

Official Report

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2006-2011) OF THE NINTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN

145TH Sitting

Friday, 28TH January, 2011

The Assembly convened at 2.20 p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Welcome

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome twenty students and two teachers from the Camille's Academy, at Soesdyke, East Bank Demerara. I trust that Members of the National Assembly will demonstrate to the students how national debates are conducted.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MOTION

BUDGET SPEECH 2011 – MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 2011

WHEREAS the Constitution of Guyana requires that Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditures 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 2011 have been prepared and laid before the Assembly on 2011-01-17

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2011, of a total sum of **one hundred and forty-six billion, eight hundred and seventy-nine million, six hundred and fifty-four thousand dollars (\$146,879,654,000), excluding fourteen billion, five hundred and fifty million, five hundred and two thousand dollars (\$14,550,502,000)** 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

Dr. Norton: I rise to make my contribution in this Hon. House to the budget debate of 2011, as presented by the Hon. Member Dr. Ashni Singh, Minister of Finance, entitled, *Together Building Tomorrow's Guyana Today*.

Before I go further, as the world observes the International Year for People of African Descent let me recognise and pay homage, and also that congratulations are in order for the Hon. Member, Ms. Joan Baveghems, who has been recently sworn in as a Member of this Hon. House.

I would now like to make my contributions to the debate. The Hon. Minister of Finance was quite impressive with the language used in the budget, where he spoke about some unmistakable lessons to be learnt from past experiences, and I quote:

“No less is required, if we are to reduce our susceptibility to external shocks, reduce poverty to a minimum, and unleash the creative energies and productive efforts of all of our people to their maximum potential.”

I cannot agree more with the Minister. But let us see if this budget will help in this regard.

According to this budget, in 2011, \$14 billion has been allocated to the health sector, with the aim of improving the quality of services provided by continuing the efforts to improve infrastructure, human resources, and the delivery of the publicly guaranteed health services packages. In spite of the fact that there has been increasing investment over the years, and substantially so, there are pertinent, real and genuine concerns by Guyanese, relating to whether we are getting reciprocal returns for the investment of the people’s money in this sector. In other words, are we getting value for money?

There is no doubt that there have been some improvements, and we have made some strides in the past, in the health sector. Not surprisingly, of course, with all that spending of large sums of money in this sector there must be, has to be, some improvements - something to point out.

There might have been some achievement in immunization- no doubt about that. This is especially so with the introduction of the two new vaccines: that of the Rotavirus and the Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine 13. We hope that the \$400 million of this budget which will be going to the vaccination programme will be sufficient to make the planned introduction of the Human Papilloma Virus vaccine for young girls to become a reality. There is, however, room for improvement in the vaccination programme, especially in the Hinterland communities, as was pointed out by the Hon. Member, Mrs. Hastings, from the Upper Mazaruni area, with respect to refrigeration of the vaccines preventing them from being spoilt.

There might be some improvements in the management of chronic diseases, like diabetes and hypertension. We do hope that the Ministry of Health got all the money that was asked for, or that the \$500 million it received will be enough for the projections of those two diseases. This would avoid that which has become a norm or a habit- coming to this National Assembly to pass supplementary allocations, after the fact, as happened last year, one day before the end of the year. According to the Minister this was to purchase medications for these two chronic diseases. Unfortunately, the Minister of Health did not inform this House what happened to the

programme for the management of diabetic eye disease which he boasted about in last year's budget. Let us hope that we will be able to see some progress in this regard during this year.

There might have been some improvements in the increase of the number of health care workers in all of the country. Of course, over \$280 million was expended last year on training. We hope that the \$345 million, that is now injected, will be sufficient to take our human resource capacity to where it is supposed to be.

We call once again on the Government to pay heed to our plea made during the debate of last year, and to the recommendations of the various investigations which were carried out. That plea is for the correction of the non-availability of specialist care in the four areas of basic eye care delivery at the Guyana Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC) and the other regional hospitals. We are referring to that of obstetrics and gynaecology, paediatrics, surgery and internal medicine.

There is a dire need for postgraduate training in the different specialist areas of medicine, and it must be done in sufficient numbers to cover the entire country. This is so, especially in the areas of neurosurgery, urology, paediatric surgery and pathology. As was the case of ophthalmology, there is one qualified Guyanese Government Pathologist for over two decades now at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation.

I must tell this Hon. House that we now have a trained Guyanese ophthalmologist, who returned home from a scholarship with a contractual obligation to the Government, working at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation, thanks to an organisation called Orbis International. Another will be back shortly from Uruguay, again thanks to another organisation called Sight Savors International.

