jury and say that that is a fair trial. When, in fact, if there is going to be fresh evidence, the Preliminary Inquiry (PI) needs to be reopened and sent for testing before the magistrate. One cannot come and anguish a man who has been languishing in jail for years with a brand new case. And that is the nature of our justice system. It is broken. [Mr. Neendkumar: Basil.] It is not me who said that; a Hon. Judge of the Supreme Court said that. [Mr. Neendkumar: You wanted the man to stay in jail longer.] I do not have to benefit from that. I benefit from my skills. We must ensure a proper jury system. [Mr. Rohee: You are getting economical benefits from it.] The Hon. Minister of Home Affairs is trying to distract me. We must ensure a proper jury system in this country. It is the

only protection against the excesses of the state. The ordinary Guyanese man has no protection; this Government affords him no protection. He gets picked up and locked up for 72 hours without any reasonable suspicion that he committed an offence or was about to commit an offence – 72 hours! The Government uses its power in such an abusive manner so that when mothers send their sons out on the road to the grocery stores, to run an errand, to buy water and bread, they do not see their sons back. And then they have to look in the police stations. The mothers are told they are put in the East Coast lock-ups and when the mothers go there, they are told that their sons are on the West Coast; they are dodged all around. If the boys are beaten up and there is evidence of beating and burning, the mothers have to go and look for Basil Williams to get them back. [Member: What is the fee?] It is pro bono most of the time. It is a serious matter. And I am only one man. My brothers and my colleagues too are in the act. The fact of the matter is that we must not abuse the laws of this country because we abuse the Guyanese people when we do that. And there are mothers looking for their children and cannot find them. They were picked up right outside here at Stabroek Market in front of St. Andrews Church. He was never ever seen again. An application was filed to the High Court for *habeas corpus* and the Deputy Commissioner, as he then was, Henry Greene, went into the witness box and he could not have told us where this young Guyanese boy was. [Mr. Nandlall: Could Mr. Felix not tell you?] He was Crime Chief. I am saying that young France Britain Wills, the late great Fred Wilson, was also taken into custody by police and was never ever seen again. And the Government comes lecturing to us in this House about justice - lecturing to us about justice? Superintendent Fraser, as he then was, turned up in Court and said that he released the man from Dragon's Squad. He acknowledged that the man was retained but they had released him and the understanding was that he was going to Suriname. Imagine that! That is the nature of the justice system that we have. They beat up a young man - *habeas corpus* file. They ran to the Court to bring extensions because they could not have taken the man to Court. We insisted and went up to Justice Jainarine Singh. The man came in an open back vehicle – laid prostrate. He could not go up to the High Court. That is the nature of our justice system and we have to make it right! We intend to make it right because the people voted for it to be made right. The jury system is what we will rely on to protect the Guyanese people against shoddy investigations, malicious prosecutions and to guarantee them what Article 144 of our Constitution provides for - a fair hearing.

I am emphasising the importance of the jury system because I recall that I had cause to obtain a stay of trial of a murder case after it was discovered that six of the jurors who were in the panel in the jury of 12, came from the same workplace. Chief Justice, as she then was, Mdm. Desiree Bernard, was so appalled that the entire criminal sessions were halted and she ordered that a total review of the jury list be done. And for one to do that the jury list is compiled from the current voter's list and the names of the jurors have to be published in every police station as well as the magistrate's courts so that citizens could go and look at the list and determine whether the people are dead or alive.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Williams, your time is up.

Mr. B. Williams: Is my time up already Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: Yes. I do not know if you recognised it but half of an hour has gone.

Ms. Ally: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Hon. Member be given fifteen minutes to continue his presentation.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. B. Williams: Thank you. [Mr. Hamilton: When you "pampazet", your time flies fast.] You call it "pampazet".

We cannot gainsay the importance of an effectively functioning judicial system and justice system in Guyana. I urge that this is something that we should have a joint collaboration on; that we get on with it and look at it in a bipartisan manner so that we can make our system one of justice and the judiciary of this country.

Let me turn my attention to the other parts of my remit: the Ministry of Public Service and the Ministry of Labour. I recall someone in this House being described as having changed as soon as he came amongst us. That jogged my memory. I recall years ago myself as a young lawyer returning home, given a high office Legal Assistant to the President - I was stopped on the road by a very young trade unionist - I think he is older than I am - and he said this, "Basil, you worked out this thing." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "You worked out your route. I love how you worked out that route to reach the Office of the President." I really did not consciously

work out any route, but if he were telling me that then I said okay and moved off. Years later that young man also ended up at the Office of the President and he had the handle and style of a doctor – Dr. Nanda Gopaul. I inspired him to reach to the Office of the President. And Dr. Gopaul so loved what we did at the Office of the President that when he got in there he also put in a young lawyer to work within the Office of the President with him. I was surprised at how this nice, young trade unionist changed after he got inside the Government's Office of the President. He transformed and that is the effect that this Government has on, hitherto, good people. I do not know what he is doing. He is making all kinds of statements which are so out of character, having being in the Office of the President. He said something to the effect that only certain people could work at the New Building Society Limited (NBS). He came in this Hon. House and said, "I came to be reasonable but when I saw the unreasonableness on that side, I decided that I am not going to be reasonable anymore." I do not understand that. That is not the man that I knew. I am prepared to give him a chance because even in the short space of time that he is out as a Minister, he had to come out from in there so that he could shine. Even in the short space of time he has done better than Minister Nadir in all those years he was there. We had to bring a no-confidence motion against Mr. Nadir. Thankfully, he had the majority on that side, but you might not be so lucky if one comes now.

This Budget is not friendly to the Guyanese people but it is in consonance with previous People's progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) efforts. They are loathes to invest in the Guyanese people, hence the dual travesties of illusory increases in old age pension and public assistance. This Government continues to degrade our senior citizens. We, therefore, have a fait accompli - yet another brick and concrete budget. That is the focus of this Government and it has always been.

Permit me therefore to focus on a particular group of Guyanese that this Government has always manifested a seemingly malevolent attitude towards, the public servants - nurses, teachers, policemen, soldiers, firemen and civil servants.

At page 12 of his Budget presentation, the Hon. Minister of Finance, under the misnomer caption *Developments in Wages*, omitted any reference, whatsoever, to increases in wages and salaries for our public servants. The Minister has not stated, in this Hon. House, that there will be increases in wages for public servants. This means that if the Government has its way, these workers will be condemned to a life of poverty and destitution. Our public servants have enjoyed

no real increases in their incomes for well over a decade and have been given 5% annual increase or thereabouts every year for the last decade. Last year's increase of 8% in wages and salaries for public servants can now be seen in its true light. It was an election tactic which did not bear fruit. As a result, the Government did not find it convenient to declare any increases for the public servants this year. In other words, punish them.

The Government did the same thing when the Lindeners voted overwhelmingly against it. It invested heavily in Linden and did not get what it wanted. The Government wants to punish the Lindeners so it proposed to remove the electricity subsidy. The Government has come with all kinds of spinners - Naresh Narine. All the spinners have come to try to justify that ignominy.

The time has come to stop the suffering of public servants. The following measures will ensure a living wage:

1. A 20% increase in wages and salaries;
2. A reduction of income tax to 25%;
3. An increase in the income tax threshold to \$60,000; and
4. A reduction in Value Added Tax (VAT) to 10%.

This will ensure that the Guyanese public servants – our nurses, our policemen, our teachers – will be paid a living wage.

In addition, there is a pressing need for the Government to pay increases in allowances to public servants - travelling, subsistence, uniform and housing - which have not been paid since 1995. And this is, despite the judgement and ruling in the Armstrong arbitration which spoke to the need for increments to be paid as early as 1999. The Government has steadfastly refused and starve the public servants of these increments.

The failure to pay these increments affects the public servants in that it creates a condition called “bunching” wherein new entrants to the public service are paid the same salary as those workers who were employed for many years, even as much as 20 years. Bunching leads to lack of morale, indiscipline, and disrespect.

The Government has always, in the last decade, had money to pay the public servants a living wage, and had made provision in budgets, but never paid it. The same is true of this Budget.

Notwithstanding the Hon. Minister of Finance never mentioning that he has made provision in this Budget, this is what was discovered. The sum budgeted for Employment Costs, for example, is, in 2012, approximately \$107 billion. The Government spent approximately \$92 billion last year and that was a revised figure because it had budgeted \$87 billion. What does this mean? This means that this sum of \$107 billion is about \$14 billion more than last year's provision. In other words, even under the head of Employment Costs, there is enough money to pay a proper increase in wages and salaries for the public servants.

Let me reinforce it. The Minister of Labour, unlike the Minister of Finance, the Hon. Dr. Nanda Gopaul confirmed yesterday that the Budget caters for additional increases so that the workers can get something. I am quoting him verbatim. Why is it that the Minister, the Hon. Member, Dr. Ashni Singh, did not say that?

I respectfully submit that public servants are entitled to be paid a living wage and the additional \$14 billion is more than adequate for that purpose.

We must factor in the head, Revenue Target for Central Government. This year, that target is approximately \$146,863,000,000. That is the revenue that the Government targets to receive this year. Last year, it was approximately \$120 billion was targeted. So what we are having here now is that the Government expects to add an approximate additional \$25 billion, this year, to scoff us. Is that not more than adequate to pay a living wage to our public servants?

These statistics show that the Government expects to garner these taxes this year and when one looks at the revision of wages and salaries provision, for this year it provides approximately \$3,741,000,000. Last year it was approximately \$3,456,000,000 and in 2010 it was approximately \$2,438,000,000. What is clear is that when one extrapolates and if the Government is saying that it is putting up around \$4 billion for revision increases in wages or salaries, it expects to make \$25 billion more in revenues and then employment costs is \$14 billion more, even if the it has some provision in the \$14 billion for new employment, there still is a lot of money to make the public service right. Hon. Member, you still have enough money to make the public service right and I know that you will do just that.

In spite of the Hon. Member's silence on increases for public servants, his Budget makes more than adequate provision. Less than \$4 billion out of a sum of \$25 billion is more than adequate.

Perhaps, the Hon. Member awaits the shout of “eureka” as a precondition to the workers’ accessing those provisions for increases in wages and salaries.

Contract Employees

Some years ago, I blew the whistle on this device to undermine the traditional public service, namely the introduction of a class of public servants called “contract employees”. The Minister, at the time, the Hon. Dale Bisnauth, who is here with us, said it was only a temporary situation since the Public Service Commission (PSC) could not be constituted due to political gridlock that was around at that time. However, this position did not change after the reconstituting of the Public Service Commission but, in fact, it mushroomed. It soon became clear that the Government was intent on creating a parallel public service to emasculate the traditional public service and to reduce the effectiveness of the Guyana Public Service Union and the Public Service Commission.

In this year’s Budget, the wages bill for contracted employees is approximately \$6 billion. In 2004, it was \$ 1.3 billion. In 2005, it was \$1.7 billion.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, your time is up.

Ms. Ally: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Hon. Member be given ten minutes to conclude his presentation.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. B. Williams: Thank you Mr. Speaker.

In the Supreme Court, alone, there are 83 contracted employees and in the Deeds Registry are 16 contracted employees. In other words, instead of employing public servants on the traditional establishment, these contracted employees are created and they really include a lot of “PPP-types”. In all of those cases, even though the contracted employees do the same work as the public servants on the traditional establishment, they are paid far more than the traditional public servants. And then every two years they get contract gratuity, but what they do not have is security of tenure. What is happening now is that the new public servants are not being employed. There is a ban on employing new public servants on Bands 1 and 2 in the traditional

public service. So no new public servants can be employed by the PSC. Public servants are being employed on one-year contracts. So what are we doing? We are building up an army of contracted employees who have no security of tenure and, therefore, serve at the pleasure of this Government - they serve at the whims and fancies of this Government. If the Government tells them to jump... [Ms. Selman: How high?] It is not even "How high?" And this is disconcerting because any proper country must have a proper public service to serve this nation. We have a public service being created that could be manipulated and it is a dangerous thing. The Government is happy with this situation, as it has always been the PPP/C's long time objective of dismantling what it perceives to be a PNCR constituency. It believes that. So we are proposing that an end be put to contract employees. We are proposing that all contracted employees be assimilated into the traditional public service establishment and that they operate on the various bands on the scales that pertain in that system and that persons who work in the public service for years will not feel that they are not moving when new persons come in and that they are paid the same sums like them. We must prevent bunching and we propose that the Government undertakes this immediately.

One might notice that I have not treated with RUSAL, but an action has been filed in the High Court to halt the arbitration that had been initiated by the Hon. Member, Dr. Nanda Gopaul. That is one of the reasons why I am prepared to give him a chance. At heart, he is a trade unionist. Having done so, it has stymied the work of that tribunal. The burning issue between the Bauxite Company of Guyana Inc. (BCGI) - a subsidiary of RUSAL - the Russian company - has been halted. I believe that since it had started, it should exhaust the local remedy provided in the collective bargaining agreement but that is another thing that we are going to deal with. Suffice it to say this; we welcome foreign investment in this country. But the question is at what price do we welcome foreign investment into this country? Would we encourage a foreign employer with an uplifted spade to threaten our workers to go to work? That must never happen again in this country. We must not have any foreign companies riding roughshod in this country over the Guyanese people. The companies have shown a palpable disrespect for the Government of Guyana and the laws. It is time that this new Minister of Labour deals with them. It is time that you deal with them Hon. Member because it is an insult to the Guyanese people. Foreign companies had said to a union that had bargaining rights under the bargaining agreement, "You are no longer our bargaining agent." How could one do that when legislation says how to

derecognise? It is not fair and the Government looks impotent in the face of all of this. We do not know what big contribution RUSAL is making because I do not know why the profits, if any, are so caged up. We must have information on this company and why our public servants and our politicians appear to be hamstrung by them.

2.05 p.m.

It is imperative that the subventions to the Guyana Trade Union Congress be restored. It is further imperative that the subvention to the Critchlow Labour College be restored. It is also imperative to end the discrimination against our women and restore the subvention to the Women's Advisory Committee of the Guyana Trade Union Congress. I do not know for what reason they are withdrawing it. The Critchlow Labour College, for example, gives Guyanese a second chance at qualifying themselves. Ask Mr. Robert Persaud LL.M. and he would tell you about it. [Mr. Nandlall: MBA...] MBA, Sorry Attorney General. I was thinking about you. We know the importance of it and I know that the man who has developed himself in the way that this Hon. Minister of Labour has done will ensure that he will persuade his colleagues as to how important it is that those subventions be restored to those three entities.

The right of collective bargaining must remain sacrosanct. The public service and the Public Service Ministry as well as the Office of the President treat the collective bargaining agreement which they have with the Guyana Public Service Union with scant regard. Every year they enter into negotiations and they never go to conciliation nor do they ever go to arbitration. Whenever it comes to the end of the year they unilaterally and arbitrarily break off the negotiations and impose the paltry 5% that they have done for the last ten years.

RUSAL was involved in negotiations for salary increases and they did the same thing. They said they derecognise the Guyana Bauxite and General Workers Union and imposed a 5% increase on their workers when the Bauxite Union was asking for a substantially higher increase. We must have respect for the collective bargaining agreements. Under the 1984 Amendment a collective bargaining agreement is enforceable in the Court of Law save where that the party says that it is not. If there is no provision in the collective agreement and I have read the one with GBSU and the Government and BCGI there is none. And so, we will have to deal with the situation. The problem that we have and I have said this ad nauseam, that the time is right to have an Industrial

Court in this country. I remember the President saying this in time. So now that he is President, we will make that appeal to him again. When you have these Trade Union matters and issues like these here now which have halted the arbitration, it should go to the Industrial Court and be fast tracked. What happens is that it goes into this milieu which is our justice system...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member your time is up.

Mr. B. Williams: Thank you Mr. Speaker. [*Applause*]

Minister of Education [Ms. Manickchand]: May it please you Sir. I did not want to disturb Mr. Williams particularly because he does not disturb other people. Could I be allowed to clarify something under Standing Order 40(b)?

Mr. Speaker: Is this coming out of Mr. Williams' speech?

Ms. Manickchand: This is coming out of Mr. Williams' speech Sir. Mr. Williams said that in the matter Seetal Sookdeo, he called it the "Benschop matter" that an order was made in the High Court disallowing trial of the treason accused before anyone else, and then an order was made, after Mr. Benschop was tried, in the Court of Appeal in effect overturning the High Court. The chronology of that is wrong. In fact that statement imputed ill motive. The Hon. Member actually said that I had manipulated the justice system and implies that the Court of Appeal who at that time was Justice Kissoon, Justice Cummings Edwards and one other person who I do not remember, had engaged in that manipulation.

If I may recall for this Hon. House, the matter arose out of Seetal Sookdeo et al versus the Attorney General. Seetal Sookdeo and seven other persons were my clients and said, "We have been perishing in jail forever and we should not be made to suffer more by elevating and accelerating the trial of one person, Mr. Benschop, over and above us. The High Court found that they were right and that should not happen and as a result of which criminal accused should be tried chronologically. The Court of Appeal overturned that decision and then Mr. Benschop was tried, it is completely contradictory to what Mr. Williams said.

The other thing which I wish to point out is that from that trial of Seetal Sookdeo, a *nolle prosequi* was entered for him. So as a result of us bringing that trial and a man, who the then

Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), Justice Roxanne George, said she had no evidence against, was released.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you for your clarification.

Mr. B. Williams: On a Point of Order, Mr. Speaker, under Standing Order 44(b). If I wanted to say that anyone has manipulated the system, I would say that. I have not said that Hon. Member Priya Manickchand has manipulated the system. So she must withdraw that contention. I am asking that she withdraw that I have said that she manipulated the system.

Ms. Manickchand: Sir there is a tape recorder outside that we can easily check this; that is what the Hon. Member said.

Mr. Speaker: I will have the Hansard Department do a check of the transcript and we will address it on a later occasion. For the moment the debate will continue. Today is the day of the giants, so immediately following Mr. Williams whose speeches we have always thoroughly enjoyed we have the Hon. Attorney General of Guyana, none other than Mr. Anil Nandlall.

Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs [Mr. Nandlall]: Thank you very much Mr. Speaker for your kind complements. I rise to make my humble contribution to the 2012 Budget debates. I begin as my predecessors have commenced their presentations, by expressing my warmest congratulations to the Minister of Finance, the Hon. Dr. Ashni Singh and his competent staff for what must have been a very massive undertaking. I wish also to take this opportunity to welcome to this Hon. House the several new Members and to congratulate them on their maiden performances.

I have sat here for several days now listening to the number of presentations made. I believe that the essence of, and this only of my humble view Sir, a budget presentation is lost when one listens to a debate which has transpired.

The 2012 Budget debate is simply a page taken from the developmental agenda of the People's Progressive Party/Civic Administration which commenced in 1993. 2012 marks its 19th year. It is in that context that the 2012 budget must be seen. I get the feeling that there is an expectation that this budget must contain a solution of every single economic, social, political and every

other problem confronting the people of this country. No budget in the world can boast of that type of potential.

The 2012 budget is only one page, as I said, of a programme which we on this side of the House hope will transform the economic, social and physical landscape of this country and will result in transformational changes in the lives and livelihood of Guyanese people. That is all that we seek to do in our developmental plan. We have taken 19 years and have reached where we are. In my humble view, and I am confident that the people of this country agree with me, we have made monumental progress. To understand and to appreciate the progress which we have made it is necessary to go back and to examine what we inherited. I know that normally evokes great adverse reaction from the other side. Unless we examine where we started from 19 years ago we would not be able to appreciate where we are today.

I consulted three budget speeches of my Hon. Friend Mr. Carl Barrington Greenidge and I have them here. I consulted them to inform myself accurately of the state of the Guyana's economy.

Mr. Speaker: Incidentally Mr. Attorney General, I would need those records because there is an investigation coming as to National Industrial and Commercial Investments Limited (NICIL). I am glad that you have them.

Mr. Nandlall: I told the Hon. Member Mr. Greenidge that I cannot understand why he is experiencing difficulty in accessing these documents. I made a simple request to this Hon. House through the Clerk of the National Assembly and they were duly furnished. I do not understand why my friend is experiencing great difficulty.

Mr. Speaker: Is there a point of order?

Mr. Greenidge: Yes Mr. Speaker. I am sorry Mr. Nandlall but I really did not want to do this. The issue in relation to what Mr. Greenidge said was concerning the Hansards as distinct from the speeches.

Mr. Speaker: I see, thank you.

Mr. Nandlall: The Speaker apparently was labelling under the same misapprehension as I am. The Speaker also requested the record based upon Mr. Greenidge's public pronouncements.

Anyway, I had no difficulty in accessing Mr. Greenidge's speech. What I found when I read it was that it was like a death announcement, one pronouncement after another, the death of economic growth, the death of so many industries and every single sector declined in performance. At the end of it, the economy was bankrupt. I do not think anybody will dispute that. Even the most average supporter of the People's National Congress (PNC) must accept this as economic reality. The economy was bankrupt when they left it. They left no foreign reserve. We had several bouts of whopping devaluations, ten to one, thirty three to one, and then from thirty three to one to one hundred and one to one. That was the expanse of the devaluation.

There was constant decline of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). There was a debt that we could not have serviced. Mr. Greenidge was very frank in the way that he spoke about the economic disequilibrium – that is what he called it – serious balance of payment deficiencies that he had great difficulty in explaining. That was the state of the economy; the infrastructure was in complete tatters; that was the economy that we inherited. This is in the budget speeches; I have marked them off.

I will just quickly read one part, "The fiscal imbalance which has been of major concern on the preoccupation of the economic policy has now been narrowed...", and then they continue. I will not detain you on this matter, except to say... [*Interruption*] I have marked it off. I will not be lured. I will hand my learned friends the documents, 1991 budget, [**Mrs. Backer:** Read 1992.] 1992 budget, 1990 budget, I have gone through them. These documents pronounce the economic death of Guyana. The only thing that was on the rise was inflation and the underground economy; those were the only two things that were on the rise.

Nineteen years hence, what is the position now? There is strong macro-economic infrastructure, highest foreign reserves, interest rates reduced from 32.5% to 4.5%, economic growth that was in the negative for nearly eight years prior to 1992 is now consistently at an average of 4.4%. Last year it was 5.4% in an adverse global and regional economic environment. We have a strong balance of payment position, and our economy is at its strongest and largest ever. Of course, I will not go much into the Government social programmes which have benefitted the people.

Mr. Irfaan Ali, the Hon. Minister is here. 100,000 families in this country have benefitted from our housing programme. 6,500 more will benefit this year. Where did this land come from? It

was here all the time, but there was never a policy to develop it. We converted those lands from cow pastures, rice fields and cane fields. We had to build roads; we had to build the lands up. We had to dig drains, install water, install electricity and then we allocated the land. We then ensured that the people got their transport and titles. We then went to the commercial banks and negotiated low interest loan programmes. It is a complete housing package unparalleled in any part of the world. That is the legacy of this administration. Yet we hear from the other side that the people are not benefitting from the budget.

Who is going to benefit from the \$6 billion that is going to be injected into Guyana Power and Light Incorporated (GPL)? If we are not to inject that money there will be increased electricity rates by 20%. Every single consumer of GPL, numbering about 160,000 or more, are going to benefit from that \$6 billion injection, yet we are hearing about bail out.

Look at GuySuCo, we have put in \$4 billion, but who are going to benefit? Yes, we are going to bail them, and we have to bail them again next year then we are going to bail them again next year. Do you know why? 20,000 people are directly employed by that industry. They each have a family of about four, so we are speaking of about 80,000 Guyanese. Another 20,000 depend upon those families indirectly for their livelihood. So that industry affects the lives and livelihood of 100,000 Guyanese. If it is in crisis then it is the duty and responsibility of this Government to bail it out. In America and Trinidad they do the same. In Trinidad they bailed out Clico and we are going to bail out sugar in Guyana.

We stood by the bauxite industry for 20 years while it made no profits. The Government stood by them and took money from Central Government and pumped it into Linden to keep that community alive. The Government has brought that industry to a state of profitability for the first time in 20 years; that is what we have done. When Mr. Greenidge said that Central Government's budget can no longer sustain the bauxite industry and therefore closure is eminent, when we took power in 1992, we continued to inject money into it and today it is a profitable industry. That is what we have done for the workers of this country and we will continue to do so.

Mr. Williams spoke about the public sector and about the public servants. I said in my presentation that it is necessary that we examine what we inherit before we can deal with the

current position. I have here a book titled "*The Constitution of Guyana*". It is a transition issue written by Professor Rudy James. I do not know that Mr. Rudy James is any supporter of this Government. This is what he said of the Public Sector in analysing the PNC administration in the 1980s:

"The unhealthy state of the relationship of the bureaucracy and the public was a subject of review by an integrity commission headed by Luckhoo. It formed that there was a breakdown of standard of behaviour of public servants in dealing with the public. Public office holders accorded in the performance of their duty preferential treatment to members of their racial communities and their families. Corruption, grafts and favours in return for services became a commonplace. There were instances of sexual harassment of, and other sexual improprieties, towards members of the public who sought legitimate services. On the other hand, the public servants were a demoralised section of the Guyanese workforce. Much had contributed to their state of demoralisation. They silently looked on as their merit system gave way to a test of party loyalty as the surest way to advancement."

In 1987 Mr. Greenidge was a Minister;

"... Senior officers were made to attend PNC party congresses and show their commitment by participating in organised force labour and party sponsored marches. They were made to connive with party officials in the misuses of state properties to further the cause of the party and to preserve political power in the hands of the ruling cliché."

This is what we inherited, and this is what we had to clean.

Let me read of how they treated the public servants and how they got the judiciary to work with them.

"A show of independence by a public servant was invariably visited by harsh sanctions in the form of transfers to remote areas or summary dismissals. The Courts decline to decree restraint in these matters was quite evident as in the case of Hydar Ally where the Court

of Appeal of this country held that you had no security of tenure in the public service and that you were hired at the President's pleasure, a royal prerogative",

That is the public service that we inherited.

"The public sector employees and in particular those in the parastatal organisations where the scapegoats of contradictions of a constitution which incorporated some goal of a liberal democracy, but permitted repression to ensure secrecy"

That is what happened in the public sector of this country.

"On the one hand the constitution guaranteed freedom to receive ideas and information without interference and to communicate them without interference; on the other hand these freedoms are negated by certain qualifications."

My good friend Mr. Greenidge passed a certain legislation called the Public Corporation Act, and this is what this legislation says:

"A Managing Director of a corporation sole or a member of cooperation aggregate or any officer or other employee of any corporation shall regard and deal with, as secret and confidential, all information, documents and matters which, or of the knowledge of which he may obtain as such Managing Director, member or officer or employee."

This is a public sector organisation and you are swearing people to secrecy. What we have done in acceding to one of your requests on the other side is that we have brought to this House a Freedom of Information Act. We have freed the entire system. Here you have an institutionalised system extracting secrecy.

Mr. Speaker: Is that not the case though with Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA) and a number of other sensitive...

Mr. Nandlall: No, this is the Public Corporations Act, Sir. This is dealing with public business, and yet public servants had to take an oath of secrecy, that they cannot disclose the affairs of the public, and my friends are asking what is wrong with that. The authoritarianism continues. We on the contrary have passed a Freedom of Information Act. We have ensured that the Auditor General brings his report to this National Assembly every single year. We have ensured that

every organisation in this country that is run by public funds is audited and their reports are presented in this National Assembly at every single occasion. That is the difference in governance. [Mrs. Backer: What about NICIL's report?] The NICIL report has been made public at a function at the Pegasus Hotel. The NICIL report is not a secret report. There was a ceremony at the Pegasus Hotel where a document was presented by NICIL detailing every single transaction that it entered into in relation to properties. The prices were quoted and persons who bid for those properties, names were listed. It is not my problem if they do not read. That was the type of system that we inherited.

2.35p.m.

So when Dr. Rupert Roopnarine, the goodly Doctor, speaks about governance and constitution, he must understand the herculean task we had to undertake to reshape what we have now. This is what Professor James said which is relevant to the Hon. Member:

“The PNC's choice of socialism as the developmental strategy entailed an expanded public sector and though the emphasis on recruiting, promotion and advancement shifted to political loyalty, the level of representation of the communities in the state services improved only slightly. This was because the ruling party drew its support mainly from Afro-Guyanese. With the rise of the multiracial party, the Working People's Alliance (WPA), and the threat of this Party to erode the support of the ruling Party, the criteria of party loyalty became institutionalised in the state services. PNC party allegiance became one of criteria for recruitment, promotion, and dismissal to and from public offices. The Government adopted a policy of harassing and dismissing Afro-Guyanese public servants who supported or even sympathised with the WPA. [Interruption]

Page 21, Dr. Roopnarine... [Mr. Williams: What is that about?] ...They took away his passport; ask him; he could not have travelled. They took away Eusi Kwayana's passport. That is the type of public service you left. When my friend speaks about the public service that is what they did with the rule of law, that is what they did with the Constitution of this country; destroyed the public servants; destroyed the public service; destroyed the constitutional mechanisms in place; completely destroyed them. That is why I commenced by saying that it is a

nineteen-year journey on which we have embarked. It will take time to correct all the destructions which have taken place. We are working hard and will continue to do so.

Let me give them one more quote since they egg me on. This one is from 1982, from the Department of State. Often times Members love to quote from the United States (US) Department of State with has all types of reports. Well, this is what the US Department of State in 1982 said - My friend Mr. Carl Greenidge was the Minister of Finance:

“Guyana maintains the structure of a multi-party parliamentary republic within the Commonwealth, but the ruling People’s National Congress and its Leader, President Forbes Burnham, have imposed a racially oriented minority government on the nation. The predominantly Afro-Guyanese party and President Burnham have consolidated power to a great extent through such non-democratic means as electoral fraud, harassment of opposition and interference with the judiciary.”

That is the type of legal system and governmental structure that we inherited in this country. So you have to be patient with us as we chart...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member just give the reference.

Mr. Nandlall: I am quoting from the book “*The Guyana Court of Appeal*” written by Bertrand Ramcharan. [*Cries of oh*] When I quoted from Professor James we did not hear “Ohs”. Members hear Bertrand Ramcharan and there are “Ohs”. I do not know what it means. Mr. Ramcharan is supposed to be planting rice, he should not have been writing books. This gentleman was a Commissioner on the United Nations Human Rights Commission. He was elevated to be the Chairman. He wrote a book, “*Guyana Court of Appeal*”.

Ours is a vision to create a legal system in this country that is free from the political manipulation which existed hitherto. It is one that ensures the constitutional rights of the citizens of this country shall prevail. It is one that the judiciary of this country must remain free from political contamination because there was a time when party paramountcy was the rule of the day, a national priority. Party paramountcy prevailed over every institution in this land including the judiciary so much so that the flag of the People’s National Congress was flown, not in the compound but on top of the Court of Appeal building which, at that time, was the apex of the

judicial structure of this country. That is the task that this administration has, to change that system, and to rid it of political manipulation. Imagine, today, if we are to fly a party flag close to any court in this country? That is the state of the judiciary which we have inherited. We have embarked on constitutional reform. Dr. Rupert Roopnarine and many Members on that side were part of the process. Some are here, while some are not here anymore. They were part of a national process which included all the political parties in this House, all the public sector organisations, the private sector organisations, the labour movement, and the religious movement.

Mr. Speaker: Your time is up Hon. Member.

Minister of Home Affairs [Mr. Rohee]: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Hon. Member be given fifteen minutes to continue.

Question put, and carried.

Mr. Nandlall: We have reformed the Constitution to deepen our democratic process and to strengthen our commitment to the rule of law. Today, the Chief Justice and the Chancellor can only be appointed with the Leader of the Opposition. That never existed before. **[Mrs. Backer:** With the consent...]

With the agreement of the Leader of the Opposition. Today, we have given security of tenure in the Constitution to many public officers who never enjoyed that type of protection before. Today, we have a judiciary which feels free to rule in accordance with the law, both for and against the Government. It reposes in Hon. Member Mrs. Backer the confidence and freedom to criticise a decision of the judiciary as a Member of the Opposition.

[Mrs. Backer: What is wrong with that?]

Nothing is wrong with that. You could not do that in the 1980s that is what is wrong with that. **[Mrs. Backer:** I was not a lawyer]

You do not have to be a lawyer to criticise a decision. **[Mrs. Backer:** I was not a member of any political party.]

You do not have to be a Member. The point is that you are now a Member and you can feel free to do so. Mdm. Manickchand also can feel free to criticise a decision. That is the healthy atmosphere we have created; that is the type of judiciary we now have.

The legal sector is undergoing massive transformation. A lot of work has to be done; a lot has been done but a tremendous amount of work has to be done. My learned friend the Hon. Member Mr. Williams said that we need more judges. He said that the number is statutorily fixed at 15

but that is not so; it is fixed at 12. We intend to amend the High Court Act to increase the complement. We have done physical transformation of the infrastructural facilities and it still continues. There is a new court which will soon be opened at Leonora. The Georgetown Magistrate's Court is going through its final stages of refurbishment. The DPP office has moved out of its original residence and is now resident in Charlotte Street to accommodate massive infrastructure repairs and renovation.

There is also institutional strengthening. There has been tremendous boost to the library facilities at both the DPP's Office and the Attorney General's Office. There has been a tremendous boost to the facilities at the High Court Library, and the New Amsterdam Library. But lawyers who do not read have no need to go to the library, so they would not know. Should they go there they would see volumes and volumes of new books, but the books will remain new because these lawyers do not read. I am speaking about the law library. [Mrs. Backer: We do not have access to the Attorney General Chambers.] Yes, that is the library I am speaking about. Let me extend an invitation to my friend that if she needs to go the Attorney General's Library she will be welcome.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members when Mr. Williams was speaking he was not shouted down like that. Allow Mr. Nandlall, the Hon. Attorney General to complete his presentation please. We may not agree with what he is saying but we must conduct ourselves as Members of Parliament.

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, the justice improvement programme is coming to an end. I am to report to this Hon. Assembly that the long awaited Laws of Guyana, both online and hard copies, incorporating all the amendments and regulations passed by this Hon. House and under Ministerial Orders since 1977 to December 2010 will become available before the 1st June. There have been some problems with the contractor but we have sorted it out. The project is completed. It only has to go to the printery.

In terms of the Law Reports we have started the online version. All law reports of British Guyana dating back to 1932 will be accessible online to every member of the public... [Mr. Williams: When?] ...in two weeks time. When I left the office yesterday the consultants were setting up the computer system to allow for that to happen. The project is

completed. Every single reported case ever decided on in this country from 1932 will be accessed on line. That is an historic accomplishment.

Then there is the law report programme. Everyone knows how important a law reporting system is for a functioning democracy, for a functioning judiciary, and a judicial sector. This is a specimen copy of the Law Reports of Guyana (*Raised a copy of a book.*) This is from 1985 to 1986.

Mr. Speaker: The Ramson edition?

Mr. Nandlall: This has no edition, Sir. This is the Law Reports of Guyana which will be available. They are at the printer and within the next month or so up to 2010 will be made available to members of the public. [Mrs. Lawrence: Is there an open tender for that?] These are Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) projects which have provisions that mandate how the projects are going to be executed. The process is transparent because it is an IDB financed project.

The Deeds Registry reform continues. We have begun the digitisation process of the records from 2006 to 2011. This digital system has been in use and all the documents are now being stored digitally. However, we have to undertake the mammoth task of going back 100 years, perhaps, I do not know, into the archives to store all those records digitally. That is a monumental undertaking, but I am meeting with some consultants next week to begin that process. In terms of going forward, the mechanisms are in place and the project will continue.

The transport system is already computerised. Transports from the Deeds Registry are now generated by computer; business registrations are done that way; company registrations are done that way... [Ms. Ally: Who is the Registrar?] ...I am glad you asked that question because Hon. Member Dr. Roopnarine in his presentation spoke about the non-appointment of the Registrar of Deeds. Dr. Roopnarine was part of the constitution reform process and ought to have remembered that the power to appoint the Registrar of Deeds was taken away from the public sector, from central government, and it now resides with the Judicial Service Commission, an organisation over which this Executive has no control. [Mr. Williams: What is the relevance of that?] The relevance of that is the Executive has no control over the appointment of the Registrar of Deeds. We must understand these things. We are here as responsible people...

[**Mr. Williams:** Are you not the Attorney General?] I am educating you. Representations have been made to the Chairman of the Judicial Service Commission, and I have received the assurance which I wish to convey to this Hon. House, that a lawyer shall soon be appointed as the Registrar of Deeds. That is my report. [**Mr. Williams:** You said that five years now.] Tell that to the Judiciary.

The Deeds Registry reform includes the conversion of that institution from a public service institution to one of a semi-autonomous body; legislation has been passed to that effect and now has to be brought into force. A board has to be established. I am bringing the legislation back to the National Assembly for further amendments because I would like to see on the board more representatives because currently only the Guyana Bar Association is represented. I would like the commercial sector to have representation. I would like the Berbice Bar Association to have representation on that board. I would come back to this House with an amendment to rectify that legislation. When that legislation comes into force it is intended to bring greater autonomy to the Deeds Registry. It will also invest greater autonomy to the Sub-Registry in Berbice and Essequibo. Today there has to be a constant movement of senior staff between the Registries because the structure is so established that there is great centralised authority in a few officials. Those systems will be dismantled to ensure there is devolution of authority away from the centre. Officials from Georgetown will no longer have to run to New Amsterdam or cross the Essequibo River by boat to perform their functions. That is now in the pipeline and will be done.

Importantly also, for the first time in the history of Guyana, we will put the Official Gazette online so that Guyanese Members of Parliament, lawyers, Guyanese in the Diaspora and elsewhere, can go on the internet and read the official gazette online. Those are the achievements. We will continue to modernise the Deeds Registry. Under the competitive strategy the remainder of the justice improvement programme, we intend to separate the Commercial Registry from the Deeds Registry. When there was a merger of these two institutions the workload was far different from what it is now. With the expansion of commerce and economic activity, obviously resulting from prudent economic management at the government level, investments are coming more and more; people are making more money; more people are taking mortgages; more people are buying properties; the Ministry of Housing is increasing the disseminating of titles to land by the thousands. These activities have created an unprecedented

impact on the work load of the Deeds Registry. So we have to constantly review the extant mechanisms to expand them with a view of making them viable and responsive to the needs and expanding needs to which they must answer. In this regard a Commercial Registry will be established and physically located outside of the Deeds Registry. We will migrate to that Registry the functions of the Registrar of Companies, the functions of the Registrar of Business and trade mark, debentures, mortgages etcetera. Those will be performed by an institution which will work in collaboration with the Deeds Registry but have its own functional autonomy and authority.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member your time is up.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Speaker, I wish to move that the Hon. Member be given ten minutes to conclude his speech.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. Nandlall: In terms of the Land Registry, as it may have been known, that organ was not within the supervisory control of the Ministry of Legal Affairs. Now we have changed that position and that organisation comes under the administration of the Ministry of Legal Affairs. The same type of improvements which I have outlined for the Deeds Registry will also take place in relation to the Land Registry. Consultation will have to be had with several stakeholders as we design the way forward, in terms of the reformation of the institution.

We have also a packed legislative agenda for 2012. We have new industries that are emerging. We have the oil and gas industry which is emerging. The legislative department of the Attorney General Chambers has already commenced negotiations and discussions with persons who have training in those complex areas. We are beginning the design of legislation to deal with these emerging sectors. We are also going to amend certain important legislation which will have tremendous impact on the lives of the ordinary people. For example, the Deeds Registry Act will be amended to elevate an agreement of sale for land to the status of an encumbrance which can now be registered against the transport. We have the unique system in Guyana where a large part of our land law is still governed by the Roman/Dutch system. Under that system an agreement of sale, no matter how much money one pays, under that document it confers upon someone no interest in the land. What we have seen is the sad situation occurring, with unfortunate regularity,

where devious owners of land are entering into several agreements of sale in relation to the same property with several members of the unsuspecting public and taking deposits from all of them, but passing transport only to one when there is no recourse to the one who has been defrauded. If the person selling has no property to levy upon and is taken to court someone gets an empty judgement. Now by imposing, registering that agreement of sale against the transport it becomes like a mortgage, and whoever purchases that property purchases that property subject to that agreement. This arrangement will bring tremendous improvement and relief to a very unfortunate situation which we have in Guyana.

We have on the agenda for this year the amendment of the Civil Law Act. We have passed a series of legislation attempting to equate the common-law wife with the legal wife. However, there remains one lacuna in all the amendments and legislations which we have passed. It has to do with the rules of intestacy. If, for example, an unmarried woman lives with an unmarried man for 50 years, if that man dies we have not reformed the law to put that woman on the same status she would have been had she been legally married to that man for one year. That situation is causing severe hardship amongst people of this country. The Ministry of Legal Affairs intends to bring an amendment to the National Assembly to rectify that deficiency.

We continue in our efforts to modernise the DPP's Office as well. We now have a wireless linkup between the Attorney General's Office and the DPP's Office which is intended to increase efficiency. I agree with my learned friend Mr. Williams that we have a human resource problem; indeed we have. This has to do with the inability to pay salaries, but the Government remains committed. As long as the resources are made available we will try to improve the salaries of not only workers in the legal sector but workers across the board. That has always been our commitment.

In terms of judges we are also going to bring to this National Assembly the Act which will allow us finally to appoint part-time judges. I have already had consultations with the chancellor and have received the green light that the judiciary is ready to move with that initiative.

3.05p.m.

What my friends on that side do not understand is, there are certain Constitutional constraints, which prevents the Executive from interacting with the Judiciary. The Judiciary is a

constitutionally independent organisation and the Executive cannot dictate the manner in which the Judiciary functions. That is why, while I hold parliamentary responsibility for that institution, there are also certain disabilities under which I function and I hope that that is understood. My friends are free to make representations to the judiciary, to also have their concerns addressed. I undertake to do so from this side, but the task of Nation building can never be that exclusively of the Government. I know that we have been shouldering most of the responsibility, but you must do your part. I welcome consultation with the Guyana Bar Association and the Berbice Bar Association, soliciting their views and help to come on board with the Ministry of Legal Affairs, for us to join hands to reform the system.

I had extended an invitation to all lawyers in this House, including the Hon. Member who continues to disturb me. But not from today, not one single suggestion have I heard from her. Yet she attempts to disturb me as I attempt to update the nation on my plan and the Government's plan to reform the system. She has no interest in improving the system except to criticise and pull it down - an enemy to development.

I want to assure this House, in conclusion, that this Government remains committed to ensuring that the judiciary remains the institution it was intended to be. We have committed to the construction of a national democratic State and we intend to carry that agenda out. A State where the rule of law shall reign supreme, the judiciary shall remain independent, people of this country shall remain available and the system of justice shall remain accessible to them. That is why we will continue to pump money into programmes like Legal Aid, because we know that access to justice is important. So Sir, I take this opportunity to assure this National Assembly and this nation by extension that in the year 2012, the \$212 billion committed by the Finance Minister will go towards improving the legal system of this country, so that they will get a superior and better quality of justice. Thank you very much. [*Applause*]

Ms. Hastings: Thank you Mr. Speaker and Hon. Members of this House. Allow me to make my contribution on Budget 2012, under the theme, "*Remaining on Course, United in Purpose, Prosperity for All.*"

The budget prepared and presented by the Hon. Minister of Finance, Dr. Ashni Singh is of no doubt one that appears good in terms of quantitative measures, but a poor one in terms of

qualitative growth. I say this since the budget, as it stands, only signals the priorities of the Government. The priorities of the Government are not merely the priorities of the Guyanese people. With the problems increasing in our society, what does this budget have to offer with respect to solving them?

My perusal of the estimates for the 2010 and 2011 budgets shows that while infrastructural projects were done on roads, airstrips and bridges, the people in this country did not get the value for money. I say this as these roads and airstrips continued to collapse soon after works had been completed.

Typical example, the Kamarang airstrip, which I traverse, in and out, when I am attending sittings of the National Assembly, which was recently repaired, is almost back to the state it was before, although millions of dollars were spent. The Bartica/Pataro road, which serves the miners, residents and school children who attend the three miles..., is already in a deplorable state when works were done on same for three consecutive years, in 2009, 2010 and 2011. Would it not have been better if studies were done so as to find out what sort of vehicles traverse this road?

The residents of Bartica are calling on this Government to build a proper or a heavy duty all weather road, which they can enjoy using for a long period of time. I am hoping that this mistake will not recur for the Imbaimadai and Ekereku airstrips and Kako, Waramadong, Kamarang and the other roads that are targeted for this year.

Let me now turn to education. While the Government recognises that this vehicle is a pre-requisite to the successful development of a nation, does it fail to recognise that a nation is made up of small communities and villages? If one is so serious about responding to the educational needs of our people so that there can be prosperity for all, as the theme states, then the Government needs to respond accordingly to the educational needs of our people, despite their geographical locations. With the allocation of \$25.6 billion for this sector, I am hoping that the teaching block and the dormitories, which are being targeted for this year, be constructed and completed to the value of the money that is to be spent.

As I reflect and recall my last speech on Budget 2011, I had called on this Government to establish a science laboratory and a Home Economics Department at the Lone secondary school

at Waramadong. I must inform this Hon. House that to this date there is none, although the school continues to offer subjects such as integrated science, food and nutrition, HSB, just to name a few.

Mr. Speaker, tell me, is this what the Hon. Minister of Finance refers to as remaining on course? Indeed, the situation at this school has remained the same after 19 years of governance under the PPP/C. Is this how we plan to improve the literacy and numeracy standards of our children, at the primary and secondary schools? If so, then definitely the Ministry of Education needs to revise its strategic planning document. Every time a new dormitory or a school is being constructed, the requirements, as outlined in the non-academic standards, have been ignored to the plight of the teachers and students, who have to teach and learn in an un-conducive learning environment.

Child-friendly classrooms are far from reality in most of our hinterland schools. Lack of curriculum guides, textbooks, adequate and appropriate furniture continues to prevail and these definitely adds burden to the teachers who are not properly paid.

I now refer to the Hon. Minister of Amerindian Affairs' speech. Yes, Hon. Minister, we have young people who are trained at Kuru Kuru College, GTI and other secondary schools under the Hinterland Scholarship Programme, but have not yet acquired jobs to this date. I was hoping to hear the Hon. Minister giving us figures of the number of young Amerindians who were trained and who have completed studies under this Hinterland Scholarship Programme and what sorts of jobs are they enjoying today, but this I did not hear. That which cannot be measured, cannot be improved.

The people of Region 7 are now calling on the Government to have in this year's budget an allocation for the construction of a fully equipped technical or vocational training school in the Upper Mazaruni. This would create jobs for the young people who have completed training at Kuru Kuru College and GTI, to teach either on a part-time or a fulltime basis. I must inform this Hon. House of what is happening. When something goes wrong with an outboard engine, a little generator, water pump, solar systems and ATV's that were distributed by the Office of the Prime Minister, these would have to be flown out to Georgetown to be rectified at an additional cost,

whereas, if our local youths are trained to handle this, repairs could be done right there at a lesser cost.

Let me turn to a comment that the Hon. Member on the other side of the House, Dr. Vindhya Persaud, who commented that Guyana has moved forward and the young people of this country are now on par with their counterparts in other parts of the country. I must say, how can we say that Guyana has moved forward when children in the Hinterland are not on par with their counterparts on the coastland in terms of getting access to internet service? There are no internet services of which I know that have been allocated or budgeted for by the Government in the Upper Mazaruni or either in the middle Mazaruni.

Hon. Member, Dr. Persaud, I too am a proud product of the University of Guyana, but my credit goes to the foundation of my education. I am a product of a Hinterland Scholarship that was offered under the governance of the PNC. The PNC had started free education, from nursery to university. I stand in this House a proud woman, because I can say I have a job today. Hon. Members of this House, I say a proud product because I give credit to my early days of schooling, those years in which the Hon. Members on the other side of the House talk so negative about, as if nothing good had been done for those 28 years.

Let me turn to the health sector, listening to the Hon. Minister's Budget Speech 2012, they have a very good plan in building a state of the art speciality surgical hospital at Liliendaal. We the people in the Upper Mazaruni would have welcomed the upgrading of the Lone Kamarang District Hospital. I heard him talking so much about cataract, I was waiting to hear when he would speak about Kamarang, but probably by speaking so much about cataract, maybe he has cataract in his eyes, that Hon. Member could not see that a lot needs to be done at the Kamarang District Hospital.

Guyanese in this part of Guyana need to enjoy and receive equal health services as that of those we received on the coastland and elsewhere. Any rational, objective and right thinking person, especially Amerindian brothers and sisters in the Hinterland, would agree with me that in this Budget 2012, it does not really make a difference to an ordinary man. My reason for saying this is that the present increase of \$600 for our pensioners in no way can be adequate, when food items such as a loaf of bread cost \$600. A pound of chicken, beef or fish is almost ranging from

\$650 to \$900 per pound, just to name a few. A pack of milk cost \$1,200 - \$1,500, how do you expect our elderly people to live?

The air transportation which is the only means, to this day, to go in and out of Kamarang and Imbaimadai, the cost for return is presently \$38 000 with Air Services Limited and almost \$40,000 with Trans Guyana Airways. Recently, I have learnt that the Air Services Limited scheduled passenger flights into Imbaimadai and Paruima, so those residents in Imbaimadai, the ordinary man, will now have to catch a flight to go into Kamarang and then pay an additional cost from Karmarang, to either hire a boat to seek as a passenger in order to reach to Imbaimadai. How can an ordinary man afford to charter a flight which ranges from \$300,000 -\$450,000? I am calling on this Government to address this issue and matters that affect people in this part of Guyana.

I now turn to youth and sports – I refer to the Hon. Member, Mrs. Valerie Garrido-Lowe, who said that Amerindians are gifted for athletics and sports in which they engage themselves, meaningfully. I am asking the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport to please allocate some money, which he has allocated for this year's budget, to upgrade our sport grounds at Jawalla and Kamarang. For every year we have our annual district games, where all the young people would come together from various villages, both male and female to compete in football, volleyball, cricket, archery and swimming and every year the cost of these, with the input from the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs... the young people would come together to enjoy what means to be a young woman and a sports man. Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport, Dr. Frank Anthony, I extend my invitation to you to come and visit during this time.

I now turn to agriculture - the people in the Upper Mazaruni are very proud farmers. I must inform this Hon. House, as I did previously, that there is a community called Paruima, which under PNC, had produced large cabbages and plantains. I do not know how many of you have seen a large plantain - but the biggest pumpkins and vegetables of all sorts. These fertile lands that are there need to be used in a way that can bring an income to these farmers. **[An Hon. Member: Make plantain chips.]** Yes, we need to make plantain chips and these other things that can be sold to bring in an income. But what happens, the farmers are not motivated to plant in large quantities since there is no market for the products they produce. So I am calling on the Minister of Agriculture to find ways and means of going into these areas and

taking in their expertise so that they can educate the people or the farmers in this part of Guyana, so that much can be gained from our agriculture projects.

In conclusion, because I think I have said enough and I am hoping and expecting that this Government, who calls itself caring, but sometimes I think it to be scaring instead of caring, I have a responsibility to represent the people of my Region. I am hoping that their hopes and expectations be taken into consideration, so that we can all enjoy a good life, as the APNU states in its manifesto, “A good life for all Guyanese”. Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for your attention. [*Applause*]

Mr. Speaker: Thank you too Ms. Hastings. I now invite the Minister of Public Service, the Hon. Dr. Westford, to address the Assembly and to say that... [*Interruption*] ...Dr. Westford before you start, I will give you an extended time so we will be going a little after 4 o'clock, so that I do not hinder Dr. Westford midway. Go ahead please.

Minister of the Public Service [Dr. Westford]: Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. Before I start, can I please ask permission, from yourself and my colleagues in this House, to use, from time to time my medicine? As you can hear my throat is not too well.

I rise, like my colleagues before me, to congratulate and also to support the Minister of Finance and his worthy staff who worked side by side with him in bringing to this Hon. House this Budget 2012. Before I continue, let me, like some of the other Members of this House, congratulate the new Members, especially the young, new Members of this House, some of whom I have had some discussions with. Let me give them that encouragement to continue the good work and to ensure that we ought to remember that you are a politician, but being a politician does not mean misrepresenting facts. Always try to have the facts in order. As I have promised some of you whom I spoke with, if there is any information you need or any help I can give, feel free to come and ask me.

I must also congratulate the Hon. Member, Ms. Hastings, who comes from a region that I am very close with also she has always been able to bring constructive criticisms. I have always said in this House, constructive criticism is good for development and that is what we need in this House.