What is a bit strange is that there are scholarships for postgraduate training in ophthalmology being advertised in our local newspapers with the qualifying exams being written in Spanish. I would assume that this is totally out of the control of the Health Ministry, for that certainly was not meant for the Guyanese medical graduates as those from the University of Guyana (UG), for they are not known to be versed in Spanish or to even speak the language. There seems to be a lack of communication somewhere, and efforts must be made by the Ministry to correct same or else our local graduates can cry foul and they would be justified in doing so. This postgraduate

training should have happened two decades ago and should have happened in so many other areas of medicine.

While it seems as though we shall be improving the ophthalmic human resources of this country I would like to point out that there are still so many setbacks. The Hon. Minister boasted about the realisation of cataracts by the phacoemulsification procedure. This, however, happens to be a thing of the past. This is so because the hospital managed to acquire the equipment and consumables necessary with the compliments of the influences of a particular Chinese ophthalmologist who worked at the GPHC at that time. I say this because since that particular Chinese doctor left Guyana we seem unable to have access to the consumables necessary for the realisation of this procedure and the hospital refuses to access same, so that we can no longer do phacoemulsification. Besides, the wet field bipolar cautery that is so necessary for ophthalmic surgery has not been functioning for the past months and the administration of the hospital cannot say when there will be a replacement.

While we congratulate the GPHC for the three postgraduate programmes in place, namely surgery, orthopaedics and anaesthesia, as mentioned in the budget, along with the new nurses psychiatric programme that was stated in the budget, to be introduced, it is important to know that most of the major players and instructors of these programmes have been qualified under the PNC Government, having enjoyed the Government's postgraduate scholarships. They did not have to wait on international organisations for those awards.

Just to let you know that the postgraduate training in anaesthesia no longer does exist, because the three students who were in the programme have now abandoned it. There is that feeling that Dr. Sugrim, the returnee ophthalmologist, will remain and work in Guyana and will not leave as so many other co-health workers before him, especially the nurses, continue to do. This is a good feeling to have when we think of the future of this country.

I will repeat, again, that the postgraduate training is important, as is being demonstrated, and I beg that the Ministry do put in place, as early as possible, the necessary programmes for the realisation of same, for we are going to continue to lose our goodly doctors. When these doctors go to do their postgraduate training on their own they generally do not return for so many different reasons. In last year budget \$280 million was expended for training. We hope that the

\$345 million, which is now injected into training, will be sufficient to take our human resource capacity to where it is supposed to be. While there is so much wisdom in training two hundred and fifty professional nurses, according to the budget, we hope that the amount of money would also be adequate to provide the conditions necessary for the living and teaching of those nurses and students of other health disciplines.

I repeat again, in the health sector there have been improvements, and I agree with the Hon. Minister of Health that the story of the health sector is not only about the deficiencies and about the mistakes which were made, but it is for the Minister to make that case. The Hon. Minister acknowledged that there are problems still in the health sector, and this is what I am here to talk about. I agree wholeheartedly with the Minister when he said that while the Members on the Government's side of the House will defend this budget, the Members of the Opposition is expected to do the opposite, that is, they will criticise the budget. I am so glad the Hon. Minister admitted to this, for we do know that some of us behave somewhat irrational, when our sector is being criticised. Now, this is why I am here on the Opposition bench, to point out the things that are not positive about the health sector: pointing out the deficiencies, reminding the Hon. Minister of the so many mistakes that were made. This seems to upset him so much. He becomes emotional, and many a times, here in this Hon. House, persons have expressed fear for his life and sanity. The Hon. Minister has no desire to hear about this even if it will help him to be a better Minister.

The Minister said that persons criticise the health sector because it serves narrow political expediency. During last year budget he declared that Dr. Norton wants to become Minister of Health, and questioned whether people will ever vote for me or want me for their Minister. I would like the Hon. Minister to know, I do not want to become the Minister of Health; I want to be the President. I say this because the Hon. Minister also has those desires and I would like to know if he is still a Republican, because with all this talk of free medicine for the public sector, I think he might not become a socialist, not to say a communist.

I worked in the health sector all my life, for over two decades, and I am fully aware of what goes on there. And even if what I speak about is carried in the newspaper that is not necessarily my source of information. It might not be entirely true to say that a few instances are selected from

the newspapers to paint a bad picture of the health sector. It is a fact that the newspapers only carry a few isolated cases, for there is many other cases which are not captured by the press.

It is said that because I am part of the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation I criticise myself, and calls have been made in this Hon. House for me to be fired for doing so. [**Mrs. Backer:** Is it that Ms. Manickchand added you to her list?] Yes. I am part of the management of the GPHC, but if firing me will make things right - bring back those who died from preventable deaths and avoid others dying under similar circumstances - then go right ahead.