We have heard criticisms throughout this budget presentation, the speeches here, some a lot of misrepresentations, some of it because of misinformation and some of it because of malicious misinformation. We have heard a lot of that misinformation being debunked by this side of the House. Also, because of the time limit that we are having, I would like to concentrate mostly on some of the misinformation that we have been hearing, some of the things that we have been hearing from the day that this budget was presented.

Just after this budget was presented, we heard on the airwaves, then it was replicated here in this House, that there is nothing or very little in this budget, especially for workers. I would like to ask, who are the workers of this country? They are the people of this country; they have relatives and families of this country. The Public Service, the Public Sector consists of 11,200 persons, but by extension, we can safely say that we are speaking for about 45,000 persons. Who would benefit? If we look at the Hon. Member's budget presentation; let us look in the area of agriculture. Who will benefit from the \$1 billion that the Minister said was placed in the Ministry of Agriculture that would be developing new lands and new agricultural products? Who will benefit from this? Our people, our workers. We are not saying workers will not benefit, we say, this is a budget for our people, to develop our people.

Let us look at education, who will benefit from that allocation? Our people. I did not say my people, as some persons are saying; I said our people will benefit from that \$26 billion. We are seeing new schools... I heard the Hon. Member, Mr. Granger, said a short while ago that a building is not an institution. **[Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Greenidge is my name.]** Yes, Mr. Greenidge. Sorry Mr. Granger **[Mrs. Backer: You have your eyes on the Leader of the Opposition, be careful!]** I have known the Leader of the Opposition long before you have Madam. The Hon. Member Mr. Granger... **[Mr. Greenidge: Granger again?]** Mr. Greenidge has said that... **[Interruption]** Mr. Greenidge had said that a building is not an institution and he is right. Even though we are putting up schools, many schools, we have also been equipping them with the necessary tools, including human resources.

3.35 p.m.

Who will benefit from those buildings? Who will benefit from the education sector? **[Ms. Ally: Contractors]** I agree. Contractors will also be benefitting and I can show you that

some of those contractors are the fathers, the brothers, the uncles and the nephews of workers of this country so, by extension, our workers will benefit. I agree with the Hon. Member.

I will call Mr. Granger's name now because the Hon. Member, Mr. Granger, was one of the persons who I overheard on the nation airwaves mentioning that there is nothing in the budget for development of human resources. I will deal with the development of human resources in a while so as not to have to mention the Hon. Member's name again.

If we look in the housing area: We heard the Hon. Minister, when he spoke, made mention of the 100,000 house lots that have been given out already and the 6,500 that are yet to be done. How many of our workers have benefited? How many of them?

Let us look at the electricity sector: Is it not our workers who will benefit as well from our electricity sector? Who will benefit? They will be benefitting; I can assure you. Why is there this big question and it being said that there is nothing for the workers. [Mr. Greenidge: The contracted workers are different.] I will get to the contracted workers in a while, Hon. Member, Mr. Greenidge.

Let us look at roads and bridges: We just heard from the Hon. Member, Ms. Hastings. Ms. Hastings, the road you spoke about in Bartica – the Bartica-Potaro Road – may I inform you that that road – though you are saying that it is being done year after year – is being done in phases so the work is going to be continuous and if one goes on that road and if one reads the contract and, as I said, all of us should try to enlighten ourselves about issues that we speak on. I will promise the Hon. Member, Ms. Hastings, to provide you with a copy of that contract so that in the future you will understand why the road is continuously being done. [Ms. Ally: You live in town.] I happen to be the representative for Region 7, “Bartica map”, and I have been informing myself, Madam.

Clearly we can see that there is an attempt to mislead the people of this country. I always say that we in this House are the ones who must be able to lead people and if we do not tell them the right things we will be misleading them. It is all well and good for us to play politics but there comes a time when we have to let people know... “Look, there is something here for you but we think there must be more.” Do not let us say that there is nothing. Let us be honest with our constituents out there.

Let me come now to the, Hon. Member, Mr. Granger's concern about human resource development. [Mr. B. Williams: But he has not made any presentation...] Mr. Williams, if you listen carefully I said that I heard on the airwaves his comment on the budget. The Hon. Member in mentioning this seemed very convinced that there was nothing in this budget for human resource development. We on this side of the House, the Government, view human resource development probably differently. We view human resource development as it ought to be viewed. The human resource of any nation does not start with somebody who has to go to school; it starts with the conception of a human being. That is where the human resource of a nation starts. If one should take the time to go through this Budget of 2012, one would see that indeed this Government has mentioned in this book all of the things that will be done at all of those stages and it starts with the Ministry of Health concerning what development will be done for women who are pregnant, after they get the baby... [Mrs. Backer: We passed that age. We cannot get...] What a pity. We look at the children – nursery, primary, postnatal care, the health sector. That is how we have been looking at it. We have been going from stage to stage in the development of our human resource. We go through those stages and we ensure that at all of the stages we have placed a lot of interest, the necessary resources, to ensure that that development continues. It is very important, this issue about a holistic approach, because if we do not look at our children when they are very small, our little postnatal children... At one point in the history of this country, and I can stand here and say it, because of lack of proper attention and care we had something in this country that was destroying our young children – malnutrition. It was so bad that in this country, that in the health sector, there was a whole ward for malnourished children. If our children are not properly nourished it will affect them in their early school ages, in their later school age and we will not be able to stand, as the Hon. Member Ms. Hastings so proudly stood and said she was educated under the PNC Government... I also got a scholarship under the PNC Government and I am proud of it. I got a scholarship not by carrying a card of any mean colour but because I attained the proper education and was offered a scholarship. It was good luck that I was not born during the time I was speaking about with the malnutrition. It is very important, the attention and care that we have been giving to the health sector... The ward that was named the Malnutrition Ward was disbanded because there was no need for it and there still is no need for it. Only because of good management could we have done that. We all know the days of beriberi and I can go on and on.

That is how we look at human resource development; ensuring that we have healthy people, both in body and mind. When we have that then we can go a step further and so what we have been doing – creating professionals for our work force. That is what we have been doing.

I would like to mention to the Hon. Member, Mr. Greenidge. I was very surprised when the Hon. Member, was speaking about the public service, mentioned two things that were disturbing:

1. That we do not have a qualified public service
2. That there is a lateral public service briefed with contracted workers but the “contracted workers” part was not the annoying part. The annoying part was that he said that the contracted workers were not qualified and were being paid super salaries.

That was replicated, somewhat, by the Hon. Member Mr. Williams by saying – though I do not wish to, permit me to repeat the words he said – that the contracted workers are PPP cronies. If I may be permitted, I am not going very far. I am staying right where we are, the Parliament Office. I have in my hands a list of 56 contracted workers of the Parliament Office of Guyana and I would like all of the PPP hacks to stand if they are in here and let Mr. Williams see them and I will...

Mr. Speaker: Could you share that list with me as well, please.

Dr. Westford: I will not call the names of these persons. I am going to call their designations and I am going to read for Mr. Greenidge their qualifications and their salaries. I will start with the Research and Analytic Assistant, that person has a post graduate Diploma in Developmental Studies and a Degree in Public Management. That position is listed on the position of inventory and it falls under Band 10 and that person is being paid \$126,309 – the salary scale that falls within Band 10. I am going to continue because it is an affront to those persons who work here and I chose her so as not to go too far because I can replicate this across the Public Service with my contracted workers. It is an affront and I want to ask for an apology on behalf of those public servants. These are young people. They have studied hard and they deserve to be employed.

The Hon. Member, Mr. Williams was grandstanding; ‘year come, year go’ we have been on this very issue about contracted workers and they have been told that the worker has a choice. Right now, if we come back again, right here – we are not going far – we have persons who are on the

pensionable establishment who are requesting to come under contracted establishment. They are requesting. [Mr. Greenidge: Why are they requesting?] You must know why, Sir. The only difference with the two categories of staff is that one category will wait until they are 55 years old to retire. Their salaries are the same. All of their conditions of employment are the same and I dare anyone on the opposite side to bring anything to the opposite. I dare anyone there. The Hon. Member continues to grandstand. The only difference is the contracted workers are paid a gratuity twice per year – every six months. That is the difference. They have exactly the same terms and conditions of service.

In the essence of time I will not go through this list but I am prepared to share this list with anyone in this Hon. House. I have many others of all the contracted workers and I am willing to share them with anyone in this House. Those persons deserve what they are getting and they get nothing different from anyone else.

There is nothing like “a parallel”. I heard something else another speaker said, which was the Minister did not mention... It seems strange to me... There is nothing which says which band contracted workers are on. I am going to offer once again my services to anyone in this National Assembly for clarification of any issue that they may not understand. A contracted worker occupies the very positions on the very band as all of the workers of this country.

It is said that where ignorance is bliss it is folly to be wise. I think that I am going to try to be wise today. [Interruption] [Mr. Nandlall: You are a buffoon.]

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Nandlall, please do not call a Member of the House a “buffoon”. Let us remember that we are all here representing the people of Guyana and are not to refer to each other by those names.

Dr. Westford: Mr. Speaker, may I continue?

Mr. Speaker: You will get some extra time. Go ahead.

Dr. Westford: Thank you Sir.

This Government prides itself on being a working class government. Our policies are all geared at the relief and assistance of our working class people. “You are damned if you do and damned

if you don't." We are hearing "Okay, yes, the threshold has been raised to \$50,000 but it needs to come up a bit more." Let me remind members of this Hon. House that \$50,000 being the threshold means that every single worker, every single taxpayer in this country, will be taking home \$10,000 per month of real disposable salary. I say "real disposable" because of the many other things that they have in place. I told you that there is health care. We heard about the health system that we are getting, free health care, education, agriculture, water, housing... They have that \$10,000 per month that they can do something else with.

We are looking at the \$50,000. Let us think about when we took office... We have our workers at heart. When we took office in 1992 where was the threshold? It was \$4,000. We are not going to give what we do not have. We will not do that. We run a prudent economically viable economy. We will not end up like some of our neighbours that we are being equated with by some of my friends on the opposite side. Some of our near neighbours in the Caribbean who have been paying huge salaries, what did they have to do? They had to start to tell people to go home voluntarily. When the people said that they are not going home voluntarily because they are not sure what will happen to them they started saying "Well then you have to take a pay cut." Upon saying "pay cut" I wonder if my dear friend, the Hon. Member Mr. Williams who likes to fight so much for the interest of public servants, would agree to take a pay cut. **[Mr. B. Williams: Do you pay me?]** Will you agree to take a pay cut? You get paid here, Mr. Williams.

The \$10,000 that the workers are going to gain is of a great relief to them, Sir, make no mistake. It is of a great relief to them. Let us not look at that \$10,000 that these persons are getting. There are other job related benefits that our workers get. I was searching and I spoke with a few of my colleagues, Ministers of the Public Service within the Caribbean, and I have been asking by saying "Do you have any such thing like you give your workers a duty free concession of cars?" They said "Well, no but you have some private companies who do that kind of things." So we have, out of a total of 11,200 public servants, a total of 2,015 public servants who access duty free concessions from this Government, on cars. We also have another set of persons who get concessions if they want to buy motor cycles that are above a certain cubic centimeters (cc); if it is below, they get an allowance to assistance them to do so.

We have various means of assisting our public servants. Our housing: once one is a “minimum wager”, one automatically gets a low cost house lot. The Hon. Member, Ms. Vanessa Kissoon, asked a question yesterday – it was a very important question. She asked why it was that two separate persons paid two different sums for the same size of house lot. I hope all of us listened carefully to the explanation because that is our way of trying to show that we give preference/relief to the poorer persons in our community.

Mr. Speaker: Your time is up. Perhaps you can get an extension while you catch your breath.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Speaker, I wish to move that the Hon. Member be given fifteen minutes to continue.

Question put, and agreed to.

Dr. Westford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, as I said, wages are not the only things that we do for our workers and our human resource – as I would like to say – in this country. It is well know and publicised, the Government’s Training Programme... I agree with the Hon. Member, Mr. Williams. I agree that we inherited the training programme which existed under the PNC Government but, Mr. Williams, I would like you to go back to see what the numbers being trained were. What were the numbers being sent on scholarships during that period? I would like you to do that, Sir. We are not only doing better, we are exceeding and excelling by leaps and bounds. A numberless quantity of doctors, engineers, mechanics... We currently have citizens, young people of this country, students, in 14 countries in the world and had it not been for concern of sending them to some other countries we would have had them in more than 30. We are trying not to send people as far as the Middle East at this point in time. [Mr. B. Williams: Do they come back?] Yes, all of them come back. All of them do not stay. Being cognizant... It is one thing to be given a suite of clothes to wear and it is another thing to make sure that one gets another one when that one is finished being worn, because when that one is torn one would walk naked if one does not have the ability to ensure that one can put another one on one’s back.

Yes, we inherited a scholarship programme but we bettered it by far. Another thing, our qualified professionals did not only start leaving Guyana under the PPP/C Government... As a matter of

fact, before I even go there, it is not a “Guyana thing”; I will soon be going to a conference in the United States where all of the countries – I did not say the poor or third world countries – of the world... IMF and the World Bank are having a meeting to discuss what methods we are going to employ in looking at the skills flight throughout the world. It is not a “Guyana thing”, Sir.

Politics aside, I think that we should stop beating up ourselves sometimes. We should give credit where credit is due. In the past, when people went away, we had big holes. We have looked at the situation and we have realised that people will go and we know what time they will start to go, because nobody want them between certain periods; they want experienced professionals. To buffer that, knowing that we are going to lose a certain percentage, we have been retraining and we will continue to train to ensure that we have adequate numbers to service our people’s needs in this country. [Mr. B. Williams: No. You must devise strategies to retain them. You must not only train them.] Is it we cannot retain them because we are a poor country...? We will get there.

4.05 p.m.

When we do get the money to prudently pay them higher salaries there will be no need to train that quantity, and we will stop doing it, Sir. For the time being, we will continue to train our people. When I say “our people”, I mean everybody - everyone who is qualified will be trained.

The reality is that in our country our institutions are being manned by Guyanese – qualified Guyanese. Maybe, they are on contract, but they are qualified, and fully qualified.

Another issue that was raised in this House by the Hon. Member Mr. Greenidge...Mr. Speaker, Mr. Greenidge raised the issue about another qualified... I do not doubt that he is eminently qualified in his field, as engineer - I will not call his name here - who mentioned that some of the engineers in the Public Works department not being qualified because there was some fault with the sea defence somewhere. Let us be realistic. Which professional, including the one who has been criticising, has not, at some point in his or her career, had the experience that he or she would have ten or fifteen years after he or she would have graduated. We must not beat up on our young people. We have to nurture them. We agree that there will be errors and mistakes, and we will have to put proper monitoring systems in place. We agree, but let us not discourage

those people. Let us not discourage our young people. We, in this House, have to give them that encouragement, Sir.

For those of us who read..., it was approximately two or three years ago when there was a huge hotel which fell, killing hundreds of people. What was the result of that? Do you know what? Three engineers and two architects, who built that building, were found. They were old men at that time. Do you know what they were charged with? They were charged with murder because it was found that there was a fault. It was not in Guyana that that incident happened; it happened in a big metropolitan country, Sir. Errors will be made but we cannot put everybody in one basket and say that we do not have qualified professionals. Our people – the same people who the Opposition Members are saying are running out of this country – let us go and see what they do abroad.

May I inform some of these very Hon. Members here that some of those very people who would have left, both in the period of the People's National Congress (PNC) and the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C), are now returning, Sir. Currently, I have on my desk fifteen applications from imminently qualified persons who would like to join the public sector, Sir. Do you know what? Things are not good out there anymore. The green grass that they went to meet is not green anymore. It has turned brown. *[Interruption from Opposition Members.]*

Mr. Speaker: Okay. We cannot have two and three debates going on at the same time.

Dr. Westford: Mr. Speaker, I will give the gentlemen a chance to argue in a short while.

Mr. Speaker: Let them do it outside.

Dr. Westford: I would like to implore upon my colleagues in this honorable House...As someone before me said that in any budget, in the world, people would like to have everything, and that is a fact. But people cannot have everything; they can only have what the country's coffers can give them; and if prudently managed, we will continue to have. We do not want to be like the man who had the goose that laid the golden egg. He did not want one egg a day; he wanted all of the eggs. He killed the goose and he got no eggs. We want an egg every day.

In closing, Sir, I want to come back...As I was saying, let us be proud of what we have. Let us be proud. The Hon. Member Mr. Moses Nagamootoo... **[An Hon. Member:** Are you proud

of him?]) I am proud of all of us in this House. We have been placed here by the people out there to look after their business. The Hon. Member Mr. Moses Nagamootoo, when he was speaking about Guyana, mentioned everything – the past President is bad. I am not going to put in words that he did not say, but we all know what he said. He mentioned corruption and mismanagement and then he said something else. He said, “You know, if we look at the United States that is being run by this great man, the greatest man...” and he named President Obama. I like President Obama; I respect him; I think he is great also. Do you know what is significant? We are chastising and denigrating ours. The very man that Mr. Nagamootoo was standing in our National Assembly and saying is so great, and trying to disrespect and disgrace our past leaders, do you know what has happened there? The very night when I went home, I was privy to hear a debate going on because a member of the Republican Party called the very great man a thug. Do you know what they were saying? They were saying that it was wrong: they should not do that; they must revere and they must respect. I want to ask us to do the same thing with our leaders. We may have our differences in this country. Guyana is for Guyanese. It is our country. We must be respectful and we must ensure...

Those of us in this House who deem ourselves as “senior persons”, let us give guidance to those young people who are in this House. They are going to be here long after we are gone. Let us show them the right way how to do things. Let us give respect so that we will be respected.

This Budget 2012 is here before us. We have tried to make the most of and give the most that we can at this point in time. We have done a lot but, if anyone should ask, “Are we there yet”? I am not going to say that that person should get an answer as the Hon. Member Mr. Moses Nagamootoo would have given, but it will be a resounding no. We are not there as yet, but we are getting there, and steadfastly. This is a great country with great potential and with the encouragement, cooperation of each and every one of us, we are going to get there and we are going to have that happy, peaceful country that we so deserve.

I thank you. *[Applause]*

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Member. I thank you, especially, for bringing to our attention what happens in other jurisdictions. It is things that we should eschew and treat each other with more respect, mutually.

On this note, I would like to also mention that earlier Hon. Member Ms. Manickchand had risen on a Point of Order to clarify statements made by Mr. Basil Williams when he spoke. He then rose on a Point of Order to refute that he said any such thing. The Hansard Department has supplied a record of Mr. Basil Williams's statement. I am satisfied that Ms. Manickchand was in order, given what I have read. I would like to thank the Hansard Department for its alacrity. I will provide to both Ms. Manickchand and Mr. Williams copies of the statement, but I will not make it public. We will take the suspension now for one hour.

Sitting suspended at 4.16 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 5.08 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Before we start, Mr. Ramjattan has asked that I remind Members of an invitation issued for a session on understanding the budget and how to read the Estimates of the Public Sector at the Guyana Pegasus on Sunday morning, from 9.00 a.m. to 12 noon. Members of Parliament, the media and members of the public are invited. Former Auditor General, Mr. Anand Goolsarran, and Mr. Christopher Ram will be there to help persons understand how to read the budget and the figures.

I now invite the Hon. Member Mr. Winston Felix to deliver his maiden presentation to the National Assembly.

Mr. Felix: Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. On this my first rising, let me take this opportunity, first of all, to express my sincerest gratitude to all those citizens whose vote is responsible for my arrival here. I shall make every effort to ensure that their vote is meant something in this Assembly.

I take great pleasure and pride in expressing my views on the presentation of Budget 2012 by the Hon. Minister of Finance, Dr. Ashni Kumar Singh, who produced glowing figures on the performance of the economy in 2011 and made projections for spending in 2012. He and his obviously hard working staff must be congratulated for their production of this year's budget. However, the only relief the Hon. Member could offer was lifting the income tax threshold to \$600,000 per annum without any increase in salaries and or other allowances for members of the joint services.

Listening to presenters on the other side, I get the impression that Government wants the Opposition to shower it with praise for any initiative it takes, regardless of the consequences, be they negative or positive. But that is not the role of a vigilant Opposition. In this new dispensation, as the configuration of the Tenth Parliament is referred to, the Opposition will call the proverbial spade a spade when the Government falls short on its performance or neglects its responsibility in any area. The Opposition, who are guardians of the public's interest, must ensure that the Government is kept focused on the task ahead. Therefore when the Opposition provides constructive criticisms of Government's actions, we are doing so to represent those citizens whose interests, in our views, are not well served by the Government. In fact, the Hon. Minister has lifted the threshold, for those persons paying income tax, to the tune of \$600,000 annually, meaning that members of the disciplined services, as their counterparts in the wider public service, will take home precious little – approximately \$3,000 – because many of them were already under the threshold. There is nothing else in the budget to benefit this category of Government employees, but it is this neglected category of Government employees who must stand up day and night, even outside of this Assembly and for the duration of these sittings, to provide protection for our work.

An accompanying feature of any consideration of national development is security. I mean effective security systems to ensure that productive work proceeds unhindered in a stable environment. This is principally the role of the Guyana Police Force (GPF). It is being responsible for the internal security of the state. The Guyana Defence Force (GDF) is responsible for external defence, our territorial defence and integrity and to define aggression. At times, it supports the Guyana Police Force when its services are needed. The Budget 2012 does nothing to motivate the members of the joint services to continue working unbelievably long hours and sometimes lose their lives in the process. Their salaries are already small. The merit increment scheme is no longer awarded annually to deserving members to increase their salaries. Allowances have been stagnated. This year's budget has done nothing to make the lives of members of the joint services better. In a society where emphasis is placed on preventing and detecting crime, one would have thought that the Government would have found it prudent to add comfort to the lives of the members of the joint services.

In spite of the glorious picture painted to describe our economy, permit me, Mr. Speaker, to illustrate the paltry allowances which our police and other joint services ranks receive. House allowance: This was graded upwards, from Constable to Commissioner, between \$1,003 and \$4,000 per month. Let us look at a rank, whether it is a Constable or Officer, with a degree, the education allowance - \$312, with a diploma - \$250, Caribbean Education Council (CXC) - \$50 and the proficiency for tradesmen - \$40. The laundry allowance: Constable to Sergeant - \$1,000, Inspector - \$500. When I go to Crystal's Dry Cleaning, the price to clean a pair of trousers is \$900. The Detective allowance is \$50 and the plain clothes allowance is \$240. This does not exhaust the list of paltry sums paid as allowances to members of the joint services. In the case of travelling allowance for Officers and Inspectors with motor vehicles, classified as A Grade, this category of allowance was increased to \$17,460 in 1995, when the cost of gasoline was between \$200 and \$300 per gallon. The cost to fill a tank today would be in excess of \$10,000 depending on the capacity of the vehicle. In addition, the cost of the vehicle spares is exorbitant. Surely, the Hon. Minister of Finance could have seen it fit and just to ameliorate the financial burden faced by our citizens who have chosen careers in the services.

On page 3 of the *Stabroek News*, dated Tuesday, March 13, 2012, and captioned, "Low pay and no voice make cops open to bribes, study finds - says weak judiciary, cash economy enabling organised crime" reported the findings of a study by researchers Taylor Owen and Alexandre Grigsby entitled, *In Transit: Gangs and Criminal Networks in Guyana*. This work asserts:

"The shortage of manpower, low wages, and a lack of representation to lobby for better working conditions create disenchantment in the Guyana Police Force, making officers likelier to accept bribes or, in extreme cases, join drug trafficking networks to get rich, a recent research has found.

Given these structural conditions, it is unsurprising that officers attempt to bribe or 'shake down' the population they are sworn to protect."

The article went on to state:

"...the police force's inadequate staffing is among the three structural factors that make it susceptible to corruption. The force is described as "chronically understaffed" – with between 2,400 and 2,880 members to police the country's 750,000 population at 2010 –

limiting its ability to patrol the internal waterways that are considered a key transit route for the drug trade. (Similarly, the Customs Anti-Narcotic Unit (CANU) is viewed as handicapped by insufficient enforcement capacity.)”

This research has made manifest that there is a necessary connection between low salaries and staff and corruption within the GPF in the fight against trafficking in illicit drugs and crime. These are key problems which beset this country without a credible response from the administration. Maybe, the Government might wish to consider increasing the salaries and allowances of members of the services so as to attract the brightest young minds from the top secondary schools in the country to offer their services. But this cannot be detained where there is the attitude to terminate the services of those officers who studied and attained a degree in law and a postgraduate degree in security management in the United Kingdom (UK). A rethink of the outdated policy on education is needed to promote human development within the services.

Section 3 (2) of the Police Act, Chapter 16:01, charges the Guyana Police Force with the prevention and detection of crime and to achieve these objects it ought to be organised, equipped and trained for these roles. Crime is an ever present feature in every society. It would not go away, but with a concerted effort it can be controlled, providing that the political will to do so exists. Therefore the Guyana Police Force has to be dynamic in its approach to the multifaceted nature of crime in order to protect the citizens and to generate public confidence in its work. We must recognise the powerful nature of the internet and television which convey information around the world with astounding rapidity and bring crime into our homes via these electronic facilities, educating the child and criminal alike. Professor Ivelaw Griffith, in his 13th Annual Eric E. Williams Memorial Lecture at Florida International University on 28th October, 2011, quoted Mr. Kofi Annan, former Secretary General of the United Nations, as observing, and I quote:

“Globalization offers the human race unprecedented opportunities. Unfortunately, it also enables many anti-social activities to become problems without passports.”

According to Griffith, drugs and crime are among the problems without passports to which Mr. Annan referred. They share some common features, one being transnational. Drugs and crime

cross national and regional spaces, paying no regard to physical, political or legal boundaries. They have no passport.

In 1992, after there was a change in Government, the new Government saw an escalation of crime. It would appear that it undermined the police, resulting in a few becoming totally corrupt. We must all recall the notorious activities of the elusive Jerry Perreira who robbed and murdered victims with impunity between Demerara and Berbice, where he eventually met his demise. Shortly after his death, a decision was taken to seek assistance from the British to reform the Guyana Police Force and this resulted in the visit to Guyana of retired Chief Superintendent Mr. Paul Mathias of the London Metropolitan Police who interviewed the relevant stakeholders in the three counties and garnered facts upon which his report was based.