One gets the idea that persons feel that because I work at the GPHC, that because I am part of the management, I should not say anything negative about the GPHC and its workers. They are saying that to do so will diminish the work of too many of our dedicated health workers, some of whom might also be supporters of other political parties. How can one interpret this? In other words, because some of those workers of the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation might be members of the PNCR -1G, of which I am a member, I should not criticise them. Mr. Speaker, one of the victims of recent scourge of increased maternal deaths at the GPHC was a staff nurse at this same institution, for fifteen years. She happened to be a victim, yet she worked there. We criticise because we want to put things right. At the funeral service of this nurse, in Linden, the relative who read the eulogy described the institution as “Hurricane Georgetown Hospital” which snuffed out the nurse’s life in a period of her full faculty.

It is a fact that there are dedicated workers in the system: doctors who will sleep in their cars for there is no place for them to rest while on duty; nurses who remain at their posts and work when there were not even the basic equipment and materials to do so - when there were no thermometers for temperature taking, no blood pressure (BP) apparatus for pressure taking, when there is a complete absence of a basic torchlight for examination of a patient. In so many countries the actions of those workers would have been different. It is happening right now.

Apparently, I should not speak of the fact that with some innovations the waiting time of the general public to have access to health care in this country could be significantly reduced. I should not point out that the accountability of the health service is deficient in many aspects and it should be improved; I should not point out that while there is a more reliable supply of medicines and medical supplies, health facilities do not always have the medications in stock that

is prescribed; that the ambulances services need to be further improved, especially in the number of vehicles and staff; and I should not say that there needs to be done a better job at documentation in the entire health sector.

It was the Head of the Presidential Secretariat and Cabinet Secretary, Dr. Roger Luncheon, and I pause to wish him a speedy recovery, Mr. Speaker, who slammed the administrations, of all the public hospitals, for poor record keeping, which has, in some part, led to some of the most recent maternal deaths at the public hospitals. Dr. Luncheon lamented that there were lapses in record keeping at both the administrative and professional levels. It was because of poor record keeping that Cabinet made statutory the monitoring of all maternal deaths. Having said that, I find it frightening, the manner in which Hon. Member Dr. Ramsammy put his neck on a block for the data collected by the health sector. Yes, I do agree that if you cannot show me the source of your data, then you have to use mine, but I am obligated to making sure that my data collection is efficient and accurate.

But most of all, our maternal and infant mortality rate is too high. In 2010, there were more than 17 cases at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation alone. In just one year, the maternal mortality rate went up by six cases. Please, I am not saying this as an attempt to disrespect and demoralise the health workers. I know they work hard and tirelessly. I am saying this to stress the importance of sustained monitoring and supervision. Yes, we congratulate Region 6 for receiving the Epidemiology Award from the Maternal and Child Health Unit and the Medex Andrea of Region 2 for being adjudged the Health Worker of the Year. We agree that there should be recognition for the health workers' contributions to improving the delivery of health services in this country.

Any preventable death is one too many, and to say that there are only a few isolated cases, as the Hon. Minister did last year's in his budget presentation, is not telling the truth. Yes, there has been improvement in bringing down the maternal death rate over the years. From a figure of 32, in 1991, to nine, in 2009, of maternal deaths per 10,000 is commendable, and we, from this side of the House, congratulate the Minister and his Ministry for recording that historic target, having realising single digit for the first time in the maternal death rate. We will be happy and do hope that we can meet the 2015 Millennium Development Goals as established by the World Health Organization (WHO) for maternal death, that rate is a of eight per 10,000.

The fact is that things went wrong and times became rough, according to the Hon. Minister, with respect to causing the public health sector to suffer a severe blow in the area of maternal and child health. That must not be taken lightly, for it can happen again. We call upon the health sector to evaluate what caused the measures which were put in place to break down, and to put in place the means to correct and prevent the same from happening again.

If the Maternal Morality National Committee is a permanent investigative team since 2003, then it seems not to be efficient and very little has been learnt from the experiences of those cases. Last year I used the case of a 35 year old mother of three, from Linden, who perished with her baby inside her and the case of another mother who died at the West Demerara Regional Hospital (WDRH). I refer to the late Tricia Wintz and Salima Ramlall to demonstrate how devastating an effect the absence of an obstetrician consultant and the lack of a functioning operating theatre could have on the mothers of this country. What was the comment from the authorities? It was said that I was reading of isolated cases from the newspapers. I repeat, any maternal death is one too many. In less than one year later, at the same hospital in Linden, another mother perished under the same and identical adverse condition - no functioning operating theatre and no obstetrician - as was the case of the late Inga Nieuenkirk. It was the newspaper that I received this information from; it was from an article with the photographs of eight of the other victims who died during the last four months of last year. At this moment, I can read of all the names of all the maternal death victims, with their address and time of death, whether it was in the newspaper or not, of the 17 persons who perished at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation, alone last year. There are certainly not a handful of adverse events that people complain about as the Minister would want us to believe about the cases that were mentioned last year.