During that period, firearms became the weapon of choice to commit robberies and murders and to settle scores. The figures on serious crimes revealed a trend indicating an escalation in *drug-running* on serious crimes. What is certain is that the incidents of crime are not reducing. This means that the public must live in fear for want of protection against criminal acts. It is pointless glorifying ourselves with figures and the millions and billions allocated to the Guyana Police Force. That means nothing to suffering public that wants to feel secure while at home, at work or on the streets.

During that period, the security of the Georgetown Prison was impaired. By allowing prisoners and prison officers to attend Mash tramp on 23rd February, 2002, five notorious criminals escaped and mayhem resulted. The Government managed the situation by committing crime to solve crime. It enlisted the assistance of a fugitive from North American justice well known as Shaheed Roger Khan. **[Hon. Members (Government): Son-in-law.]** You provided the wedding. Police and GDF personnel, twice, arrested him with a cache of firearm and ammunition, silencers and grenades but his charges, for various reasons, were dismissed in court. He is now a guest of the American Government, having been convicted of drug trafficking, money laundering and gunrunning to the United States of America. In this period, extra-judicial killings by phantom squads were the order of the day and there were drive-by and walk by shootings in execution style. Illegal firearms were regularly in use. Kidnapping arrived on the scene in Guyana and the village of Buxton, on the East Coast of Demerara, became a restricted area to policemen between 2002 and 2004. The Roger Khan group was identified as a phantom

squad, so named because young men were found dead in various parts of Georgetown and on the East Coast of Demerara without anybody being associated with those killings. Invariably, the bodies were found with several bullet wounds and with no trace to a perpetrator. The deaths were attributed to that group. The crime spree resulted in the deaths of twenty-one policemen, but, unfortunately, the Government was loath to hear the cries of members of the force for more resources. After thirteen policemen died, then two policemen were sent to the United States of America to secure protective gear. The Government has not shown an interest in holding inquest to determine whether anyone was criminally concerned in the cause of death of scores of Guyanese. Presumably to prevent exposure on its connection to the phantom squad, was there a cover-up or was this an attempt to protect the phantom squad?

5. 27 p.m.

The police's response to violent crime has frequently been criticised as heavy-handed and often resulted in death. Policemen investigating violent crimes have often been accused of human rights abuses. In his book on *Public Security*, the author, Brigadier (retired), David A. Granger expressed the view that there are two schools of thought on how police should respond to the threat of criminal violence. He described them as the "brute force school of policing" and the "human rights school of thought." "The former school," he said, takes the view that the chief responsible of the police is to safeguard the security of the citizens. If this can be done only through allowing the police the flexibility to shoot and kill suspects, to rough up citizens and turn a blind eye to torture, then so be it. The author described the latter school in this way: "Adherence to the human rights school of thought, on the one hand, usually takes the view that the police should operate only under the strictest legal constraints that characterise democratic states. According to this school, human rights are more important than public security."

It is important to note that at the opening session of the 24th Annual Conference of the Association of Caribbean Commissioners, held in Georgetown, in May 2009, President Jagdeo expressed in unequivocal term his preference for the brute force school of thought. President of the Association and Commissioner of the Royal Barbados Police Force, Mr. Darwin Dotting, expressed his preference for the human rights school of thought in these terms, and I quote:

“As police organizations, we are not fighting war against our citizens. Even though they are provoked in most cases, police officers are working in a conflictual position. We think that their training is as such that it would be able to deal with those persons with whom they are in contact in a respectful manner.”

This contrast of views would continue to drive debates on the use of violence of citizens in the police custody. The fact of the matter is that the laws of this country do not support the brute force rule. To address this challenge the Government of Guyana entered into agreements with the British Government to train policemen to resolve violent incident safety, criminal violence and community policing. This training which was undertaken by the Scottish police came to an abrupt end in July, 2006. There were other efforts aimed at accessing British training for the Guyana Police Force, but for various reasons those efforts were either incomplete or abandoned. The force is now participating in a citizen's security project which is financed by the IDB. While this development is taking place, the force has the inescapable ability to reduce crime to make the society safe.

The attack of Guyanese fishermen at sea by pirates is another challenge the force must be confronted either by itself, given adequate resources, or in conjunction with the GDF coastguard in a joint operations mode. The latter course seems feasible since the GDF is more experienced at sea, having in the past to challenge foreign vessels in our Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), searching and detaining them, and would have the equipment and training necessary to use them competently. In view of our current challenges, the Guyana Police Force needs to improve on the quality of its entrance and should look towards secondary schools graduates. This can be aided by an increase in salaries and allowances which would make the Guyana Police Force, and the services, competitive with the private sector and to provide the organisation with young minds with the capacity for training in technical, specialised and scientific fields.

Narco-trafficking: When the Government changed in 1992, marijuana was known to be trafficked in and out of Guyana. Cocaine trafficking was statistically insignificant. The new Government began dismantling structures set up by the previous Government to coordinate activities of all agencies having a role to play in the new drug strategy. There was a National Drug Law Enforcement Committee (NDLEC) which was chaired by the former President, now deceased. This committee met monthly *inter alia* to receive reports from members on the

circumstances in which narcotic drugs were found in Guyana and to examine similar reports from foreign countries, examine training opportunities and to provide coordination among constituent members. The activities of this committee ceased in 1993.

In the intervening years, law enforcement has been monitoring the Cheddi Jagan international Airport (CJIA), discovering passenger bound for either North America or Europe with cocaine either strapped to their bodies or swallowed. A few persons who ingested cocaine died because of their indiscretion. Larger finds were found by CANU and we can recall the *Danielson*, the foreign-owned and registered vessel which was seized by the order of the court after the captain was convicted for drug trafficking. In another interesting case in 1993, Jairo Patino Ramirez flew an aircraft from Columbia and dumped approximately two hundred and fifty pounds of cocaine in Loo Lands, upper Demerara River. As a result of quick actions by the police most of the substance was recovered on the East Bank and East Coast of Demerara. Ramirez and his Guyanese associates were arrested, charged and sentenced to terms imprisonment. Since then, according to reports received from foreign territories, cocaine has been found in rum, rice, pumpkin, cabbage and lumber, all exported from Guyana. The drug trade has exposed the vulnerability of our airspace, particularly because of our wide and expansive nature of our unpatrolled border. Aircrafts and vessels can enter and leave the country, as they currently are doing, deposit large quantities of illegal substances and indulge in illicit contraband trade without being intercepted by any security personnel.

The illicit drug trade has brought Guyana a desire for more illegal firearms, particularly ones with rapid fire capability to protect the turf of the drug lord. Consequently, there are conflicts as deals would go bad and the concomitant effect of a war erupting and unexplained deaths being the unfortunate result. Drug dealers tend to desire, most, the control of people with political power, the judiciary and the police, to provide coverage for their illicit business. Strenuous efforts must be made to keep the organisation free from the clutches of the drug lords.

The Budget 2012, with all its promises, has not catered for the provision of appropriate patrol vessels with navigation equipment and appropriate weaponry to protect the fishermen against the attack by pirates. This ought to be the given priority since consistent attacks on our artisanal fishermen would eventually destroy the industry. It is not expected that four boats would be

required at the same time, but it would send an encouraging sign to those affected if at least one or two boats were acquired to protect all fishermen at sea.

Politicization of the Guyana Police Force: Since the Hon. Member, Minister of Home Affairs moved into the Police Headquarters, and occupies three buildings, one gets the impression that the act as taking politics in to the face of the Guyana Police Force. The building located at the corner of Young Street and Camp Road is identified as the new training school, but it cannot be used as such until the Hon. Minister has completed his period of training. Indications are that even before the Minister took over this building he has been directing the transfer of a certain senior police officer whom, it was suspected, had written an anonymous letter detailing certain irregular police behaviour during the questioning of suspects. The force is so richly endowed with officers trained and experienced in forensic sciences that the officer was summarily isolated at Mounted Branch. He has not been working since.

I have one experience with the Hon. Minister intervening into the police matters. On Monday, the 28th of November, between 2 p.m. and 2.30 p.m., retired Police Commissioner, Mr. Winston Felix, was in Sophia when a police vehicle drove up. He heard a transmission from the police communications network. A policeman was reporting the arrest of a well known miscreant associated with Office of the President who goes about damaging windscreens and is otherwise offensive to members of the public. Mr. Felix heard a call sign, with which he is familiar with, calling senior members of the force and admonishing the police not to arrest the arrested miscreant or any such people who arrested him would be guilty of an assault. Just then the vehicle drove off and Mr. Felix heard nothing more of this matter. **[An Hon. Member:** Get the tape.] I am the tape. **[Mr. Rohee:** Miscreant!] You play that. This is you all property. It is you all who make that.

There is another matter currently in the public domain which the Hon. Minister has made pronouncements on ordering that the acting Commissioner discipline the certain senior police officer. Then he proceeded to instruct that the officer should explain why he should not be charged. This is utterly incorrect. Firstly the Police Discipline Act, Chapter 17:01, has set out the procedures to discipline any member of the force below the rank of Commissioner. The Hon. Minister has no part in that procedure. He may discuss matters of that nature with the Commissioner but he cannot direct him. I know of certain retired Police Commissioners who

would have told the Hon. Minister where his role ends and where the Commissioner's commences. I hope the acting Commissioner would put on some muscle and prevent intrusion into his space.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, your time is up.

Ms. Ally: I beg to move that the Hon. Member be given fifteen to continue his presentation.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. Felix: When a breach of discipline is discovered the rank who has defaulted must be served with a notice in which he or she is told that he or she is under investigation of the alleged breach and of his or her right to refuse or to make a written or oral statement if he or she so desires. There is a choice here. There is another procedure to follow when the investigation is completed and the charge is preferred. These steps must be followed where any rank below the rank of Commissioner is to be charged.

In the case under review, the acting Commissioner of Police has to determine whether he would write the Assistant Commissioner a letter with a view to censuring him or whether he would prefer charges. The Minister's voice should not have been heard in this matter. By instructing the acting Commissioner to write the Assistant Commissioner for him to explain why he should not be charged, he misled him, because such an action is not known to the Police Discipline Act, Chapter 17:01, which is a law passed in this National Assembly. With the Minister current attitude, how can we be sure that decisions of the police are not politically motivated? I trust that better judgement would be exercised on another occasion and power drunken officials would not overreach themselves and damage public confidence, or whatever is left of it, in the Guyana Police Force.

The budget seems to cater for incomplete projects and to maintain Ministries and Departments by providing allocations that would ensure the organisations meets their needs. Under item line 6231, "Fuel and Lubricants", there is one common thread running through the police and fire allocations for the commodities. Though the two departments have been identified to receive new outboard engines, motorcycles and vehicles, the budgetary allocation which should have been increased has decreased. In other words, it is getting more vehicles; there is an increase in

the price of fuel, but its allocation of fund, this year, is less than last year. I get the impression that there is a set up to come for supplementary, when we are told that the law clearly states that supplementary is only properly before this House if it is either sudden or unanticipated. So we have to look out. We know that the services would need it, but it seems to me that there is a bit of ineptitude. Figures were just picked up and seemed to be plucked in. If one goes through the Estimates one would see it. In one case I saw that different headings having the identical figures. It cannot be. It has to be a strange coincidence that two separate heads are carrying the same figures, under allocation.

The allocations for training in the police and fire services seem inadequate, and notice is served, but inadequate provisions should be exhausted by mid-year with accompanying result that the training programmes might have to be curtailed.

Fire Service: The budget for the Guyana Fire Service ought to reflect the current housing drive where expansive schemes are built. Some locations are not situated near reliable water reserve and there are no hydrants. In Georgetown where the availability of fire hydrants once assured the Guyana Fire Service on reserve of water, this facility is not available since the Georgetown Sewage and Water Commission went out of existence. The question is: Who is now responsible for hydrants or the facility to provide water in the event of fire in any one of the housing schemes? Is there a plan to resuscitate the system? The recent fire at La Parfaite Harmonie has given rise to this question.

The development of urban areas has presented challenges for the efficient performance of fire fighting duties. High rise buildings require lifts, hose and pumps to take water to the height of four and five-storeyed buildings, should there be an outbreak of fire in the upper flat. In addition, the observation must be made that with the type of materials being used in building construction, for example dry wall and other material, may issue an odour that is offensive to the health of fire safety personnel during the course of performing duties in extinguishing a blaze. There is also the consideration that fumes released during combustion might penetrate the skin. The recommendation is hereby made for considerations of appropriate respiratory and body protection gears to protect fire service personnel. There is a proposal to construct a larger terminal building at CJIA and extend the runway. What considerations have been given to aerodrome firefighting? There is also the possibility that a fire may affect a vessel in one of our

main rivers. Resources must be sought to ensure that the fire service is prepared to protect life and save property.

For the Guyana Police Force there are some recommendations which, I think, would be appropriate at this time.

- First, members of the Guyana Police Force need to be retrained with a view to building capacity to perform the duties of their offices efficiently and at every level.
- The Guyana Police Force, in view of staff shortage, should examine carefully the benefits to be derived from the employment of civilians to take over clerical and technical jobs so as to release policeman for law enforcement duties.

I admit that there are challenges, but solutions can be found.

- The Guyana Police Force should pay strict attention to indiscipline at all levels of the service and deal with deviant behaviours condignly.
- The courts must be monitored with strong supervision to ensure that cases are not dismissed for want of prosecution, where this result has been achieved, enquire into the cause and where necessary discipline the defaulting rank.
- Personal development within and outside the organisation must be encouraged as ranks progresses in the service.
- An annual increment award system should be reintroduced, assessing performance, discipline, initiative and response to an adaptability to change, among others.

Finally, as I examine the budget's theme I feel good about it, but when I get into the Estimates there is nothing to encourage anyone to remain on course, neither can we unite in purpose. The low level employees would wish to express their thanks to the Hon. Minister for \$3,000 which this Budget 2012 has given to them. Thank you. [*Applause*]

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Hon. Member Mr. Felix. I would now like to invite the esteemed Minister of Home Affairs, the ever ready Mr. Rohee, to give his presentation. I would ask the Members of the Opposition to allow Mr. Rohee, the Hon. Minister, to complete his presentation with the least bit of interruption. He is known for making spirited speeches and I believe that evokes some responses from the other side, but in the interest of time, and for those who are to

follow, let us allow him to speak please. I think we are all anxious to hear his presentation this evening. Go ahead Mr. Rohee.

Minister of Home Affairs [Mr. Rohee]: Thank you Mr. Speaker. This is my, I believe, ninth or tenth presentation on a national budget, on behalf of the People's Progressive Party/ Civic, in this National Assembly, and I would like to take the opportunity, from the very outset, to congratulate the Minister of Finance and his team for preparing such an excellent piece of work.

I would like to start with some matters which were raised in this House by some Hon. Members which, I believe, should be addressed in an open and frank way. The Hon. Member from Alliance For Change (AFC), I think he is Mr. Trotman... **[Hon. Members (Opposition): AFC?]** It is the Working People's Alliance (WPA), A Partnership for National Unity (APNU), sorry... raised a concern about the barricades around the Public Buildings during this period of time when we are discussing the budget and he drew certain parallels with respect to the debates that took place under previous conditions when such a large amount of barricades did not exist around this building. I think basically what he was saying is that we fought for so many years to free up the ambience around the National Assembly when matters of this type are being debated and now that the PPP/C is in the Government it should be acting in concert with that dispensation that was fought for, for so many years. That is a truism, but what is also true, which I believe is either Mr. Trotman is not aware of it or sought to leave it out as a matter of convenience, is the fact that there have been several debates in this House prior to 1992. I think the Hon. Member, the Attorney General, referred to the various devaluations of the Guyana dollars that took place during budget debates and there were large demonstrations outside the Public Buildings. I happened to be a part of those demonstrations, protesting the devaluations of the Guyana dollar - ten dollars to one dollar, and so forth. I have a publication here. It is called *Those Days*, extracts of newspapers articles by my good self.

Mr. Speaker: Could we get a copy for the library, here.

Mr. Rohee: Yes, certainly, Mr. Speaker. On the 14th April, 1989, during the course of a demonstration in front of this very building, protestors were arrested by the ranks of the Guyana Police Force. I believe, Mr. Derrick Thompson was the person who arrested me, put me in the hands of ranks of the force and gave me a good thrashing in front of this Parliament Office. Then

dragged me on me back to Brickdam Police Station and, again, there, beaten very soundly by the force which I, myself, now lead. History is an interesting phenomenon, because the ranks that carried out that activity I happen now to be in charge of those ranks. I wish to point out that there is no vengeance or vindictiveness that was met, but just to let Mr. Trotman know that when we are speaking of historical experiences we must paint the full picture and, therefore, do not let us come to this honourable House and create the impression that what happened in those days are happening again in these day.

5.57 p.m.

The budget that was presented by the Hon. Minister refers to the security sector. In reference to the security sector, I would wish to make a number of observations. It is true, as the Hon. Member Mr. Felix said, and I do not think that we have a problem with that connotation, which is that every time the Opposition does what it is expected to do, and that is to oppose, as it is expected to... But I want to believe that this time, given the present configuration in the National Assembly, it is likely to go a step further, consistent with the actions that were taken during the consideration of the supplementary provisions in respect of advances made from the Contingencies Fund.

Once again, we heard the old argument that the budget has no vision; the Members of the Opposition are disappointed; that it is demotivating; it has nothing for the poor. For the years that I have sat in this House I have heard those descriptions *ad nauseam* of budgets which had been presented by the Government. But I would have hoped that with the ushering of the Tenth Parliament and the occupation of the Opposition benches by the APNU that we would have witnessed a much more constructive approach to this matter of national importance. Alas! Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is the more things change, the more they remain the same.

The same spiral, meaningless, hollow political arguments were raised once again, placing us in this humdrum of parliamentary debate reminiscent to the years prior 1992, and even during the period 1993 to current. Take for example, the constant harping on the question of transparency and accountability, are we to understand that transparency and accountability can only be achieved when the Opposition is involved and that transparency and accountability does not lie within the realm of a Government in which ever country it might be? In any event, who say

when the Opposition become involve that it will not come with a political agenda as it wants it to be, as an Opposition? Will its agenda be neutral? Will its agenda be altruistic? I respectfully submit that I doubt that. It cannot be.

What is the talk about us working together? When we talk about “working together” we have to establish what the guidelines are, what we are to be guided by, what the benchmarks are and what the criteria are for involvement, unless it is a euphemism for working together. This working together appears to be like *Willo the Wisp* which has displayed the illusiveness, so characteristic of a process of a type which so many Guyanese seek after.

Are we to understand that nothing will be right unless the Opposition is able to dictate its wins and fancies to the ruling party and the Government? Are we to understand that the AFC/APNU alliance is the sole custodian of transparency and accountability in this country? How can this be when misinformation, distortions and half-truths are being peddled on the ground in contradiction to the programmes and policies adumbrated at the official level of Government by persons who sit in this honourable House when they dish out a menu platitude which has a familiar reminiscent of the 1960s. Where does this take us, in respect of the progressive economic and social political developments in Guyana? This is the question which the Opposition must ask itself and, as Pastor Calvin Heywood, seek to find the answer to life questions.

The Government, for its part, has set out its economic developmental agenda, and it has done so over the years. There is a famous German philosopher by the name of Friedrich Hegel who declared, in a standard triadic form of philosophical logic, that all that is real is rationale and all that is rationale is real. I want to posit that rationale, in the Guyana context, and deem it appropriate, in respect of the Government’s performance *vis-a-vis* the goods and services to the Guyanese people, is from nothingness, prior to 1992, to the concrete reality in 2012. If per chance this is to be considered an experienced position, then we need to ask ourselves, how do we reconcile that view in what we are told *ad nauseam* by the Opposition, during this and previous budget debates, that nothing has been achieved in this country, since 1992 in Guyana, under the PPP/Civic?

So we have two extreme positions which require reconciliation. What we are confronted with in this debate is the question of credibility. It is a context of credibility on who will win that matters. It is not necessarily who wins the debate, but who will win in the short, medium and long term in so as the destiny of our country and people is concerned. More importantly, I want to submit that what is more important is what will be the rules of engagement. That is the question. This critical question was touched upon by His Excellency, the President, when he addressed the opening of the Tenth Parliament, when he said, and I quote:

“Indeed, the make-up of this new parliament dictates that we seek consensus and compromise and should resist the temptation to believe that any party can ride rough shod over another. Any such attempt may see us missing the historical opportunities that this new composition offers. I urge that we put the interest of our people first. I urge that we work assiduously to find common ground within and outside this hallowed chamber.”

The President went on to say and I quote:

“As willing however as my government is to exercise patience, forbearance, and reasonableness in the interest of all our people, my administration will not be held ransom to intractable postures.”

It is all about politics. It is the political option that is being resorted to by Opposition to throw dusts in the eyes of the people in an effort to make them believe that the PPP/C’s programmes and policies are not in their interest and that these programmes and policies are solely beneficial to one section of the Guyanese population supportive of the PPP/C. When the Opposition cackles about major developmental projects currently in the pipeline, how are we to interpret it? Take the Marriott Hotel Project, it is all about political posturing. There is nothing of substance in opposing this project. Take the Amaila Falls Hydropower Project, it is all about political posturing; there is nothing of substance in opposing this project. Take the new airport project at Timehri, it all about posturing, politically; there is nothing of substance in opposing this project. Take the modern specialty hospital, it is all about political posturing; there is nothing of substance in opposing this project and take the merging of the electricity arrangements at Linden with the Guyana Power and Light (GPL) national grid, it is all about political posturing; there is nothing of substance in opposing this project.

Nothing that the APNU says about the economy is true; it is all about political posturing. Nothing that Opposition says about the social conditions in Guyana is true; it all about political posturing. Nothing that the Opposition says about governance is true; it is all about political posturing. Nothing that Opposition says about economic performance is true; it is all about the efforts of the Opposition to convince the Guyanese people and to engage in political kerfuffle and trickery that the Government is giving them a raw deal and in so doing intentionally depriving them of their rights from entitlements. This is tantamount to executing a national scam. It is like being in a denial mode. In the opposition, it is quite easy to get caught up in the perception syndrome - we were there; we know that - and to seek to make that perception a reality and further to achieve narrow partisan political ends through it.

There is a reality and a reality, but there is one reality that cannot be wished away and that is the reality called “the delivery of basic goods and services”, in many instances, modern goods and services, which the Guyanese people benefit from today. The reality I speak about is about an economy that is dynamic, robust and all-inclusive. It is an economy that has the people at the centre of development and the private sector in partnership with the state as the engine of growth. This is the living reality that is characterised pragmatism, a population that is highly motivated and energised and many who have hope and confidence in the future, and who have indeed invested in the future of this country that is pregnant with prosperity and revolutionary transformation for all.

Development always poses these challenges. Only recently I was browsing the internet to examine, for example, the challenges which the United States of America faced in associated with the establishment of the railway system and I found an interested paragraph which states, and I quote:

“Although everyone thought that transcontinental railroad was a good idea, deep disagreement arose over it path. The Northern States Union Pacific workers laying rails, October 1866, favoured a northern route while the southern states pushed for a southern route. The logjam was broken in 1961 with the cession of the southern states, from the union, to allow Congress to select a route running through from Nebraska to California.”

This is an interesting story in the history of the railway industry of the United States of America. But the story behind this is that it posed certain developmental challenges at that time in the United States of America and in a similar fashion the developmental challenges that we are confronted here with in Guyana must take into consideration those lessons.

Another interesting experience is the construction of the Brooklyn Bridge, linking Manhattan to Brooklyn. According to the information, it states that of all the engineering advances in the 1800s the Brooklyn Bridge stands out as perhaps the most famous and the most remarkable. It took more than a decade to build, caused the life of its designer, and even the son of the designer, and was constantly criticised by sceptics who thought that the entire thing was going to fall into the New York's eastern river. Many of us - I see it from the immigration records - who travelled to the United States of America regularly... *[Interruption]* I thought that would have happened, Mr. Speaker. I intentionally said that to heat up the discussion, but many of us who travelled to the United States of America and who crossed the Brooklyn Bridge must bear this experience in mind, that it holds a developmental challenge to it in the same ways that we oppose the developmental challenges in Guyana which is likely to hurt the ire of some persons.

We are optimistic, and what is the source of our optimism? Above all, it is the people of Guyana. That is the source of our optimism - the people of this country. Since 1950, we have been comforted by their confidence. So those who think that the people have let us down on November 28, 2011, better think again, because the fact of the matter is that one hundred and sixty-six thousand one hundred and twenty-seven strong have kept us in the Government. We have no doubt that come the next General or Local Government Election there will be a resurgence like a Tsunami - I am not at a public meeting - and herein lies the source of our optimism.

Transformation process has been proceeding apace inexorably across the institutional landscape of our country. This transformation, or this transformative process, is being driven by us on this side of the House. The Guyana Police Force, the Guyana Prison Service and the Guyana Fire Service, indeed, all law enforcement in general and in specific, are being impacted by this transformative process. This brings me to regional security sector indicators which have looked at Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Barbados and The Bahamas, in respect of the spending of these countries in support of the security sector. The amount allocated for security

sector, in US dollars, in Guyana is \$77.5 billion, Trinidad and Tobago - \$744,000, Jamaica - \$146,000, Barbados - \$33,000 and in The Bahamas - \$209,000.

The populations of these countries vary. Guyana has approximately seven hundred and fifty-four thousand four hundred and ninety-three, Trinidad and Tobago, one million three hundred thousand, Jamaica, two million seven hundred thousand, Barbados two hundred and seventy-three thousand and The Bahamas, three hundred and forty-two thousand. In terms of the allocation of the budget of the projected revenues, in US dollars, for example, the projected revenue which is Gross Domestic Product (GDP), \$810 million for Guyana, \$6.4 billion for Trinidad and Tobago, \$4 billion for Jamaica, \$1.2 billion for Barbados and \$1.9 billion for The Bahamas.

In terms of the percentage allocated, given these revenue base, Guyana is projected to allocate 9.5 per cent of its revenues to the security sector.

Mr. Speaker: Your time is up Hon. Member.

Minister of Agriculture [Dr. Ramsammy]: I move that fifteen minutes be give for the Hon. Member to continue his presentation.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. Rohee: Out of these five countries, Guyana has the lowest revenue base and the smallest GDP *per capita*. However, Guyana contributes 9.5 per cent of its revenue towards security, Trinidad and Tobago, 11.5 per cent, only a mere two per cent more, even though it has the largest revenue of the five countries. Furthermore, Trinidad and Tobago's GDP *per capita* is more than five times higher than that of Guyana's.

Given the size of our economy, comparing to these other countries, Guyana manages to provide just over US\$100 per person for security, while Jamaica spends less than half of that and Barbados spends a miniscule amount. It seems to me that the economy is performing well in terms of its allocations. The Hon. Member Mr. Felix embarked on an analects with respect to the crime situation in Guyana. Well, Mr. Felix was the Commissioner of Police, from 2004 to 2007.

[Hon. Members (Opposition): You had fired him in 2006.] It was from 2004 to 2007. I am making my own calculation. You do yours.

Mr. Speaker: Alright, maybe the accounting showed that he was drawing a salary until 2007, or something.

Mr. Rohee: There was a twenty-three per cent reduction in the reports of serious crimes, which reduced from four thousand four hundred and forty-two in 2004 to three thousand four hundred and ten in 2007. Prior to that, because we have to make a comparative analysis, from 2001 to 2004, his predecessor, the total amount of serious crimes for the year 2001 was four thousand five hundred and forty-six. There was a seventeen per cent spike in the reports, taking the figure to five thousand three hundred and eight. This was primarily due to the incidence of robberies and murders that were spearheaded mainly by the prison escapees. But effective law enforcement saw the serious crime reduced by sixteen per cent in 2004 from the high figure of five thousand three hundred and eight in 2002.

In 2008, the total report of serious crimes was three thousand six hundred and seventy-five. In 2011, the total report was reduced by three per cent to three thousand five hundred and eighty-three. Therefore the overall assessment of the serious crime situation in the country, from 2001 to 2011, has indicated that the reports were reduced from twenty-one per cent, from four thousand five hundred and forty-six in 2001 to three thousand five hundred and eighty-three in 2011. So when we talk about the crime situation let us not seek to paint a picture on what it was during one time compared to what it was in another time, simply to paint or to create the impression that we were doing well when we were there.

Mr. Felix: Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a Point of Order. The honourable gentleman is imputing that crime rose only in my time. Before my time it was good, in my time it was bad and...
[Interruption]...Impossible!

Mr. Rohee: That is the fact.

Mr. Felix: I want those figures because I know that those figures cannot be correct.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I think it is well known that numbers are numbers. I do not know whether the Hon. Minister may want to quote the source from some report that he has received, which he is entitled to do. But it is amazing that the same numbers can be looked at in ten

different ways. I will monitor the Minister to see if, in any way, your character of stewardship of the force is being impugned.

Mr. Rohee: I stand here as the Minister of Home Affairs and when the Minister of Home Affairs gives figures it is the correct figures. The Minister of Home Affairs, Mr. Speaker, with due respect, is never going to mislead this House with figures. These figures are from the Guyana Police Force which the Member once led... [*Interruption*]...

6.27 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, if I may be allowed to continue, Hon. Member Dr. Roopnarine made reference to his adoration and preference for a new political culture. [**Mr. Felix:** Are you running from the facts?] I am coming back to it. I think in a very complex way; I am not very straight-headed. The Hon. Member, Dr. Roopnarine, made reference to his adoration and preference for a new political culture. I recognise his consistency as an old campaigner for this much exhorted and lofty idea whose time is yet to come, but could only do so if there is political will. One thing I am sure of, however, is that the new political culture of which the Hon. Member speaks – and I hope not – will not come through a parliamentary dictatorship by establishing dominance of one side over another or by seeking to bludgeon the Government into accepting a new political culture made at Sophia. The Hon. Member must know that the PPP is no stranger to change, adaptation or renewal of itself, the body politics or to the country. The PPP is the Harbindra of Chaurajmah in Guyana. Ever since its establishment in 1950, the PPP has always sought to introduce changes in the political culture in Guyana. It did so in the colonial and post-colonial era. There is no one who can deny that.

I have said it before and I will say it again; the history of the PPP has been one of generosity, compromise and accommodation. At the same time, we have made it clear that while we do not want to dominate, we do not want to be dominated either.

Hon. Member Mr. Roopnarine is probably the most experienced political member leader sitting presently in the Opposition benches. He was once identified as a possible candidate for the Olympics as one of the fastest runners when it was publicly declared that our steel is sharper. [**Mr. Trotman:** And you were in hiding.] You were with the police. I would not worry with

the Hon. Member. He probably was a special agent in the secret service so he knew what I was doing.

Dr. Roopnarine: A Point of Correction: I think my Hon. Friend, colleague and old comrade is misremembering since I was not the Leader of the Working People's Alliance who was being sent to the Olympics. [Mr. Rohee: You were the co-leader.] I was not being sent to the Olympics.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Speaker, I said "a possible candidate". However, thanks to the People's National Congress (PNC) which was on the throes of economic and political death, just waiting to be consumed by Hades, the god of death and the dead, the Hon. Member was plucked along with his colleague sitting on his right hand from among the chosen few and cast, once again, into the political limelight. We welcome you.

Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member spoke as though it is the PPP alone which must learn from the years of political division in Guyana, just throwing completely out of the window those chapters of our political history which show the real and truthful reasons for division which we live with in this country up to today and which was recently exemplified in the 28th November, 2011 Elections.

I would like to follow on from where my colleagues the Hon. Members, Manzoor Nadir and Mr. Whittaker, left off when they spoke about the demands of the Opposition in pressing for much more than what the Budget 2012 can afford. I think my colleague referred to it earlier, but I will expand a little more on it. The story about the goose that laid the golden egg: the owner of the goose demanded that it laid two eggs rather than one egg each day and when it replied that it could not, the owner and his wife reckoned that there must be much more gold in the belly of the goose. But the goose was hiding the gold and was not being transparent or accounting for the gold. So there was a question of transparency and accountability since those days. The owner of the goose and his wife, being enlightened persons at the time and who wanted accountability and transparency, like in the advertisement, burst the goose's belly. Rather than waiting each day for one of the golden eggs, they killed the goose, but found no gold hidden in the goose's stomach. And so, they lost goose and egg like losing corn and husk. What is the morale of this story? The

morale of the story can be applied to those who want much more and lose all by trying to outreach themselves. We must learn from these lessons and, like Spike Lee, *Do the Right Thing*.

The Hon. Member, Mr. Winston Felix, brought into question the role of the Minister of Home Affairs vis-à-vis the Guyana Police Force. I have in my hand, the Discipline Forces Commission Report signed by Justice Ian Neville Chang S.C. At that time he was Justice of Appeal or acting Chief Justice, I believe. In this Report says:

“Section 7 also confers upon the Minister a power to issue general orders and directions to the Commissioner and as rendered the power of the Commissioner subject to such general orders and directions. Since the Minister is extrinsic to the structure and composition of the GPF...”

Mr. Speaker: Your time is up Hon. Member.

Dr. Ramsammy: Mr. Speaker, I make a request for fifteen minutes for the speaker to conclude.

Mr. Speaker: I will grant ten minutes to conclude.

Question, as amended, put and agreed to.

Mr. Rohee: The power to issue general orders and directions can only be to the Commissioner. The Minister is empowered to issue general orders and directions to the Commissioner. I continue the quote:

“Unlike the Commissioner, the Minister is conferred with a statutory power without a statutory responsibility. But the burden of responsibility always accompanies the conferment of power. The Minister may be without statutory responsibility but this does not at all mean that he has been conferred power without responsibility since he, as the Minister responsible for internal security, bears an executive responsibility to the National Assembly for matters of internal security. It is in recognition and furtherance of this executive responsibility that Parliament has seen it fit to confer upon him the power to give general orders and direction to the Commissioner to which the power of the Commissioner to man and superintend is made subject.”

The Hon. Member raised the question of responsibility for fire hydrants. Apparently he is not familiar with the contents of the same Discipline Services Commission Report. This Report says:

“The legal authority responsible for the maintenance of the hydrants is the City Council. The Guyana Fire Service maintains that its responsibility is limited to the matter of checking on the condition of the hydrants and reporting on the condition of the hydrants to the Minister at the end of each financial year. The Guyana Fire Service contends, however, that it has never been its responsibility to maintain them. The Commission noted that under Section 279 (1) of the Municipal and District Council Act, Cap 28:01, the City Council has the responsibility of providing the city with proper and sufficient water, not only for sanitary and domestic purposes but also for extinguishing fires and is empowered to do and execute all works, matters and things necessary for and incidental to such purposes.”

I rest my case, Mr. Speaker.

The Hon. Member, Mrs. Backer, referred to my tenure at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – and I am very proud of my tenure there - and described my efforts at restructuring and trimming the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a disservice to that Ministry and, by extension, to the country. It is to be recalled that in the 1992 elections campaign, Dr. Cheddi Jagan committed himself to publicly reordering the budgetary and developmental priorities of the new government he would lead. In this regard, he showed where up to 1992, the PNC administration, in crafting a budget for the nation, established the following priorities. When we took office, government had allocated \$1 billion or 3.2% of the national budget to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs while, at the same time, only \$1.3 billion or 4% was allocated to the entire security sector and, furthermore, only \$1.4 billion or 4.6% of the budget was given to the entire social services sector: education, health, and social services. The very next year when Dr. Jagan took over his government, we reversed the trend. 6% of the budget went to social services; 4.6% went to the security sector; and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was adjusted to 1.8%. As the economy grew over the years, by 1999 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs allocation went back to \$1.8 billion, over 2% of our budget which was still more than what was allocated in 1992. At the same time, we increased our investment in social services and security sector which grew by over 15% and 7% of the budget. And so it was important to recognise that from 1993 upwards the Ministry of

Foreign Affairs continued to receive, increasingly, more and more resources under the PPP/C administration.

There was rather extravagance in those days at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. [Mrs. Backer: It was for good reason.] Of course it was for good reason. I do not want to burden the House with the reasons why, but we all know the reasons why. Here is a copy of a text. We did not have text in those days. We had telegrams in those days. Here is a copy of a telegram that was sent:

“Dear Frank...”

I think I know who the Frank is.

“Dear Frank, you can show them the PNC showed interest in China. It was to have a free and luxurious holiday for the family and friends. In June, 1984, Burnham paid a visit, taking over the Guyana Airways Plane for a delegation of 68, including his wife, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, his wife, the Vice President Shahabadeen and his wife, Minister of Health Van West Charles and his wife, a trip for wives to go shopping in exotic market places in Beijing.”

On 12th June, 1984 when many Guyanese went to bed hungry and the country was in bankruptcy, Mr. Burnham hosted a banquet in Beijing for his delegation of 68 plus no less than 10 coaches. Here is the menu: h’orderves, chicken soup with rice noodles, fish cake and fish choka, rice crush with three delicacies, labba in ginger sauce, roast turkey kebabs, curried labba, peas and rice – that is cook-up – garden salad, pastries, fruits, ice cream and pineapple. But here comes the thing – alcohol: one case metaxa. [Member: What is that?] Metaxa is one of the most exotic Greek coniacs and it is Metaxa five-star grand vine. That is the thing that tickles him when it goes down his back. I used to lime with the man; I know the man. One case Benedictine, brandy liqueur, one case black tower wine, 2 cases moskova vodka, Gordon’s dry gin...it is fantastic.

Mr. Speaker: That sounds nice but you have 30 seconds to go.

Mr. Rohee: The resources that have been placed by the Ministry of Finance to the Ministry of Home Affairs are valued very much. And we see ourselves, in the security sector, using these resources in order to produce value for money.

Most of the arguments raised by the Opposition were basically of a political and technical nature, taken together with others such as: why was the project done this way? Why is so much money being spent on the project? What impact will the project have on the community? Are we getting value for money? Cumulatively, these queries beg the questions: who are we measuring our successes and challenges against? Who are we measuring our opportunities and fortunes against? Is it Jamaica? Is it Barbados? Is it Trinidad and Tobago? Is it beyond CARICOM? We need to look at our means to earn and from that perspective measure our capacity to provide the goods and services as a qualitative and sustainable balance. On balance, a greater appreciation of the reality must lie with the Government since it is the Government that must govern in an even-handed manner less it commits the act of shooting itself in the foot and, as a consequence, suffering a loss of confidence by the electorate which would cost it the Government itself.

To conclude, this debate is but a mere routine following the Annual Budget Presentation. While it can be informative, educational, spirited, and, at times, lack lustre, it is pleasurable but painful an experience we must go through. I have sit and listened to my comrades speak on this side of the House. Also, I have listened to the representatives of A Partnership for National Unity (APNU) and the Alliance For Change (AFC). It is not my intention to be bias here, but all things being equal I have to conclude that all those who spoke from the Government benches divulged a considerable amount of information about the sectors in which they are involved. Thus, a careful examination of these contributions, taken together, can provide any uninformed person with a wealth of information about what the Government is doing. It can always help the sceptic who may be desirous of verifying what is going on in the ground to do so.

This brings me to a very important question. Assuming that the joint Opposition has already formulated a strategic approach to the Estimates, which we are to consider in a few days time, I have often wondered during the course of this debate, whether these presentations from the Government side have helped the Opposition, in any way, to form a better appreciation and have given them greater insights as regards the challenges. Or is it a case where their minds are already made up? Talk as much as they wish, we have to do what we have to do. And that this is the Opposition's moment of glory; it is now or never. Is this the next scenario that awaits us?

I thank you Mr. Speaker. [*Applause*]

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Hon. Minister. It is just before seven o'clock and I am considering having the Hon. Member, Mr. Bond, going for 15 minutes and then coming back and resume or we can take the break and come back earlier.

Mr. R. Persaud: Let us take Mr. Bond to the end.

Mr. Speaker: Let us go Mr. Bond.

Mr. Bond: Thank you Mr. Speaker. Let me begin by saying thanks to the more senior Members of this House who have extended the warmest of welcomes to new Members in this House. I do not presume to speak on behalf of all the new Members, but for those who may not have gotten up to say Thank you, I want to say thanks to the Members of this House for the welcome they have shown us. Also, I wish to congratulate you personally and publicly on your ascension to the Speaker's Chair. I must say that Guyana is honoured to have a statesman of your calibre sitting in the Chair and I say this with due respect to the other Members who would have vied for the Speaker's Chair, my good friend and brother, Mr. Moses Nagamootoo, and my sister, Mrs. Deborah Backer, and also Mr. Ralph Ramkarran, who is not here right now. I also would like to congratulate the Minister of Finance, Hon. Dr. Ashni Singh, who presented this Budget, and, of course, his team as well. Good job, Sir.

However, please Sir, if I may begin with the substantive parts of my presentation, I think it is Rogers and Walters in the 6th edition of their treatise, *How Parliament Works*, who said:

“The word 'budget' comes from the archaic French *bougette*, which actually means a little bag.”

What we have heard so far from the Minister's little bag does not have a lot of goodies. As a legal practitioner for some odd years, I would have expected a particular goodie when I looked at the Estimates and that is in relation to the Ombudsman. I have looked at the Estimates from 1992 to present and I must say that up to 2005, the Office of the Ombudsman was functioning. There were reports; there were estimates. Some work was being done. Up to 2001, there were Reports filed by the Office of the Ombudsman and submitted to this House. But since 2005, there has been a considerable drought.

I see in the Estimates, it reads, in some cases, \$13 billion estimated, but at the end of the day, \$3 billion was spent on maintaining the Office. Nothing was done by the Office of the Ombudsman from 2005-2012. That, in my opinion, is a shame.

The Office of the Ombudsman, if I may quote none other than the Hon. Sir Shridath Ramphal, who as then Attorney General and Minister of State in August, 1967:

“Our Constitution contains an elaborate network of constitutional guarantees of fundamental human rights and in our endeavour to ensure that human rights in our society were safe guarded in practical ways, the Constitution itself established the Ombudsman.”

That is supposed to be a goodie in this Budget and it is not there. If I may also share with the House some of the objectives of the Office, in part:

1. To investigate and resolve complaints promptly against injustice done to members of the public by government departments and other authority;
2. To offer guidance to members of the public whose complaints are outside of the jurisdiction of the Office of the Ombudsman; and
3. To ensure that members of the public are treated alike and there is no discrimination on the grounds of race, place of origin, political opinions, colour, creed or sex.

Mr. Speaker, if I may go outside our jurisdiction, Roy C. Gregory in his treatise, *The Parliamentary Ombudsman in the United Kingdom*, Vol. 111 in 1996 at page 304 said:

“The Office is an invaluable aid to the individual and a constructive critic of the executive.”

We live in a day and age when constructive criticism is seen as bad advice by the Eastern side. We live in a day and age in which the Hon. Minister, Mr. Clement Rohee, presumptuously says that transparency and accountability could be accomplished without the participation of the Members of the Western side of the House. That is an affront to the principles of good governance, transparency and accountability.

6.57 p.m.

This coming from a senior functionary within the Peoples Progressive Party /Civic shows that the party has problem with understanding that incestuousness and inbreeding results in a drought of ideas. You have to look out. You cannot consume within your own self; you will die and you will grow out of existence. That is of a result of why on November 28th they suffered a shock. They were so concerned about what was within that they did not see what was without.

I was also shocked and appalled when the Hon. Minister Clement Rohee harkened back to the 14th of April 1989 saying that right outside of these Parliament buildings he was dragged on his back to the Brickdam Police Station. Is it not ironic that under the watch of this very Minister Members of this Hon. House were shot, arrested, charged and placed before the Courts? These were peaceful demonstrators exercising their right to say that they were not happy with the process. A party who claims that they have survived struggles against tyranny, for a party to continue in such a realm shows that he who forgets his past is doomed to repeat it.

They spoke about 1992, everybody except my good friend Dr. Vishwa Mahadeo. Everyone spoke about 1992 and back... [Mr. Ali: Hon. Member.] Thank you my Hon. friend Mr. Irfaan Ali. Do you know what it tells me? It tells me that the PPP/Civic wants to be remembered as the party that remembered the PNC/R. If they look to the north they will see the Caribbean Islands and North America to which my Hon. friend Mr. Rohee cannot travel. To the east they will see Suriname. To the West they will see Venezuela and to the south they will see Brazil, but instead they look back. As a Preacher's son I remember...

Mr. Speaker: I believe there is a Point of Order Mr. Bond, hold on a minute.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Speaker, a point of illumination, for the benefit of the Members and other. I would like to enlighten the Hon. Member as well as those who have an interest that I have only just about four days ago returned from the United States. [Mrs. Backer: Did you return voluntarily?]

Mr. Bond: I am glad my Minister has had that which was taken away from him given back to him; my congratulations, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Speaker: Go ahead Mr. Bond.

Mr. Bond: Instead, this Party looks back. The only person I can remember suffering dire consequences for looking back was Lot's wife. Because of the looking back nature of the People's Progressive Party Civic we are sucking salt, so to speak.

Why, do I ask the Hon. Minister, Dr. Ashni Kumar Singh has the Office of the Ombudsman been left to rot since 2005? Look at the zeros, the numerous "duck eggs" in the Estimates. We cannot ever take for granted this office. This Budget is presumptuously titled, "Remaining on Course, United in Purpose, Prosperity for All".

If I may echo a former distinguished Member of this House in the Budget debates of 2008 where that budget was titled "Staying the Course", there is no freshness in the People's Progressive Party/Civic I must say. Mr. Murray said, "I would not like to stay on the scores". This \$2.1 billion that is allocated for the justice sector is a commendable sum. However, developing countries with new challenges we much reach out not only to the private sector, but also other interest groups that have sought partnerships to meet those challenges.

The thinking behind public-private partnerships must involve the growth engines of the private sector and its competitiveness, its innovation in projects that will transform the lives of the populace of the country and the landscape of the country. Further, it gives credence and validity to claims of promoting unity and moving forward together. Ian Davidoff in the Harvard Business Review publication of October 4th 2006 says, "Under public-private partnerships the Government contracts with the private company not just to build the facility but operate it over its expected life as well". Public-private partnerships are used for social infrastructure such as Courts and Hospitals as well as for economic infrastructures such as tour roads and public transportation.

I do not know why the PPP have not embraced this concept more. Only twice in the Hon. Minister's presentation is public-private partnerships mentioned, two times in 69 pages. The formulation of a system of prioritising programmes upon which this \$2.1 billion is spent should be undertaking using the same principles that obtain in private-public partnerships. In this wise the Government will be able to utilise the wealth of expertise at the disposal of the Guyana Bar Association, the Berbice Bar Association, the Guyana Women Lawyers Association, the wider

pool of Judges and Magistrates and the entire Guyanese legal fraternity both foreign and domestic. I have not yet heard of the Government's intention to do any of the above.

I heard my learned friend, the Hon. Minister of Legal Affairs, Mr. Anil Nandlall saying that he consulted with a Consultant, but consulting with a Consultant cannot be meaningful consultation. We must engage every single person in the judicial sector. All hands must be placed on deck for this monumental task of transforming our judicial sector, including all the stakeholders.

Members of the legal fraternity have been shouting into the ears of the Government that our Judges and Magistrates still take copious notes by hand, wasting much need judicial time and draining our legal luminaries. They have shouted in the ears of this Administration that we are in the 21st Century where our Courts should be equipped with every modern technology, whether stenographers, or real time voice data compilation, which I believe will deliver the service which Guyanese need.

It is commendable that the Government is seeking to build and rehabilitate buildings, but buildings do not translate into justice or quality of service. New buildings must go hand in hand with new policies and well trained personnel who are adequately paid. Again, these are areas where money will be well spent. The Guyanese people and legal fraternity also have reason to fear that 20% of all capital expenditure is siphoned off from projects to illegal pockets. This \$2.1 billion seems as a ripe cherry for the picking.

I know Members of the House will remember Mr. Murray also saying that these 20%, in that time I think it would have accounted to \$40.8 billion of the capital expenditure that was expended in the year 2008. I know I may take some flak for quoting none other than... [Ms. Teixeira: Source.] I love that. It is from the first day of the Budget Debate of 28th February 2008. Check the Hansard Records please Hon. Member. The Hansard Records is a source Mr. Speaker. Though I may take some flak for quoting none other than President Bharrat Jagdeo, if I may quote him immediately after quoting the Hon. Mr. Murray I will nonetheless do so. For it was the said Ex-President, known ambassador at large, Champion of the Earth, Doctor-Doctor who was speaking to sugar workers on the 25th November 1999 said these words – yes “Doctor-Doctor” did say these words:

“We have a lot of corruption still in Government agencies despite progresses we have made. That has to go. People have to understand that when they work in Government agencies they are there to serve the people of the country. They have to understand and behave in that way”

That was President Jagdeo. There is a saying in Papua New Guinea that corruption grows like a tree. You can uproot it with your fingers as a seedling. A few years later it grows into tree and you will then need a bulldozer. The People’s Progressive Party/Civic after 20 years is still using its fingers to uproot corruption. I fear for the \$2.1 billion for the justice sector of which I belong.

The National Development Strategy 2001 – 2010, Chapter 3, paragraph 317 states:

“The basic features of this fundamental of good governance are that:

- (1) The rule of law must prevail over all individual, institutions, including even the Government.
- (2) Citizens must be shielded from arbitrary and unlawful acts done by other person done by the state.
- (3) All citizens should be given equal treatment before the law and should be subject to the law. The rule law is an essential precondition for accountability. For the rule of law to prevail there must inter alia be knowledge of the law and the legal system, an independent Magistracy and Judiciary, an uncorrupted and incorruptible Police Force and the non discriminate application of law itself.”

Listening to the Hon. Minister of Home Affairs, I am wondering whether or not he is of this world, by that I mean of this country. In this country, for the past few years we have had incidences where members of the Police Force have engaged in acts that are criminal in nature. They have been hauled before the Courts and charged. Yet the Hon. Minister tells us when we say these things that they are not true. He is also saying that everything the Opposition says is not true, that we are only posturing. The massacres of Lindo Creek are not posturing; there is no political posturing in that. There is no political posturing in the massacres Lusignan. In Bartica there is no posturing; those happened. I do not know whether the Minister left during that time, but those things have occurred.

If I may also quote from the same National Development Strategy which says this about the justice system, “Court facilities although having been improved in recent times are still in general shabby and various states of disrepair” in Sparendam it still leaks. “Court staff are depleted in numbers and not as qualified as they are required to be.” In Mahdia it is so close that it is like a chicken coup, you cannot move your legs. “Indeed, almost fifty percent of the positions in the judicial system are vacant and many of the existing staff occupies positions that are well beyond their education capabilities. In addition, the law libraries do not possess the basic reference documents and reports are not kept up to date. Moreover, there are reported to be inordinate delays in the trying of cases mainly because Court files very frequently cannot be found because of the absence of indexing systems, the low quality of security and the inefficiency of filing procedures. If these do not concern the Ministry of Legal Affairs then we are in dire straits. These must concern every single Guyanese, because all Guyanese are affected by them, not only the Chancellor.

Furthermore, Guyana’s Courts are not supported by modern technology. Computers are virtually unknown. I could tell first hand. The first time I walked in with my Blackberry Playbook the Magistrate told me to put it away. I was absolutely astounded. I had to explain to the magistrate that instead of writing notes and saving cases, you can compile and index things right here. I was afterwards permitted to use it. Computers are virtually unknown. The equipment that is currently utilised is often so obsolete that spare parts cannot be obtained for them. In addition, the organisational structure...

Mr. Speaker: Your time is up Hon. Member.

Ms. Ally: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Hon. Member be given ten minutes to conclude.

Question put, and Carried.

Mr. Bond: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I wish to echo the sentiments of the Hon. Member Mr. Basil Williams who mentioned the 72 hours, but I will like to take it a step further and propose to the Hon. Minister that we abolish the 72 hours and have 24 hours of incarceration. Seventy two hours is abominable. It is not for decent society to have persons incarcerated for 72 hours without bail whilst their resolution is pending.

I will also join with the Minister of Legal Affairs, the Hon. Attorney General, who proposes that there be part time judges and judges to work on weekends to ensure that our citizens do not rot in jail over the weekend which has happened most of the time.

We must invest in a programme of education and assertion throughout the length and breadth of Guyana. This is another project that can be undertaken by private public partnership. Most of our population are unaware of their basic human rights and are still feeling helpless in the instances where breached. Our juvenile offenders are the most vulnerable in the justice system and continue to be neglected. There are no goodies in this little bag for them. I will just give one aspect in the basis of time. On November 28th 2008 a questionnaire was circulated by the Organisation of American States (OAS) in which the Hon. Ms. Gail Teixeira, then Advisor to the President on Governance, says as many juveniles at the New Opportunity Core have not attended secondary school on a consistent basis. The Centre runs remedial programmes for all programmes for all students. In addition to the basic curricula the students are also exposed to various skills training including carpentry, tailoring, needle craft such as embroidery and knitting, home economics and metal works. The students are involved in sports and music programmes.

We have reached the day and age where remedial programmes just will not do it for our young people that have come into touch with the justice system as a result of delinquency, broken homes or poverty. We will continue to fail our young people who find themselves at the odds of the law. I believe it is time we find an alternative to use the strengths and remove the weaknesses of young offenders, whereby we can maximise their potential under the supervision of the Courts. The New Opportunity Core cannot prepare our young people for the 21st Century, a century of cutting edge technological advancements. The curricula of the New Opportunity Core must merit that of our best secondary schools and not the Camp Street or New Amsterdam prisons. I recommend a system of juvenile reformation where candidates are screened by an officer of the Supreme Court and placed in a programme best suited for their skill, with weekly or monthly reports given to the Supreme Court.

I know I have to rush through for ten minutes, but I also want to mention the incidence of the Guyana Law School very quickly. The 16th August 2002 Stabroek News says, a quote, which Dr. Luncheon would have said these words, and this is a report of the Stabroek News of since 2002,

not 1991 nor 1990, under the caption ‘*The creation of a Guyana Law School is being considered by the Government and it may come into being at the start of 2003/2004 academic year*’, it read “Cabinet Secretary Dr. Roger Luncheon said at his Post Cabinet Press Briefing held in the Office of the President yesterday Dr. Luncheon said that the concept paper on the creation of the Guyana Law School was distributed and discussed widely at Cabinet and it was at the most initial of reviews deemed acceptable.”

Since 2002 nothing has been done. I must say, given the report, it would appear as though there was an idea, but there was also a proposal by a member of the private sector to run, build and operate the transfer of the Guyana Law School. This has not been followed through by the Government and we continue to suffer, our law students who still have a quota affecting them, continue to suffer and have to wait until a next year. In the same 2002 when I went into law school a lot of persons were left back because of this same quota that was applied to our University of Guyana students. This is unacceptable Mr. Speaker.

We must focus on this sector for a number of reasons. Not only does our future depend upon a strong justice system, but also the order and decency of this country depends upon it. Guyana cannot continue to progress where our justice system lacks behind. We cannot compare our justice system to 1992. We have to compare our justice system with the justice system of first world countries and countries who have sought to give meaning to fundamental human rights. I think one of our lawyers said that Guyana has no shortage of laws; Guyana has a problem with implementing laws. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Applause*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we have had a very robust session. The Hon. Member Mr. Felix took us into the intricacies of the Disciplined Forces and Services. Minister Rohee walked philosophically and was his usual good self and Mr. Bond, I have to say that Parliament of Guyana is privileged to have you as a member. Thank you very much. I think now is an appropriate time to take the suspension. Thank you very much.

Sitting suspended at 7.20

Sitting resumed at 7.42

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members the Sitting is resumed. Please be seated. Thank you. Hon. Members I invited Dr. Anthony the Hon. Minister of Youth Sports and Culture to address the House. It is always a pleasure to have Dr. Anthony addressing us.

Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport [Dr. Anthony]: Thank you Mr. Speaker and Hon. Members. First of all let me also join in welcoming all the new members to the Assembly, especially the young people who are here. We have just heard a very spirited presentation from the Hon. Member Mr. Bond.

The Greek philosopher Aristotle once said that quality is not an act, it is a habit. Over the years Dr. Ashni Kumar Singh and his team have made it a habit of presenting quality budgets on the stakeholders of this country. This year is no exception. Despite the complexity and the quantum of variables and the sectors involved, he has managed to distil the philosophy behind the Budget in three simple, yet sophisticated thoughts, “Remaining on Course, United in Purpose, Prosperity for all”.

The cynics amongst us will say “what course?” and “what purpose?”. That course is reflected in the prudent economic management that we have enjoyed and continue to enjoy as is illustrated by the numbers in this Budget. The domestic economy has grown an average of 4.4% for the last five years. Increased External Reserves now stand a historic high of US \$798 million. There is stabilisation of the exchange rate and of course we have seen US \$1.3 billion in foreign direct investments over the last five years. This is the course that we speak of, not a course of economic misadventure that was so common in a bygone era.

We live in times that are as exciting as it is risky and depending upon how we rise to the occasion we will either benefit from the opportunities or be surmounted by the challenges. Now is not the time to deviate nor to divide, rather it is time to be singular in our resolve to make up a better Guyana. This budget offers us the right policy mix to move our country forward. It allocates resources for us to modernise the traditional sectors to make them more efficient. It allocates resources for us to diversify our economy, to get into oil, the extractive industry, environmental services so that we can become less dependent on the traditional sector. It creates new opportunities for the improvement of living standards, better health, better education and better human services. It will create more jobs. It will allow us to build the transformational

infrastructure, laying the basis for our new wave of development, the Amaila hydro project, the specialty hospital, the Information Communication Technology (ICT) backbone, the airport expansion and of course the Marriot Hotel. This is a budget that guarantees growth, development and would enrich us all as a people.

Enriching people's lives mean investing in them. In my sector, this Government has never failed to invest in Culture Youth and Sports. From 1998 when this Ministry was first created to now, the figures speak for themselves. In 1998 we received \$207,693,000,000. This year we have allocated \$1,929,774,000. If spending was the only measure of achievement, then by this standard we would have achieved. It is not only the money, but also what this money did and what it would continue to do. We can examine any one of the areas and we will see that the investment made would have surpassed their expectations.

Let us look at youth. We all recognise the importance of investing in youth. While it can be symbolised by the growing allocation to the Ministry of Culture Youth and Sport, that interpretation would be too restrictive. Youth is too big to be contained in one Ministry. That is why government youths services are provided in a multi-sectoral way by several Ministries. The Ministry of Culture Youth and Sports have continued to place emphasis on youth health, youth and parenting, youth jobs, youth and education and youth leadership.

In youth health, our programmes complements what is currently being offered by the Ministry of Health. Our programmes are mainly educational and we place a strong emphasis on educating our young people on sexually transmitted infections including HIV. Of course we have been working to also prevent the chronic non-communicable diseases. We have also paid a lot of attention to the problem of substance abuse. This is a problem that is plaguing our society.

7.49 p.m.

While the Ministry of Health has stabilised the HIV pandemic in Guyana, if we are not vigilant, these gains can be quickly reversed. In 2010-2011, of all the persons diagnosed with a sexually transmitted infection about 50% were between the ages of 15 to 25 years. In 2011, of all the persons diagnosed with HIV 17.52% were between the ages of 15 to 25 years. It is for this reason that we must continue to provide education to our young people about these diseases. This education will allow them to make intelligent choices. We in the Ministry of Culture, Youth and

Sport, through the President's Youth Award Programme, have been rolling out a programme to educate young people using edutainment. Over the last year we would have reached about 20,000 young people using this methodology.

But while we have this problem with HIV it should be noted that at the global level attention, and the resources, are being diverted from HIV to other issues, because it is felt that we are now on top of the problem in the developing world. But if our funding is diverted internationally it will cause a collapse of the public health gains made over the years. We have to remain vigilant and at the global level continue to impress on the partners to maintain the funding level. Locally, we must not feel we are on top of the epidemic, but must all play our roles to continue the fight against this dreaded disease. And, we have to continue the education of our young people.

In the area of youth and parenting we continue to offer this programme to our young people because we recognise that sometimes they take this responsibility too lightly. Over the last year we have been holding several workshops which are helping our young people to understand their responsibilities, especially the responsibility of raising a family.

In youth education, while there are several ministries offering youth education, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport has been offering what is called the Youth Entrepreneurial Skills Training (YEST) programme. We have the programme at the New Opportunity Corp (NOC) which has been referred to by the Hon. Member Mr. James Bond. These programmes offer something that is good for the young people and, very often because many of the persons who come to the programme would have dropped out of the school system, it will help to give them a second opportunity at an education.

[Ms. Selman in the Chair at 7.52 p.m.]

I would have spoken about this programme in several other presentations, exerting the virtues of these programmes. So on this occasion instead of talking about the number, instead of talking about how many people would have graduated from these programmes, I choose to refer to two cases for us to understand the effect or impact this programme is having on the persons who access them.

I want to refer to the case of a young girl from Region 9, born on 3rd September, 1994, and lived with her grandmother who became ill and was unable to care for her. She became delinquent and was sent to the NOC in 2007 at the age of 13. She spent three years and completed her studies in English, Mathematics, Social Studies and Integrated Science. While she was at the NOC she also had some skills training and was able to do Information Technology, Electrical Installation and Tailoring. And, yes, we do have a computer lab at the NOC. She also represented Region 2 at the National Athletics Championship, and in those events she got third place. After her discharge from the NOC she was helped by the Ministry's Reintegration Programme, and used the monies she received to continue her studies at the Kuru-Kururu Training College, another institution run by the Ministry. She completed a course in Business Studies in July, 2011, is now enrolled at the Carnegie School of Home Economics, and is currently supported both by the Ministries of Culture and Amerindian Affairs. She will be graduating soon and intends to open her own business.

Let us look at another example. A young man from Sophia attended the Sophia Training Centre and did six months training in Information Technology and Office Administration. He also attended the Drama Training which was offered at the Centre. That course was taught by one Mr. Howard Lorrimer. He was given a role in the play "The Protagonist" and after that break was able to secure acting roles on such shows as the "Link Show", "Stretched Out Magazine", "No Big Thing" and was also in the radio drama "Merundoi". He now writes and directs his own plays, and has created his own show called "A Different Kind of Thing". As he puts it:

"I moved from a "nobody" to a writer, director, actor, singer, stand-up comic, and a producer; and it all started at the Sophia Training Centre."

He urges his fellow young people to make use of the opportunity and said to them, "the sky is the limit". This is the power of the programmes we run. Over the last six years we would have made this life changing impact on more than 2,000 young lives.

There is much more that can be said. We can also talk about the 6,154 young people who would have passed through the President's Youth Award Programme. Or we could talk about the 7,000 children who benefit each year from our annual children's camp in every region of this country.

Our Government takes a holistic view of development. We believe that sports and culture is not just a recreational pastime, but is important to cohesion and the wellbeing of our people. Without our culture we will float idly around without an identity. Our culture anchors us and gives us pride as a nation. That is why we have placed so much emphasis on culture and sports.

Let me just look at some of the institutions within my sector - the Walter Rodney and National Archives. Our Archives continue to be the fountain for researchers. Last year we had more than 455 persons using the facility for research. This year the numbers of international researchers are expected to grow, especially since the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has listed us as part of the memory of the world register.

We have been listed for two reasons. The first, relates to the Dutch West Indian company documents, and, the second, to the documents of Indian indentured immigrants. Both of these Archives contain primary sources for researching the history of the period. And it is said that the information contained there can be found nowhere else in the world. It is because of this unique value that Guyana has been placed on the coveted (UNESCO) list. While we feel privileged to be the custodians of these records, they come with great responsibility to protect and preserve, not just as part of our patrimony but, as part of the heritage of the world. In this year's budget a start-up sum has been allocated to buy equipment for the digitisation of these records. This multi-year project when completed will allow us to share our heritage with the rest of the world.

We will be having other initiatives, including collaboration with the University of Guyana to start an archivist and residency programme. We will also be partnering with the National Communications Network (NCN) to establish an audio-visual archive. These are some of the new developments taking place at the National Archives.

What about the museum? The Ministry continues to operate four museums. These are the Dutch Heritage Museum, the Walter Roth Museum, the African Heritage Museum, and the Guyana National Museum. During the last year there have been about 50,940 visitors collectively to our museums. The renewed interest is primarily due to the annual exhibitions and special exhibits now on display. One such exhibition is in the cartographic room which displays maps of Guyana going back for the last four centuries. This year we would continue to improve the services provided at all our museums, and in particular we will continue to develop attractive and

educational exhibits. With this in mind we will commence the construction of a walk-through aquarium at the National Museum to showcase the bio-diversity of our aquatic life forms. We will also enhance the museum outreach programme because we will be providing them with a vehicle so that they can take scientific exhibits to schools to enhance the learning experience of students.

The Walter Roth Museum - traditionally we have been collecting and housing artifacts from various communities. This year the museum will be collaborating with various hinterland communities to develop eco-museums. [*Interruption*] This is what we are doing, developing eco-museums. These eco-museums are fundamentally different from the traditional museums because they offer the visitor a lived experience, that is, a more holistic interpretation of the community's cultural heritage. The development of these museums will not only help to preserve the culture but will foster greater appreciation of the cultural practices of these communities. It will also promote the sustainable economic development of these communities.

What about publishing? The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports is very pleased to be associated with the upswing of publications in Guyana. The Ministry, which operates the Caribbean Press, has completed 26 books in the Guyana Classics Library and the final 10 will be completed this year. In addition, we have published the National Assembly speeches of Dr. Jagan from 1947 to 1987, and copies of these publications can be found in the library of the National Assembly. [**Mrs. Backer:** What about Burnham's speeches?] I am very happy that the Member has asked about President Burnham's speeches. I am happy to tell you that we have President Forbes Burnham's speeches, along with President Desmond Hoyte's speeches, and Janet Jagan's speeches, and are working on them. And, they would form part of the presidential library series. So we are not discriminating. And, in fact, the first volume of President Burnham's speeches is right now with the editors. In addition, we have started work on a number of books by Guyanese writers for children. Later in the year the Ministry would also embark on consultations with a number of stakeholders with a view of creating a book exhibition in Guyana. We believe that such an event would be an outlet for Guyanese and Caribbean creativity.

What about cultural education? The Ministry placed renewed emphasis on cultural education in our country. To raise the general cultural awareness the Ministry has been holding a number of

lecture series that includes the Edgar Mittelholzer lecture series which was started in 1967 by A. J. Seymour. We have resuscitated it. We have also started the Republic of Guyana Lecture Series, and already held two such lectures.

[Mr. Speaker resumed the Chair at 8.06 p.m.]

Last year we started another series in honour of the late Dr. Desiree Fox. We will continue with such educational lectures.

Another thing we will be doing this year is to expand the scope of education being offered and improve the quality of cultural education being offered. Therefore, the Ministry will be working this year to establish the Institute of Creative Arts. This will be a consolidation of the Burrows School of Art, the National School of Dance and the National Music School under one umbrella. In addition, we will work to develop two other faculties, one in drama and the other in film. A curricula review has already started with the existing institutions. And opportunities are already been explored for the courses to be properly certified and accredited both nationally and internationally. At the National Music School we already have the first batch of students and they are expected to write an external music examination in May of this year.

What about the performing arts? During the last year the Ministry continued to give support to the performing arts. We have created a platform to allow our artists to perform and become recognised. We continue to invest annually in Mashramani Song Competitions, the Chutney, the Soca, and Calypso Competitions. We continue to invest in the Steelband and National Drama Competitions and, of course, the Guyana Music Festival. In preparation for these competitions the Ministry would have also invested in various workshops to assist the participants to improve their performances. While many of our artists have been able to perform unhindered at home, some have been experiencing some difficulty in performing regionally. To minimise these difficulties the Ministry will be working to establish a registry for cultural workers that will be compatible with similar databases that exists in sister CARICOM countries. We hope by doing this some of the problems which our cultural artists have been experiencing will be alleviated.

What about festivals? Apart from the many religious and secular festivals we have here in Guyana, this year the Ministry will be hosting the Inter-Guiana Cultural Festival. This Festival which started last year is intended to bring the three Guianas together. We have started preparing

for this Festival with the establishment of a broad-based host committee. We have also been preparing for several commemorative events.

This year will mark 40 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China. Over the years we have seen this relationship grow and blossom. To highlight this significant milestone we invited, last year, seven top Chinese artists to visit Guyana. They came and created beautiful paintings of Guyana's hinterland, and this year as part of the anniversary celebration they will be showcasing these masterpieces in one of the top galleries in Beijing.

This year also, we will start preparations for two important milestones on the nation's calendar. In 2013 it would mark 250 years since the historic slave uprising in Berbice, regarded as one of the earliest uprising in the western hemisphere. That uprising fired the imagination of the enslaved to fight for a better life. Next year also, we will mark 175 years since the arrival of the first Indian Indentured Immigrants to Guyana. To highlight these two significant dates...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister your time is up.

Mr. Ramsammy: Mr. Speaker I request fifteen minutes so the Hon. Minister could continue.

Question put, and carried.

Dr. Anthony: To highlight these two significant dates the Ministry will establish shortly two national committees to recommend appropriate ways in which we could commemorate these significant dates on our national calendar. I hope that some of the Members of the National Assembly who have an interest in these matters will join these committees.

The National Trust is constantly working to protect the country's tangible and intangible heritage. The Trust will continue to maintain various monument sites across Guyana. We will complete the rehabilitation of the 1763 Monument site later this year. Our hope is that we can restore the fountain and add lights to enhance the beauty of this site.

We would also unveil a new monument this year, this is the 1823 Monument which will be a tribute to all those who lost their lives in the uprising of 1823. A renowned Guyanese sculpture, Mr. Ivor Thom, is presently working to complete this project. I heard the Hon. Mrs. Backer

asking about what we did last year for the “International Year of People of African Descent”. This is one of the tangible projects which will be coming out of that year. [Mrs. Backer: That was last year.] The project started last year and it will be completed this year. [Mrs. Backer: Where is it going to be sited?] That is the other thing, and I am coming to that now. The Hon. Member has asked about the sighting of the 1823 Monument. On two occasions we went out to the public to ask for suggestions of where to site it, whether we should go on the East Coast of Demerara or should we have it in Georgetown. I would like to throw that out again because we have not made a final decision on the sighting of the monument. [Interruption] This is consultation.

Mr. Speaker: Could we allow the Hon. Minister to complete his presentation, please.

Dr. Anthony: Maybe for the education for the Hon. Member let me give an insight into what we are constructing. The monument we are constructing is going to be a 15-foot high bronze statue, and it is taking some time to construct. The foundry is located right here in Guyana, and the local artists are making that monument for us. We do not have to send it to England to be constructed. We are constructing the monument locally and that is why it is taking some time. We are building local capacity.

In addition, more emphasis will be placed on how we protect our historic environment. As you are aware the world history books talk about old world civilisation such as those in Sumer, in Egypt, the Harappa, and in China. The earliest of these are the Sumerians and they are thought to have existed from about 3,500 years before Christ, or as the archeologist would say before present time. In the new world the two important centres of civilisation were in ancient Peru and the Olmec of Mesoamerica. The ancient Peruvian civilisation is thought to exist from 1,000 Before the Common Era (BCE) and the Olmec some 1,500 BCE. These areas are now centres for archeological research and give us a better insight into the pre-history of the world.

We in Guyana are now learning more about the pre-history of our country. Last year there was a scientific theme which conducted research in the Berbice River area. We have uncovered evidence of early human settlement. We have been able to carbon date this settlement back to the Mid-Holocene period which would have been between 6,000 to 3,000 BC. This is an important finding and researchers are confident that with more studies into this area we will rewrite the

history books of the world. We need to demarcate the areas for protection and have allocated resources in this year's budget to start the mapping of this area. We hope that we all can agree that this is part of our heritage and it deserves protection.

8.19 p.m.

I now turn to sports and the budget shows Government's firm commitment to the development of sports in Guyana. We will continue to invest in the development of sports infrastructure. The construction of a 25 metre warm up pool at the National Aquatic Centre will allow us to hold Carifta swimming championships in 2013. Right now we have several rising stars in swimming and I would like to single out Jessica Stephenson, who have already won a gold medal at the 27th Carifta Championships and we expect her to win some more.

At Leonora, works have been ongoing on the synthetic athletics track. Contracts have been awarded and the work is progressing on the perimeter fence. The land filling of the entire site, the parking area, internal roads, the synthetic track, the football field and also the areas designated for long jump, pole vaulting, shot-put, et cetera. In this year's budget, with the moneys that we get, we will start the construction of the stands and the administrative building. This project will be completed in 2013.

What about boxing? Boxing has always been popular in Guyana and we have seen resurgence in boxing, both at the amateur and professional levels. This year we will be adding new gym equipment to the Six Head Lewis Gym and our intention is to make this into the best boxing training facility in Guyana. A Cuban coach has already been contracted and has been working with our boxers. He will be here for the next two years.

This year we will also start the construction of a sport institute at the Woolford Avenue site, it will provide space for training and house a sports library where coaches, officials, sportsmen and women and, of course, those students who are writing sports at the CXC level, will be able to use it. This will vastly improve our human resource capacity necessary for a vibrant and robust sport system. This year we will also commence work on the National Coaches Accreditation System and an Official Accreditation System. With these systems we will help to professionalise the sports sector.

The Ministry will also have a very strong focus on school and community sports. In partnership with the Ministry of Education, we will be working to get more schools involved in physical activities. We will promote the development of cricket, football, volleyball, basketball, athletics, table tennis and chess, both at the primary and secondary levels of schooling. At the community level, we have allocated \$180 million for the improvement of community grounds. I understand several Members have been asking for grants to assist them in their community, through this facility, we will be able to work with you to improve those grounds. [Mr. Jones: ...over 200 grounds... look it is right here.] I can give you a list of the grounds that we would have completed. I am very happy that you are reading that. The grounds will be improved and the Hon. Members, who have an interest in helping to improve their community grounds, can talk to us and apply to the National Sports Commission. We have also been working with a number of national sport organisations to get them to own their own assets.

The Government of Guyana would have given to the Guyana Olympic Association one acre of land for the construction of its head office. The Government of Guyana has also given one acre of land to the Guyana Karate Association for the construction of a dojo. I have heard the Hon. Member, Mr. James Bond, talking about public/private sector partnership and we have a number of associations who have approached us for us to work along with them, so that they can develop facilities for their perspective sports.

A facility is being looked at where a synthetic turf for hockey can be put down. The Guyana Table Tennis Association would like to develop a centre of excellence for table tennis and we will work with them to ensure that this happens. What about power lifting? The Power Lifting and the Weight Lifting Associations are asking us to develop a strength training centre and we will be working with them to establish such a centre. This will be public/private partnership. [Mr. Harmon: What about football?] For football - at the Leonora facility, in the middle of the synthetic track, there will be a football field and that facility – the synthetic track and football field at Leonora – will be able to accommodate between 8,000 - 10,000 spectators, when it is completed.

There are many other things that we will be doing for sports, but I do not have enough time to tell you all the good things that will be happening during this year. I have listened to the Hon. Member, Mr. Trevor Williams, who in his presentation raised a couple of issues. I would like to

thank him for his remarks and I would like to point out to him that the question he asked about computer labs in the school system, I want him to know that at the secondary level 72% of our secondary schools already have computer labs. At the primary level, 15% of our schools already have computer labs. He also asked or he said that, one of the things we should do, was introduce, I think, regional mechanical shops. I want to say to the Hon. Member, that we have a number of technical vocational institutes in various regions. In Georgetown, you know, we have the Government Technical Institute, the Guyana Industrial Training Centre, in Linden the Linden Technical Institute, in Region 2 the Essequibo Technical Institute, in New Amsterdam the New Amsterdam Technical Institute and the Upper Corentyne Industrial Training Centre...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, your time is up.

Dr. Ramsammy: Mr. Speaker, I am requesting five minutes for the Hon. Minister to conclude.

Question put, and agreed to.

Dr. Anthony: Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. I can go on, because there are a number of facilities where we are training young people. So, I would like the Hon. Member to know that it is not only about a workshop, but we have institutions in these regions that are taking care of training.

The Hon. Member, Mr. James Bond, spoke about the NOC (New Opportunity Corps.) and I think that report, which he quoted from, the OAS Report of 2008 would be a little dated now. So I told my Hon. Friend that I would like to invite him to visit the NOC, so he can see what we are doing at the NOC. [*Interruption*] He can come anytime he wants and I am sure that if he visits the NOC, he would be able to see the good programmes that are happening there. You would be please to note that we have a computer lab at the NOC.

I am pleased with this year's budget, especially in my sector. It allows us to expand our programmes and to serve our people better. Building a better Guyana is not about blaming the past or denying our short comings, it is about recognising that we need to rise above pettiness and a partisan old style approach to one of trust and better cooperation. It is not so much about where we stand, but it is in which direction we are moving and I want to say that this budget is

moving us in the right direction. Let us stay the course for the prosperity of all of our people. Thank you very much. [*Applause*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have great pleasure in inviting the Hon. Member, Mrs. Catherine Hughes, to address the Assembly. I ask you to proceed please Hon. Member.

Mrs. Hughes: Mr. Speaker and Hon. Members of this noble House thank you for your warm welcome that you have extended to myself and the other new Members.

As I stand here today to make my presentation on the 2012 national budget, I reflect on the sitting of this National Assembly just a few weeks ago, when a number of women picketed just across from where we are and I am reminded that whatever we do in this Assembly must reflect the wishes and needs of those women, women in general and the masses of this country. Our deliberations, therefore, and what we agree to in this Assembly, must not only be what we determine is best for the people of this country, but must consider what the people of this country are calling for.

We will not deny that there have been some improvements in Guyana today. To do so would make us appear as extreme oppositionists. This is not what I or we in the AFC are about. Rather, we see ourselves as the conscience of this nation and the voice of reason in this Hon. House. Therefore, where there are good ideas and plans in the budget, the AFC will support those, because we do not believe that any one party has the monopoly on good ideas. And, where we feel this budget has failed, we will raise our concerns, expecting that as parties committed to Guyana and doing what is best for all her citizens, we will find the maturity to compromise.

It cannot be disputed that the challenges facing our communities and social services have reached alarming proportions. Domestic violence and child abuse are now daily occurrences and regrettably, many in our population are slowly becoming numb to it.

In the 2012 estimates, in the details of “Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations” we see a list of NGO’s set to receive allocations. Several of these organisations provide valued support to public service agencies and their positive contributions go undisputed. Take Help and Shelter, whose name is mentioned in every discussion on support services for victims of domestic violence, but who will receive only \$10 million in this year’s budget. But, the

Government's propaganda machinery – the Guyana Information News Agency - receives \$111 plus million dollars. The question this forces us to ask is, is the daily churning out of Government propaganda a better use of scarce financial resources than an agency dealing head on, every day, with an unacceptable epidemic that eliminates one of this nation's most precious resources, our women?

Or for example, the meagre \$200,000 also listed in the estimates for the David Rose School for the Handicapped, a school I am personally acquainted with as far back as the early 70's, when one of my sisters who is deaf, attended that school. Little has improved over the years and originally a school for the deaf, today the David Rose School for the Handicapped it is a melting pot for children with various disabilities fighting for a chance to learn, but in an environment grossly inadequately staffed of resources, which, in fact, guarantees that they really will never achieve their true potential. This is an unacceptable allocation for one of few educational facilities dedicated to training and educating persons with disabilities within our communities.

In the estimates, we also observe an increase in travel for conferences and official visits, "The globetrotters" from over \$263 million in 2010 to \$270 million in 2011 and now we are being asked to approve \$285 million in 2012. If that is not bad enough, the estimates highlight a category of "Other transport, travel and postage" which moved from \$564 million to over \$941 million in a twelve month period.

The winds of change blew over this Parliament a few short months ago and they must continue. I say again, this budget must reflect what the people of Guyana want and what they say they need. We represent them and I say \$200,000 for the David Rose School for the Handicapped for children with disabilities and \$285 million for overseas conferences and trips cannot be considered just. It must change. Behind every child with a disability is a mother fighting hard to understand and cope with the additional challenges. Is this the best we can do; is this the best support Guyana can offer these families?

Guyanese from all walks of life have said they need more financial support to grow their families. They have said in no uncertain terms, that the VAT must be reduced and pensions increased to levels that persons who served this country will have a little more than bread and water to live on. This is not a gift, but a right they have earned. For many of them we have

chased their children away as they search for better opportunities and now these pensioners grow old and alone in Guyana. We must do better by them.

Examine this more carefully and we see that most of these NGOs will receive, in 2012, less than what one man will receive in one month of his pension. Where is the level of care in this? Let me give an example, so that there is no doubt as to the AFC's thinking. Take two-thirds of the total allocations of the former President's pension and give it to these NGOs, who are taking care of our pensioners, abused women and children. This will not affect macro-economic programmes.

I have heard that some in the Government do not believe that the Government has an obligation to give a pension. Let me make it clear, the AFC sees it not only as an obligation, but as a moral and religious duty to take care of our elderly, our widows, our orphans and all those less fortunate in our society.

As I said before, it is not for us to determine what is best for the people, but we must also listen to and fulfil the wishes of the people. We are in fact servants of the people.

Article 146 (1) of the Constitution of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana states:

“Except with his own consent, no person shall be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom of expression, that is to say, freedom to hold opinions without interference, freedom to receive ideas and information without interference, freedom to communicate ideas and information without interference and freedom from interference with his correspondence”.

With this firmly in our minds, I want to examine the role of Public Service Broadcasting. Please note that as a recipient of state funds and funding from the national treasury, the National Communications Network (NCN) must be examined within the context of a Public Service Broadcaster. Given these considerations that I have very carefully outlined, it is clear that the National Communications Networks does not fulfil the mandate of a Public Service or National Broadcaster and therefore, should not be receiving, together with GINA, a total of more than \$241 million as outlined in the estimates.

I mentioned before that the propaganda machinery, GINA, received \$111,496 million last year and has been allocated an increase to \$130,398 million in this year's estimates. Surely this

expensive propaganda cannot be considered as critical to the development of a better Guyana. In addition to GINA, NCN, in the estimates, who received \$70 million last year, has now been allocated \$81 million this year. This is a waste on partisan propaganda.

It is a well known fact that NCN has deliberately refused access to this nationally owned station to several large sections of the population in direct contravention to the provisions clearly outlined in our Constitution. Political parties such as the AFC, the PNC and most recently APNU, have been consistently excluded, not even allowed a right to reply, a foundation of any fledgling democracy.

The AFC is not prepared to go to another election where the NCN dictates that the opposition will only get five minutes of air time, but gives the PPP blanket coverage with equipment that is paid for by all Guyanese, including the taxes from the majority of Guyanese who voted for the political opposition in this House.

The monopoly that NCN exerts in Linden, across the television and radio airwaves, continues unabated and is a breach of the decision of Guyana's courts, which instructed that the situation in Linden was a breach of the Constitutional rights of Lindeners. The failure to issue licenses in a fair and objective manner, the refusal to allow existing TV stations to expand their signal, the recent subjective allocation of a few radio licenses to members of the PPP's family and friends' network, is nothing short of a dictatorship, which the PPP is so prone to crying down. NCN fails to remember that the spectrum belongs to no one and as occurs in the smallest Caribbean island and the largest developed country, but not in Guyana. This spectrum must be managed in a non-partisan manner, educating, informing and entertaining and providing ideas and exchanges from all walks of life, in the public's interest.

I am happy to share with this Hon. House that I have in my possession and I have it right here for any that may want to see it, a letter to the AFC dated March 19, 2012, in which NCN states that it is a registered, company incorporated under the Companies Act No.29 of 1991 and receives over 90% of its income from advertising. This is a wonderful feat for NCN and given this information, it is absolutely clear that NCN and the Guyana Information News Agency does not need over \$240 million from the limited national coffers. It is after all clearly a very successful company that can compete effectively with the private sector, although this is not allowed in

several countries. Surely this Hon. House cannot authorise the use of hard earned taxpayers' money in such a manner. The fact that NCN has made no attempt to change its *modus operandi* over the years and the fact that the best of international election and media monitoring experts have noted this unacceptable situation, election after election and yet unfortunately nothing has change. It is clear that only this House can and must make that change. Let the agencies that NCN and GINA serve fund their activities, if they refuse to serve the interest of all in this nation.

The people are tired of the NCN diet and, more so my friends and the people of Linden. Now to add insult to injury, this Government is saying that it cannot subsidise electricity costs for Linden. I am suggesting that we take the \$81 million dollars budgeted for NCN propaganda and put it towards subsidising electricity for Linden. I am showing the Government how taxpayers' money can be better utilised in the interest of the people of Guyana. If the people cannot afford to pay for electricity they cannot watch NCN anyway. Again, we are not proposing any new funds, just better use of existing funds. Or use the money set aside for NCN and GINA to open a meat processing plant at Linden where young people can get jobs and farmers at Kwakwani can be encouraged to get back into cattle farming, knowing that there is a viable market available.

As an impatient and somewhat frustrated new comer to this noble House, I have grown up hearing about my dear country's great potential and hope that it will be realised in my lifetime. But, what I find most offensive is the constant looking backwards to a time long gone, which has plagued much of the presentations on the opposite side of the House. No young Guyanese and I say that there are many of them here, wants to drown in stories of the past, they want to see a vision of the future, one that will serve them, excite them and provide them with an opportunity to prosper right here at home.

Every wasted moment looking back keeps us from moving forward. So with this in mind I would like to address a few inaccuracies from the Hon. Minister, Irfaan Ali, who fails to acknowledge that *Stabroek News* was born under the Hoyte's administration and not under the PPP. And, that it was under the same Hoyte's administration that the *Mirror Newspaper* and the *Catholic Standard* got approval to start importing newsprint to carry on their trade, much of which was to criticise the Government of the day, which was and is their democratic right. Interestingly, it was under the same Government that our most recent former President got a job at the State Planning Secretariat. Do you think anyone from the AFC or the APNU could get such a job today?

Unfortunately despite all the promises the most Hon. Former President, Dr. Jagan, made to his people in 1992, to end squander-mania, to bring back lean and clean Government and to end wastage and financial abuse in Government, this has not stopped.

8.49 p.m.

In the 2008, 2009 and 2010 Budgets included \$200 million in total in those three years to purchase and install a new transmitter and to purchase production equipment for various locations for NCN. Most importantly, a large percentage of those funds were used to move the NCN transmitters from Sparendam to West Demerara to make way for “Pradoville 2” and this nation continues to tell its people that there is no money to pay the pensioners more and to ensure that they live, at least, above the poverty level.

The AFC promises to continue to work to make the Freedom of Information and Broadcast Legislation more effective, so that the people in Region 10 could have alternatives to NCN on their television spectrum. Existing television stations will be allowed to expand their reach and to ensure that Guyana will no longer be the only Caribbean country in which there is only one government-owned radio station, whereas in 2012, the average in other small islands is as much as 30. The AFC will continue to work during the life of this 10th Parliament to ensure that the Guyanese people have a wider choice; not next year, but now.

We agree with the Hon. Minister that tourism must become a significant contributor to national output and to the process of creating new jobs, new income and wealth for our people. As an investor in this sector, I believe in the potential tourism offers to turn our economy around and I take this opportunity to applaud all those who have invested everything of theirs and work hard to build a fine product with limited gains and slow financial returns. What is in the 2012 Budget for the tourism industry – a Marriott Hotel? In 2007, when Guyana played the proud host to a series of World Cup Cricket Matches, we added 22 small hotels to our inventory with an additional inventory of 771 rooms. It was a necessary investment and we have no regrets. What we find unacceptable is that it appears that the only way tourism can move forward is for the national taxpayer dollars to fund a foreign operated hotel.

Guyana, like Barbados, has built a tourism industry in which the smaller hotels are the backbone of the industry. Local entrepreneurs committed to keeping the money at home, work hard to

expand and not companies that would pack up and go just to follow the almighty dollar, as several multinational corporations do. These locals are here for the long haul because this is home, yet the system denies hotels with less than 15 rooms the opportunity to qualify for several duty free concessions offered to larger establishments. How do we grow and expand? Several of these properties face low occupancy rates, averaging 30%, and a few have been closed and others sold. Private sector occupancy rates for hotels with more than 100 rooms show slightly higher levels of 74% occupancy in 2009 and reductions to 49% occupancy in 2010 and in 2011 there was an increase to 68%, but those were only for the few large hotels.

This budget must include allocations that will build the industry and that means international destination marketing that will bring more visitors to Guyana and improve occupancy levels. We do not need another hotel. If Marriott want to come to build a hotel here in Guyana we welcome them. Let them come and build it. We do not have a problem with that but let them use their own money. Marriott and Sandals have both, in the past, as have other large hotel chains which have done feasibility studies on Guyana, have said that the current level of tourists visiting Guyana does not make it financially feasible to fill all of these hotel rooms. Right now hotels are struggling to break even and, believe me, this is not about political posturing.

Taxpayers' monies should not be used to build hotels. Let us use the money they want to put into the Marriott to improve our standards and to pay for an effective international marketing campaign, so when the world switches onto CNN they can glimpse the beauty of a paradise they have never heard of before, Guyana.

Let us build a juice or canning factory in New Amsterdam or somewhere in Canje, Berbice, which is something that would ensure that the farmers in Canje and on the Corentyne can have a market for their produce and Guyana can earn foreign currency by exporting the produce. This is not rocket science; it is just a genuine desire to improve the standard of living of all Guyanese and not seek to line personal pockets.

The acting Minister of Tourism mentioned, in his presentation, hosting another Visit Guyana Year. What he does not realise is that in 1996 Visit Guyana Year arrivals, as released by the Guyana Tourism Authority, stated that 91,972 visitors arrived and despite all of the talk and

promotion it was one of the lowest rates over the last 12 years as arrivals declined the year after until there was a moderate increase in 2000, which was followed by another decline until 2004.

In reality visitor arrivals – the foundation of any strong tourism industry – must improve to create a viable industry. The AFC would like to propose the following policy measures in this budget to accelerate the process of making tourism into a significant contributor:

A programme to empower, build capacity and train the staff of the Guyana Tourism Authority and the requisite funds to fulfill its mandate

An international marketing plan and supporting budget to market Guyana internationally as a superior eco-tourism destination

A programme to develop further niche markets such as birding, yachting and adventure travel, which have all been fairly successful to date

A public relations programme to address the negative publicity, poor image and negative perceptions many persons hold of Guyana

There are just a few of the things which are very necessary.

This year should not close without an updated national tourism strategy, focused on creating jobs. We must market ourselves more and make it easier for more attractive overseas tourists to want to visit Guyana.

Before I go I would like to mention the all important electricity sector and I would like to raise my concerns that this Hon. House being asked to write a cheque to GPL for \$6 billion although the company has failed to reduce line losses over the last 10 years, which currently stands at 33%. When I hear this I cannot help but think of the hard working citizens at No. 30 Village who, in 2012, still have never had electricity supplied to their homes and who are being asked to come up with \$2 million to get electricity to their village.

This Government must be judged not only by the roads and fancy buildings they elect but by the way we look after the most vulnerable in our society, how many street children we take off the roads, the number of homeless we can put into more appropriate accommodations other than the

cold pavement of La Penitence and the ever growing number of old men and women shriveled with age from a time gone by and who are now trying hard to catch a hand or are forced to beg.

I indicated before that we in the AFC did not come to this House to oppose the PPP Government for the sake of opposing. We all have better things to do. We want to accelerate growth and new wealth for more of our people. We are prepared to work with anyone if they are serious about an agenda to create a just and secure Guyana but that process must engage more people and the dividends of success must be shared by all, especially the women and youth of Guyana.

Right now, although I complement the Minister for the Budget, I do feel that there are several areas that we can improved on that I have mentioned and I do not think that the budget, in totality offers prosperity to the majority. I hope that the valid suggestions from this House that we have heard over the last three to four days will be considered with maturity and a spirit of compromise they all deserve. It is not too late.

I thank you. [*Applause*]

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Member. I think that we all would agree that your views are welcome and refreshing and if paired with those of the Hon. Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport I think that the nation of Guyana will go a very far way.

Ms. Shadick: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is very late in the evening and I would like...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, one second. I just wish to make a public announcement. The public gallery is meant for members of the public to visit but there seems to be a constant movement and flow as people come to hear a speaker or two and it is disruptive and unparliamentary. I believe that in due course the Sergeant-at-Arms, with the advice of the Clerk will be taking steps to address it. There is too much movement in the public gallery. My apologies to you, Hon. Ms. Shadick.

Ms. Shadick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Those were my thoughts exactly – there is too much movement. This 2012 Budget Debate has been a pretty quiet one. You have had a pretty easy time and I think that that is because we have had so many new Members who were giving maiden speeches so the House was constrained not to make noise. I am not asking to be treated

as a maiden. I am however asking for your attention as I speak. If one makes noise one would not hear what I am saying.

I know that I have 25 minutes so I do not want Mrs. Backer to disturb me. I would like to, again, congratulate the Minister of Finance and his staff and the Government of Guyana for staying on course. In 1992, when we came into office, we made certain resolutions and we had certain goals and certain visions. Every year, in every succeeding budget, we move nearer and nearer to those goals. What has also happened was where people thought they wanted to go, in 1992, having seen better, now want the vision to stretch further so we are constrained to move faster and faster.

Since this just happened, I just made a rough note of this I would just like to say something about what my friend and colleague the Hon. Catherine Hughes said about Help and Shelter – that the money given to them this year is \$10 million. I would like to say to this House and to Ms. Hughes that \$10 million was what Help and Shelter requested of this Government for 2012. The Government honoured their full request. This honouring of the full request of Help and Shelter began while I was Minister, as I remember, when their building needed to be repaired – I will go further back just now – and their subvention was smaller as they asked for \$5 million. We gave them \$5 million that time. We need to also remember that Help and Shelter is a non-governmental organisation but when the Domestic Violence Act was passed by this PPP/Civic Government – a very good Act, very useful – it gave land at Mahaica to Help and Shelter and negotiated with Future Fund to build the shelter. Help and Shelter operates with the full cooperation of the Government.

I would also like to say, that Help and Shelter is not there for women only; Help and Shelter is there for victims of domestic abuse so men are also welcome. When they needed an administration building the Government gave that, which is on Homestretch Avenue near to the burned down Ministry of Labour building.

We have this partnership with a lot of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and while I am talking about that partnership, I would like to mention that the Deaf Association has made representation to His Excellency, the President, requesting Government's assistance to identify a building to have their own school and it was highlighted by the head of the association that there

are more than 200 persons who are deaf. They also requested funding from Government to the tune of \$2 million to assist with meeting their operational costs; Government is favourably considering all of these requests. So we do work closely with the underprivileged and the vulnerable.

While we talk about the underprivileged and the vulnerable, the women of this country do all kinds of things. I have always said that sometime women are their own worst enemy. I remember 10 years ago when I tried to and succeeded in getting the Institute of Distance and Continuing Education (IDCE) to run some programmes in non-traditional skills for women. They were taught masonry, electrical installation, how to lay tiles, build fences, a bit of carpentry and so on. The people of Linden said that they wanted women to be able to operate some heavy duty machinery because some of the men would be drinking and not go to their jobs; the women would do a better job. In Essequibo women were taught to drive and operate tractors and repair them, drive and operate combines and effect small repairs. Those things happened and we tried... This was 10 years ago and such continue to happen. 10 years ago I tried to tell women and encourage them to get together, bid for small contracts – “A school fence has to be built. You have been given those skills.” That is why I am saying that women are their own worst enemies; some of them said “Man, mah husban’ nah gon’ wan’ meh go.” “Got to look after the children!” These are the kind of things we do.

I am asking every single Member of this House to speak to their constituents who are women; that they must stand up and be independent and use the skills that this Government is giving them the opportunity to acquire. These programmes are run all over: Board of Industrial Training, the Central Islamic Organisation of Guyana (CIOG), National Committee of Sisters’ Affairs (NACOSA) and the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport give training; we have all of these training programmes for dropouts and so on. We need to use those skills. Women are not neglected in this country; please, let us not get away with that. The issue is that we need to change some attitudes. It is our culture, sometimes this is hard to change. We have gone a long way, so we must not speak as if all women are suffering; they are not. All women are not suffering.

I have a few things that I would like to say. I want to address something that my comrade and Hon. Friend, Mr. Moses Nagamootoo, said. The Hon. Mr. Nagamootoo talked about Guyana’s

external debt being more than it was in 1992. Every child that is born now will grow up with a debt of “whatever”. I am a mathematics teacher, I always was, I believe in numbers. I can add and subtract but one has to read the message that the numbers carry. Numbers tell a story as well. It is not just the numbers that my friend was adding up. The matter is, and I would like to say to my friend, Guyana does not have a foreign debt problem because, even though our debt is close to US\$1.2 billion, it is our ability to service that debt which matters. It is not how much debt we have.

A businessman goes to the bank and borrows money to set up his business. He borrows some more to expand his business and as long as he can service that loan without contracting his business he is successful and is capable of doing it. There is no problem.

I am a teacher and the numbers bothered me. When my erstwhile friend said this it bothered me. I would like to say, and I am saying this clearly, the Hon. Member Mr. Carl Greenidge is the least one who should tell us about this. Under the PNC the debt that was accrued sucked the very life out of this country. I will say here, that today, Guyana’s debt situation has never been as manageable as it is now.

Talking about servicing debt and saying that we are in debt is some “boogie man” story being used to try to fool the people. We are not here to fool the people.

I want to say very clearly that Guyana may have its problems – it does. We are not saying that we do not have problems. We are saying that there are things to happen, but this PPP/Civic Government will remain on the course that it has charted and we vow that Guyana will never ever go back to the days when people had to line up for food and petrol. When one had to go to the Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA), and had to put this in your passport “US\$40 to travel”. We are not going back there. We are not going to go back to scheduled six-hour blackouts. Now, when we get 10 minutes of blackout we are quarrelling. We forgot the days of six and twelve-hour blackouts. Guyana may have its problems but I promise you that this Government is staying resolutely on course and Guyana will never go back down there. We made a promise.

Something bothered me which my comrade and friend Mr. Moses Nagamootoo said. I deal a lot with the ordinary people and there are some women who say that if the man does not hit them a little he does not love them, so when I heard the Hon. Nagamootoo say the words that he said to

his grandson, which I do not want to repeat here, whether he purported to say them with love... All of that is in the name of the men who say “Knock them down. Keep them in line and that is how you show how you love them.” I have known the Hon. Member, Mr. Moses Nagamootoo, for a long time. I am sorry that he is not sitting there. I am disappointed and I am sure that he does not mean that. I think that it was an example used; I do not think that it is true. I would hope that it is not true that he said that to his grandchild.

The AFC keeps saying to bring down Value Added Tax (VAT) to 10%, take up the threshold to \$60,000, take up the pensions to \$10,000, double the salaries of teachers and Public Servants and the Disciplined Forces. That sound to me like a “cake shop story”, because what the Hon. Member Dr. Ramayya said “how we gon’ do dis”... He said that from the \$75 billion that is in Capital Budget the Hon. Minister must take out \$5 billion... [Mr. R. Persaud: That is “rum shop economics”.] Well I call it “cake shop” because I do not go into rum shops. He must take the \$5 billion to do all of these things with it and use only the \$70 billion, and it will not cause any trouble. I would like the Hon. Member – it might sound like a good suggestion – to identify which places he will take out these \$5 billion from and what is not going to suffer. If we were going to spend \$10 million on a school should we then take out \$1 million and leave out the step or something like that. I would like to see some details for the \$5 billion and how it is not going to affect the Capital Budget. That is something that we would like to see.

I remember when I listened to the AFC’s plans... Those were campaign promises. One does not say those things when one comes to Parliament. When I listened I remembered the man from my village. The man used to sell rice. He was not educated in reading and writing and one of his relative gave him some money/capital and he bought rice to sell – we used to call him “Fyta”. Fyta goes and sells the rice. As soon as he sells a bag he goes to buy food. He sells another bag; he goes to buy clothes and so on. By the time he had finished selling the capital that he had, according to the villagers, became “common”. He spent out that capital. That is the story that I am reminded of when I listen to what the AFC is asking us to do. These things are disappointing when one lists to them.

The Hon. maiden Member from Region 3... I had issued an invitation many times to the other PNC/R-1G Member of Parliament who represented Region 3, the Hon. Mervyn Williams. He is no longer here, so now there is the Hon. Member Mr. John Adams. I invite you, Sir, to visit

Region 3 and not just drive along from where you live to the bridge and come over here. Visit the rivers... [Mrs. Backer: He is not here.] Whether he is here or not I am speaking to him so you can give him the message. Visit, see what is happening. I wonder what the Hon. Member meant when he said that the West Demerara Secondary School is a disaster waiting to happen. Then he said "because it does flood". I have news for the Hon. Member: If his yard floods then his house is a disaster waiting to happen. My yard floods but I do not consider that a disaster waiting to happen. Guyana is below sea level. We will have floods but the water runs off very quickly. I know that the school ground is low and we will look to see how we can put some dirt and so on to help to fill it up but one does not call that a disaster waiting to happen.

To crown it all the Hon. Member suggests that all the money that Cde. Dr. Frank Anthony, the Hon. Member and Minister, said about setting up an athletic track and football field and so on is wasted. He said that we should have used the Den Amstel Ground instead. That is not even worthy of any kind of explanation.

9.19 p.m.

That just shows that the Member needs to move around a bit and not just drive from his home. By the way, I heard a strange rumour. I do not know. I asked the Hon. Member. He admitted that the Guyana Power and Light (GPL) had to investigate because some building that he was responsible for was getting electricity without paying for it. He told me that. He said he was not charged but the GPL had to investigate. [Mr. Lumumba: Did he steal light?] I do not know; I will not say that.

The issue of old-age pension is causing so much trouble in this country. It is like a campaign theme. Do you know how many people receive old-age pension? It is forty-five thousand. Is it that somebody wants to tell me that all forty-five thousand of those people are on the poverty line and cannot live? Can somebody tell me whether every single one of those forty-five thousand people does not have children? Do you know what, Mr. Speaker? I would like to bring to the attention of this honourable House that there is an Act called the Maintenance Act, Chapter 45:03 of the Laws of Guyana. Whilst sections 2 and 3 made provisions for maintenance of children by their parents, section 4 reads:

“Everyone born in wedlock is hereby required to maintain his or her father and mother, and grandfathers and grandmothers; and everyone not born in wedlock is hereby required to maintain his or her mother, and also the man (if any) with whom his mother openly cohabited at the time of his or her birth, provided that man recognised and treated him as the man’s child during his or her infancy...”

This is the law of this country. How can we say that we cannot afford to mind our mother and father? If I have half a loaf, I have to share it with my mother, my father and my grandparents. That is the law of this country. How can we...? Do we have people as waste now? Are we throwing away human waste?

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, your time is up.

Mr. Rohee: I move that the Hon. Member be given another fifteen minutes to continue.

Question put, and agreed to.

Ms. Shadick: I would like to focus a bit on something that Dr. Rupert Roopnarine said about paddy and yields. The sugar industry is failing and the Government has to help. And so it says that it is bailing it out because that is a corporation, but the rice industry is based on individual farmers. What is not very visible, because it does not come as a lump sum in this budget, is what Government does for rice.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I need to hear the Hon. Member.

Ms. Shadick: How is it that the Hon. Member thinks those yields are acquired? The farmers work hard, yes, and they always work hard. In fact, rice farmers do not work as hard now as when my parents were rice farmers, because my father had two bulls and a plough. Now there are tractors. The issue is, Sir, that in 1991, the yield per acre was an average of nineteen bags of paddy per acre. In 2011, the last crop, the yield per acre was in the vicinity of thirty-eight bags. That was the average. There were farmers in the coastal regions, of Region 3 and Cane Grove, in Region 4, who averaged over fifty bags per acre. Fifty bags of paddy is the target that we had set in our strategic plan.

Do you know how this came about? Do you know what Government did? Government set up farmers' field schools. In 2011, there were sixty-six schools set up and one thousand four hundred farmers participated. Eight farmers had exchange visits between regions to see how others were doing and one thousand six hundred and sixty-four farmers participated in those visits. There were farmers being trained in those areas that have Water Users' Associations. There are nine pilot study areas in Regions 3, 4 and 6 right now. They take soil samples, analyse them and recommend the types of strains that should be planted. For 2012, there is sixty-nine of those schools planned for. I am a child of a rice farmer; I am interested in rice.

In 1991, the country's total production in rice was one hundred and fifty thousand tons. That was the time when the Rice Marketing Board was no longer there; when people could not sell; when people had to graze cows in their rice beds. In 2011, it was four hundred and two thousand tons. That is rice. That is the reality and success story of rice and it did not come because the little farmers did it themselves. It came about because Government intervened.

There are so many more things that I want to say but I know that my time is limited. I am a Region 3 representative and so I will be remiss if I do not talk about Region 3. **[Mrs. Backer: Talk about Leguan.]** Leguan is very well, thank you. Nobody abandoned it. You were not in the People's National Congress (PNC) then but it had told us to move out. **[Mrs. Backer: What happened to the airstrip?]** It is coming along nicely.

In 2011, Region 3's capital budget was \$225 million. Of that, it spent 99.99 per cent. This year, its capital budget is \$280,500,000. That budget will be used, among other things, to do these things which I am going to talk about quickly. There will be bridges being done. Bridges will be built at Doornhaag, which is in Leguan. The West Demerara Regional Hospital (WDRH) is getting a new bridge. There will be a new bridge at Vergenoegen and one at Karia Karia. That will cost \$22.5 million, this year, because it is an ongoing project. The whole project would have cost \$43.5 million. For those of you who think that is a lot of money, you need to visit Karia Karia. You need to visit these places where these bridges are going to be built and see what is involved. It is not just timber and wood; it is revetments and other stuff.

For roads: Roads will be done in Marias Lodge, in the Canals Polder, Number One and Number Two, which really need work, in Stewartville, inside roads, Philadelphia, Pleasing Hope, Naamless and La Bagatelle, which is at Leguan, by the way - \$55 million will be spent on roads.

Twenty-five million dollar will be spent on land development. That includes upgrading roads for the housing schemes such as Patentia, Canal Number One, De Kinderen and Hog Island. Yes, at Hog Island, roads will be developed there. Conditions will be improved at the Stanleytown library. A new fence and sanitary facilities will be put. A ramp and landing will be constructed at Santa/Aratak Mission at a cost of \$6.5 million. The Region will spend \$56.6 million on new Drainage and Irrigation (D&I) projects. For agriculture, high-density polyethylene (HDPE) tubes will be purchased because those are always needed when there are problems. Winches will be purchased for areas such as Stanleytown, Goed Fortuin, Versailles, all on the West Bank Demerara, and Salem, Hubu and Zeelugt, on the East Bank Essequibo. Structures such as culverts and *kokers* will be constructed at Coghlan Dam, Samaroo Dam, De Kinderen, Hague, Maryville, which is at Leguan, Kamuni-Potosi and Hog Island. There will be revetments done at Sisters sideline dam, Blenheim at Leguan. Canals at Kamuni-Patosi will be excavated.

The Region will spend \$52.5 million in the education sector, constructing nursery schools at La Parfaite Harmonie, extensions of the Essequibo Island Secondary School, that is in Wakenaam - it has to be extended - and the Windsor Forest Primary School. I heard somebody talk about the Windsor Forest Primary School. It is going to be extended this year. [Ms. Selman: You are doing everything this year.] Philadelphia Primary School... No, these are new things; we did other things last year. Headmasters' and teachers' quarters at Fort Island, Aliko and Karia Karia will be rehabilitated. There will be construction of sanitary blocks at Princess Carolina, which is in the Demerara River, lower Bonasika and McGillivray Primary Schools. When I said that there are septic tanks and overhead water tanks in all of those riverain areas, my friend, Mr. Williams, last year, doubted me. I am inviting people to go and see those places and see what exists. The walkways at Bagotville Nursery and northern Hog Island Primary Schools will be rehabilitated. It will spend \$10 million, again, in the education sector, to purchase furniture, beds and other equipment for kindergarten schools. Those will be kept for whichever schools will make a request.

The Region will spend \$17.5 million in health. It is will purchase freezers, solar panels, fans, emergency sets, Electrocardiogram (ECG) machines, with trolleys and beds for health services, for wherever the request will come from.

When I looked at the budget here I remember that there was a picture that the Member of the Alliance For Change (AFC) put and said it was the Parika Health Centre - was a little hut, which used to be used, near by the school. There is a brand new facility at Parika. X-ray facilities will be put in, this year, from this budgeted amount. Health posts will be constructed at Greenwich Park and Sand Hills. A furnace will be constructed at the West Demerara Regional Hospital and a laboratory at the Wakenaam Cottage Hospital. The outpatient department at the West Demerara Regional Hospital will be repaired and extended and a laboratory and a x-ray department will be constructed at the Parika Health Centre.

When things are going to be peddled, showing pictures of vines on fences and saying that is what it looks like... We need to tell the truth. The word "honourable" is put to our names – Hon. Members. We must be honourable. Let us honourably tell the truth. Let us not stand here and pontificate about helping workers, while some of us who had owned businesses declared bankruptcy so that we do not pay the people their termination benefits. Those things the Government does not believe in. It does not short-change its workers. It never does.

Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. [*Applause*]

Mr. Speaker: Just on the side to say that I yearn for the day when this Assembly, or its Committees, or its Members, could go and visit those places so that Members can see first-hand what is happening. I am hoping that the Clerk, through the Hon. Minister of Finance, can make it possible for Committees and Members to visit and hold meetings with the people.

Hon. Members, I am urging and inviting the Chief Whips to consider the possibly of releasing the staff and all of those attending to the Assembly a bit earlier tonight. For now, we are going to invite Mr. Allen to speak. It is his inaugural presentation. I am thinking that, given that it is the weekend, we could give everyone an early night, but it depends on the Whips agreeing. There are only eight Members to speak on Monday, which would mean that Monday's sitting could actually be stretched to about 8.30 p.m. or 9.00 p.m. and get over with it. That is up to the Members. It is a proposition that I am hoping that we all agree with because I am sure that the

police officers, staff, drivers and all others who are involved would welcome the chance to leave here a bit early. While that is being dealt with, Mr. Allen I invite you to make your presentation. I welcome you to the National Assembly of Guyana and we are proud to have you.

[Mr. Neendkumar in the Chair at 9.32 p.m.]

Mr. Allen: I am grateful for this privilege to be here to address this honourable House in this Tenth Parliament and to look at this national budget for the year 2012. The Hon. Minister, in his budget speech, indicated to us that the budget is here to reach the needs of all Guyanese, within and without. The Hon. Minister of Finance with his staff, I personally feel, had to spend some time in preparing this budget. They worked some hours to put these documents together - to gather the figures and some research might have been done. The Hon. Minister told this House that the Government received large sums of revenue from the mining sector. The Government boasted... We should be proud that gold mining is not done in Georgetown; we get gold from the fields. The mining sector which produce... I am speaking now of mining district No. 5. The total sum of gold produced... The Minister did not give us the figures as divided by area, but I know that more than half of that sum came from mining district No. 5.

The Government boasted of revenue received and what it is expected to receive through the projection for 2012. But what has the Government done and is prepared to do for the miners and those persons who have been investing in this field? People have been investing their money, from across this country. And when it would take an operation owner to get fuel and food stuff to a mining camp when the miner would have departed from Port Kaituma, with a Model M truck, and it would take him four or five days to get that stuff to his camp, we know, that, right there, there is added expense for the investor, because of the conditions and, more so, the roads which are in a deplorable state. Here, in this budget, we have not seen anything... I perused it because questions have been asked. I am glad that the Minister, who is responsible for that sector, is here, right now, and he did not take his leave. I am happy because the people will ask questions and are asking questions. In this budget, when I looked at it, there is nothing for those miners in Matarkai district – mining district No. 5.

[Mr. Speaker resumed the Chair at 9.37 p.m.]

If the returns from mining have been so good, and our Minister could have boasted about the amount of revenue which was received, why not have some of the same revenue been replaced into that area and give the life of the mining sector a better boost? When the Hon. Minister said that the small and medium scale miners will benefit more, I looked at the *Estimates of the Public Sector Current and Capital Revenue and Expenditure* to see where the benefits will come from. How benefit will be derived when the same small and medium scale miners are having their lands taken away? Their claims are being taken away and given to other persons. There are persons there...and this is not just an isolated case...It took the Mines Corporation eight years to find that persons who have been paying for their claims are now being told that it is null and void. The same claims are being given to other people.

This is a total abuse by the officers of this Government. They are taking full advantage of people. The Minister is saying that the small and medium scale miners will benefit. These are the people who are producing. This is where we can boast of revenue.

The Land Distribution and Allocation Unit...The crime in this sector... I do not think it has crossed the mind of the Minister while he was preparing and then to say that the small miners will benefit. I personally, last year, wrote the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs requesting that a senior officer from the Guyana Police Force visit the Matarkai Subregion where miners asked for a meeting with such persons because we could not have gotten officers on the ground to make decisions. They had wanted to give donations to the police force to enable it to curb the situation of crime in the mining district. No reply was given to us regarding that letter. For last year, there were eight murders. As I am speaking here, just yesterday, there was another murder. There were five armed robberies. The police are not equipped to get into those *backdams* to solve the crimes in those areas.

I personally went to Minister Benn's office, two years ago, and made a request of him..., because he is in charge of transport, and I also shared some concerns. That Minister promised me then... and took my telephone numbers. He said, "I am going to send an officer in. You will hear from me." To date, I am still waiting to hear...Miners have been complaining. I heard my colleague was saying, about the Guyana Fire Service, ... Members would have read, just the other day, that the ferry left Port Kaituma and came out here and had to be rushed back out midstream and there was no fire boat to go and put out the flames on it because the Guyana Fire

Service does not have anything in place to deal with fire on the water top. Right now, there are persons who have their mining equipment, at the Transport & Harbour wharf, waiting to go. Up to this afternoon, they said, “Mr. Allen, they cannot tell us as yet when the boat is going to leave.” This is the caring administration that we have.

When I look at this budget, it reminds me of the landlord who does not care about what the tenant goes through. The steps are falling down; the roof is leaking, but all the landlord is concerned about is getting the rent. All I can hear the Minister saying is, “I will be getting more revenue for 2012.” What are we putting in? How the tenant will be getting into the house to give the revenue? I think that this is not good for our people. I, therefore, call on the Government to see that our miners are treated in a better way.

I will look at bridges and roads. Public roads in Region 1... I heard the Minister was saying, yesterday in his presentation, “You can ask Mr. Allen to tell you the truth. Yes, I am going to speak the truth. That is my good friend, Hon. Minister Mr. Norman Whittaker. One of our Hon. Members was saying tonight that we hear the people are asking for cooperation of working together. I remember that on the 25th of February I was in the Mabaruma district and the Minister said to the gathering that there is a Member of Parliament, Mr. Allen, here and he would be going across to the Matarkai Subregion tomorrow. He said to the Regional Executive Officer (REO) that he must notify me because I would have been travelling with them. Lo and behold! The next morning...No one said to me what time the boat was going to be leaving. Yet, this was said, “You will know when the boat is going to leave, because we are supposed to be working together. We are going for a meeting.” **[Mr. R. Persaud: Mr. Allen, I took you on my plane.]** That was not in February, my brother.

When I turned up at the waterfront to get the boat one officer said to me, “Mr. Allen, we cannot carry you. We have eight children who got sick. As you know, it is *jumbie* business. Last night they got sick and we will have to carry them home.” I said, “If the children have to go home, they are from the Matarkai Subregion, they will have to go.” But then the officer thought I would have turned away, but I did not. I am saying this because I want people to know what is happening out there. The Hon. Minister, when he came down that morning, I was standing on his right, he looked left. I said, “Good morning, Hon. Minister” and he said, “Good morning, Mr. Allen.” Do you know what happened further? That boat left without any children and Mr. Allen

continued standing, and no one said anything to me. When they saw me at Port Kaituma, this was said, “Mr. Allen, how did you reach here?” We are supposed to be working together and I can hear my Government officers are saying that people are talking about working together. Is this what we are looking for? I do not think this is what we are asking for.

9.49 p.m.

Our public roads are in a state of disrepair and this honourable House has passed money for contractors to do contract in that Region. Moneys have been paid where we find that it is sometimes substandard works and in some cases no work at all. When questions are asked about these matters people get annoyed. I would ask that the Hon. Minister, when preparing his budget, looks for the projects that he has put money into, years before, to see if those moneys were spent and if they were executed in the manner in which they were supposed to be executed.

The Hon. Prime Minister said that we should remove the bad elements, but in these cases, what will happen? We find that contractors continue to get contracts - more money. In the Estimates we will see that there is a road which is supposed to link Oronoque and Port Kaituma; that project started two years ago. The contractors were told at one time that there was no more money. The work started and just before I left home last week, to come here, the work stopped again. Substandard work, yes, is what we are having.

As it would have been known of the Kumaka revetment, when I asked from the officers at regional administration about the contractual agreement they said to me, “Mr. Allen, we do not have the contractual agreement; we do not know anything about the contract.” In the region, if that was true, of what was said, that it is saying that it does not have the contract, so it is that the Government is giving contracts in regions and they do not know about the contract. The work is stalled there right now. Who will pay? Moneys wasted, work has to be done. These are things... I have heard one of our colleagues saying that we must stand and speak the truth. Yes, we will say exactly what is happening.

We heard about works to be done. I call on this Government to launch an investigation into those projects where moneys have been spent. I have in my possession a document signed by the Regional Engineer, the Regional Executive Officer, the Regional Chairman and everyone who was involved in that project and no work was done on that road. Nothing at all was done. I trust

that the Attorney General, who was saying some things along the way, is taking notes and we see action being taken against these officers. These are the same people we have in Government, again, to man the affairs of the regional administrations.

Over the years residents at Barabina have been crying out for better road. We can always hear money spending to do Barabina road. The Hon. Minister here, Mr. Whittaker, since he was the Regional Chairman there, knows what I am speaking about. Just as he said yesterday what he was saying was the truth, just what I am saying is the truth. The people in Barabina, the *mud-in*, have to walk through the ... Right now the buses are not carrying anybody in there. The teachers have to take off their shoes and walk through the water to get to school. Children who are coming out have to walk through the water, and our Minister of Amerindian Affairs said that all the areas are taken care of well. Well, I would not like to see better care than this. People have been asking. I asked the Regional Chairman in the month of February about the Barabina road. He said, "Mr. Allen..."

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, your time is up.

Ms. Ally: I move that the Hon. Member be given five minutes to conclude please.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. Allen: For the Barabina road, I asked and was told that engineers will be going in from Georgetown to give an update and to advise about the road. To date, there is nothing being said about it. Is this the way we treat our people?

I want to touch quickly on water. I have seen that in the budget presentation the Minister said that the Government will continue to invest in the water sector thereby ensuring that all Guyanese have access to adequate supply of safe potable water. I keep studying this thing. I heard the Minister arguing that the water is very good. I would ask the Minister that the water which is coming through the taps in this compound if he would take it and drink it. Comrades, Mr. Speaker, I went into a building in Georgetown and when I turned on the tap and saw what was coming through I asked the residents this: Is your tank clean? They said, "Mr. Allen, this is not from my tank; this is coming directly from the tap." They took me down the yard and when I turn on the tap I asked myself if I needed to get sick in Georgetown or should I go back home to

get water to brush my teeth, because what was coming through that tap it seemed to have problems.

In the North West, there is no where there that treated water is given to the people. Here I am seeing that across the country there is safe potable water. I reported issues where water was coming through... There the [*inaudible*] like milk. The miners throw their tail ends into the creek, and all is creek water, and there is not even one tank to throw a little chlorine and treat the water so as to pass it through the lines. This is what the schools and everybody have to use.

I look at the amount of money allocated for sports and I ask: What happens here? From Region 1 to Region 10 moneys are allocated for sports, but when I looked I saw that there is nothing for the Matarkai Subregion, or the region at all. When I ask how much money will be allocated to each region... I said to the residents, when I call them, that there is nothing in the budget for Matarkai and, more so, Matthews Ridge. Why? It is because the administration, just last year, was about to sell the community centre of Matthews Ridge. I do not know which part of the world people sell... It has the right not to give any money for sport because the sports ground and the centre are in a deplorable state. The administration ensured that it has left that centre to go down.

Health: I am very happy that the Minister of Health said that it will be training a lot of persons, but when those people are trained they ought to go out to work somewhere. We in here are in a safe building; we are safe from the elements. At Moruka, when the staff of the hospital go into the store they have to walk with an umbrella. At Port Kaituma, in the clinic, when standing there one can see the sky. A pregnant mother in the maternity ward left and went in to the toilet and fell. Those matters were reported, and what have happened? Absolutely nothing! When training staff to go out into building, they ought to have somewhere safe to work. At Port Kaituma, there is the nurses' hostel which started and was supposed to be completed since the year before the last December. To date, it is still framed standing there. The nurses' quarters... The patients' utensils are washed with the nurses'. There are Tuberculosis (TB) cases and all sorts of things. The nurses are supposed to be taking care of the patients, but those who are sick and the staff are mingling.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, your time is up.

Mr. Allen: Thank you. [*Applause*]

Mr. Rohee: I would like to move that the Standing Order No. 11 be suspended to enable this sitting of the National Assembly to continue with its business beyond 10.00 p.m.

Question put, and agreed to.

Standing Order suspended.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Damon, we welcome you to the Assembly. You have a proud heritage to live up to.

Mr. Damon: Thank you Mr. Speaker and each and every other Member of this National Assembly. It is a pleasure having me here and to all other Members who are first-timers, as myself, I congratulate you all for being here too.

Mr. Speaker and all other Members, on both sides of this honourable House, I rise in this House today to support our budget presented by our Minister of Finance, the Hon. Dr Ashni Singh, for 2012. This budget, before this National Assembly, comprises of all the ingredients Guyanese would have hoped for. Let us, on both sides of this honourable House, which was once controlled by the Lords and the Governors in the colonial era, remember the masses are out there and to make sure they recognise us as their representatives in this National Assembly because of what we do for them. Members of both sides of this honourable House, let us try our best to be plausible and eloquent during our debates so all of us can understand one another. This is not the time to hold malice against one another. This is the time for the masses to judge us, and judge us they will.

We sat in this honourable House on the 10th of February and listened to our President, the Hon. Donald Ramotar's address to this National Assembly. Our President maintained, in his speech, that he is prepared to have a working relationship with the Opposition through dialogue. I think the Opposition must also try to accept our President's offer so that all the parties in the National Assembly can share their knowledge with the Government on the way forward for the people of the Republic of Guyana. I want to suggest to this honourable House that the word "Opposition" must be removed from this National Assembly as the way we identify other Members on the other side and replace it with a word that would sound more cooperating to the programmes of

this honourable House, namely the budget. I want to believe that referring to other side of this House as “Opposition” usually causes Members to make sure anything from the governing side of this House must be opposed.

From 1992 to 2012, we came a long way from being a nation power than every other country in the whole of the Western Hemisphere, except Haiti, to a nation that is playing the leading roles in the United Nations. Be it known to Members on the Opposition side of the House that under this Government the World Human Global Order, presented by the late Hon. Dr. Cheddi Jagan, has now become a chapter of the United Nations General Assembly, which is the highest bargaining body in the world. Added to that, under Comrade Jagdeo’s Government, there was the recognition with the Champion of the Earth Award. Let us not forget that it was under Dr. Jagdeo’s and the People’s Progressive Party/Civic’s Government that we stamped our authority again worldwide in the reduction of greenhouse gases so that we can help in the fight to protect the ozone layer.

Listening to some speakers, on the other side of this House, they behaved as though the Hon. Dr. Jagdeo is branded as a destructive President in his time. He was instrumental in bringing back this country from nothing to where it is today. I have sat here, in disbelief on more than four or five occasions, and heard other Members of that side of the House calling other Members on this side of the House “thief”. Tell me something: Is it true that they do not know where the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) headquarters is or they do not have facts?

We have come a long way with foreign currency in the bank to spend under the Hon. Dr. Jagdeo’s Government. The PPP/C administration will continue to serve the people of this country through this budget and we must all make sure our budget for 2012 is debated and approved by the full National Assembly. Doing otherwise and not approving this Budget 2012 is a recipe for chaos and confusion by our people in this beautiful country, who are waiting anxiously for peace, progress and prosperity. Hon. Members, on both sides of this House, we must understand that our nurses, teachers, doctors, policemen and policewomen, our soldiers and all in the sectors depend on the budget approval to continue being employed and receive a salary from Government’s coffers.

Let me now touch on some of the benefits of this budget - how it could benefit the people of Guyana, and I mean all the people of Guyana. We, the people of Region 2, thank the Government and the people of China who made a grant available for the building of the two roll-on roll-off ferries. As I speak, these two modern vessels are moored at the Transport & Harbour Department (T&HD) stelling in Georgetown and very soon they will be commissioned to start plying the route from Parika to and Supenaam return. When this process of building the stelling at Parika is completed I think the Hon. Minister Robeson Benn should invite all Members of this honourable House to be passengers on the maiden voyage from Parika to Supenaam and back. Replacing the *MV Malawi* and the *Makouria* with these vessels was a long awaited dream by the residents of Region 2.

In 2002, several new international hotels have been built - the Chic Paris, Xenon, Purple Heart and the Oasis in Queenstown. All those hotels catered for the arrival of guest, locally and further afield, and they are well served.

Not so long ago, in Region 2, two modern pumps at the Dawa pumping station were commissioned in the tunes of more than \$400 million to pump water for rice cultivation, for thirty-two thousand acres of rice land. Indeed, as stated by the Hon. Member Mr. Seeraj, new varieties and modern rice research paddy cultivation bounded from some ten thousand acres before 1992 to thirty-two thousand acres in 2012. This yielded in excess of 1.3 million bags of paddy. This is progress. All the drains and canals were silted up before 1992, and working rice was a waste of time. It was a nightmare, in Region 2. Over six new rice mills have been built, after 1992, by some of our rice farmers.

In the Pomeroon, the PPP/C Government along with the regional administration made two excavators available to impolder farmers' farms to avoid flooding. Essequibo is no more referred to as a "Cinderella County", but as the food basket of Guyana. This is because of the interest our Government has shown in Region 2. At Charity, there are two entities which are concentrating on the processing of fruits and bottling of coconut water for export. The people of Region 2 have brought Georgetown to Essequibo. Huge supermarkets are everywhere and to purchase a vehicle, be it what model, seven auto sales businesses are available to serve on terms, which is much lower than Georgetown. There are three new banks - Guyana Bank for Trade and Industry (GBTI), Republic Bank, Demerara Bank. Citizens Bank will also be in Charity, very soon. This

is because the strong growth and good management by the PPP/C administration in Region 2 under the leadership of the once Regional Chairman, the Hon. junior Minister of Agriculture, Comrade Alli Baksh, who has left no stone unturned to foster development in that Region.

Before 1992 Essequibo was a deserted county by central Government, under the People National Congress (PNC) Government. It is depressing remembering what transpired before 1992, but sometimes it is good to remember the past for the benefit of the Opposition; it forgets very quickly. With the PNC administration, there was only one marketing centre in Region 2 and even to get a file or a cutlass a farmer had to book his name and sometimes waited for three days before the tool was collected from the marketing centre. Under the PPP/C Government, if a farmer needs any agricultural tool, be it tractor, combine, trailer or motor blowers, he can stay at home, telephone a dealer and make all arrangement on one day for what he needs, and it is delivered.

From Capoey to Hampton Court, the Government has installed road lamps as the residents are very happy to receive those lamps. I want to remind the other side of the House that indeed we have brought Georgetown to Essequibo, which was impossible for those Members to do. Very soon we would have to ask central Government to widen the Essequibo road to accommodate a surge of vehicles. We have the benefits of two water purification plants serving thousands of our residents between Devonshire Castle and Adventure. Very soon, there are provisions in the Budget 2012 for continued water upgrading systems all over Region 2. God Bless the PPP/C Government.

Our eight Amerindian villages are no exception where developments are concerned. Mainstay village, Tapakuma, Akawini, Wakapau, Kabakuburi and Siriki, all are recipient of the Government budgetary allocations. I want to believe that all the other Amerindian communities are no exception. The Hon. Member from AFC made mention about water for Onderneeming. It is a new scheme and the Hon. Minister of Housing and Water, Hon. Irfaan Ali, is in the process of drilling a well at Onderneeming, opposite the New Opportunity Corp. When it is completed water will flow to all residents of that scheme. Now is not before 1992 when almost all *Essequibians* had to make good with water from the canals to drink. This Government is for the people; it is not like the Government before 1992 which was self-opinionated and had no interest in us, in Region 2.

10.19 p.m.

Before 1992, we, the residents in Region 2, once wondered if we were not part of Guyana. We asked ourselves then which country we were part of - Guyana or Venezuela. From our hospitals, police stations and all other government quarters and institutions to serve our people were down.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, your time is up.

Dr. Ramsammy: I move that five minutes be given for the Hon. Member to conclude his presentation.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. Damon: Our hospitals were giving aspirins for our fever, aspirins for ulcers, aspirins for every illness and ailments. In Region 2, I am aware that on several occasions, before 1992, before we came to office, families of severely sick persons started building coffins and made arrangements for their funerals before they were confident, at our two hospitals in Region 2, that they would die. The Hon. Member Comrade Alli Baksh, who for nineteen years was the Regional Chairman, along with the cooperation of the PPP/Civic administration, was very instrumental in turning around Region No. 2 to its splendour and now it is recognised as the cleanest region in Guyana.

I speak about Region 2. We in Region 2 were fortunate also to receive a medical boat with a dental chair that plies the upper and lower Pomeroon river to take care of our farmers, loggers, gold miners and their families. Other Members on the other side of this honourable House... This is progress under the PPP/Civic administration.

Let me touch on our sea defences. In Region 2, our sea defences before 1992 were very old and all that existed were cavities, slippages and erosions, everywhere, but under this administration billions were spent to repair and rebuild them. We have very sturdy sea defences in Region 2. As I speak, contracting company, BK International is repairing and building sea defences in Region 2. From 1992 to 2012, more than \$2 billion has been spent on chip-seal roads and streets and no village was left out, be it Dartmouth or Queenstown. Two years ago farmers benefited from a four-mile farm-to-market road which costs \$37 million.

The Hon. Member of APNU, Mr. Trotman, made recommendation to this House for the removal of the barriers from around the Parliament Office. All of us, on both sides of this honourable House, were presented on the 10th of February when our President, the Hon. Mr. Donald Ramotar, came to this National Assembly and if those barriers were not there, I think, the police might have had caused to use force to restrain a bunch of indisciplined people who were all decked in green shirts. We know which side of the House they belong to, unless they were all fakes. Let me remind this honourable House that it is the responsibility of all of us to make sure the people's budget of 2012, and its dispensation, has a smooth passage, and this can only happen by all of us agreeing that indeed this budget has all the ingredients for the people of Guyana.

I thank you. [*Applause*]

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Hon. Member Damon. Hon. Members, undoubtedly, the essence of this debate is contained in the presentation of the regional Members of Parliament, so we thank Mr. Damon for that presentation.

Hon. Members, it has come to the end of our business for today. I would like to wish you all a good weekend. I invite the Hon. Minister of Home Affairs, leading Government's business today, to move the adjournment motion.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Speaker, I wish to move that the House stands adjourned until Monday at 1.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the House is adjourned until Monday the 16th of April at 1.00 p.m. Have a good weekend all. Thank you very much.

Assembly adjourned accordingly at 10.26 p.m.