The Minister was criticised by his superiors. He openly said that he was embarrassed by this sudden increase in maternal deaths; he openly came forward and said to the public that he will take the blame when blatant mistakes were made in the health sector, but he defended his health workers. While I point out the various deficiencies manifested by this sector, I will stand by the Hon. Minister as he stands by his health workers, reminding him, however, of what was said by his President, and I quote: “It is a sad thing when there is negligence at health institutions. If there is negligence and no sanctions, then there will continue to be negligence.”

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

[Applause]

2.50 p.m.

The Prime Minister and Minister of Public Works and Communications [Mr. Hinds]: Mr. Speaker, Hon. Members, I rise to support our Government's Budget 2011 so thoughtfully considered and presented by our Hon. Minister of Finance. The budget, which garnered \$161.4 billion, is, again, larger than the one before with no new taxes, but increases in the threshold for the payment of personal income tax and reductions in the level of corporate taxes, except for telephone companies which are doing well enough in Guyana and can continue to shoulder the existing tax rate. The budget is not larger because the Hon. Minister of Finance contrived to make it so. Rather, it reflects the progress in our economy. On the revenue side, it reflects the growth in our national economy and on the expenditure side it seeks to sustain and enhance that growth as well as to reset, refine and signal the direction of continuing growth.

In an economy every citizen is receiving or taking some resources from others, doing something to or with those resources to make them more valuable and passing them on, now of greater value, to others in society. There is a myriad of transactions and relationships at any one point in time, with all parts in these relationships, enabling each other whilst constraining each other. An economy is dynamic, and growth of the whole requires growth all around. Mr. Speaker, we can see these features in our economy growing all around.

Some people say our budgets sound much like each other from one year to the other. This is so. The layout is much the same. It is a logical, informative layout starting with an international background and proceeding to many particulars which give a fair and balanced picture of where we are coming from, where we are and where we are going. The economy is truly like a living system, as a plant that grows with nurturing. That is the way our economy has been growing, with the attentive, knowledgeable, tender, loving care of this PPP/C administration. As one listened to the budget's presentation, one had the sense of progress, continuity, change and transformation from stage to stage.

Mr. Speaker and Hon. Members, we have had repeated criticisms that this budget is an election budget and some of my colleagues have spoken to it, giving the impression that this budget has been drawn up looking for enough goodies for everyone to buy votes. Such a budget would be one of a kind budget. It would not be following the pattern of the budgets of previous years as this budget is. Whoever described this budget as “an elections budget” should be made to look at the characteristics of an election budget, in particular the deficit in this budget of 2011. The characteristic of an election budget is the surge in a deficit as a Government sets out to unsustainably and irresponsibly makes friends with everybody, but look at the deficit in the Budget 2011.

On page 67, it is 3.0 %, reflecting the financial discipline that leads to prosperity which the PPP has always been wedded to since its first budgets of the pre-independence period. If this was “an election budget” spending to buy votes would have lead to a budget deficit of more than, say, 9% which in itself would have been very defensible when one looks at deficits being run by many other countries, developed and developing. We heard some figures, yesterday, of deficits that the previous Administration ran up. I think it was 30% 40 %, so even if we move to 9 % it still would have been defensible, but we have resisted that and we have held to the 3%, a level, if you look you will see, was much the same as previous years.

Before I get to those areas of our economy which I oversee, let me address the theme, a theme with which I could not concur with more, *Together Building Tomorrow's Guyana Today*. There has been much criticism of the word “together”. I will not respond now to that save to say that on considering the history of our country, no group has sacrificed more- paid more dues- to keep Guyana together than the PPP and the PPP/C. That being so, with more invested in Guyana being kept together than any other group, we of the PPP and the PPP/C are more earnest in our commitment to stay together than many, who have been criticising, have ever demonstrated.

A Guyana that is not together will bring to nought all that Dr. Jagan, the PPP, and our country as a whole, endured and sacrificed during those three decades from the early 1960s to 1992. We of the PPP and the PPP/C do not speak lightly of the word “together”. That aside, the theme restates that we have to build Guyana. We have a country to build. I think the Hon. Member, Mr. Corbin may have been leading others to sink in those earlier days when he was in charge of mobilisation. We have a country to build; it will not build itself and we have to build today for

tomorrow. We cannot consume and enjoy all we can today, but must defer, must put aside something, invest something, for the better tomorrow. That is an obligation, a responsibility for each of us. This budget, in its theme, speaks to and calls on every Guyanese to take part in the building of Guyana. Each of us has to do something, all that we can do, each in our own way, today for the better tomorrow. As a new young lawyer said to me, rather surprisingly, out of the blue, at a function some years ago, we must not be Guyanese by default; we must be active Guyanese.

Mr. Speaker: Would that be Mr. Nandlall?

Mr. Hinds: No Sir. It was a young female lawyer.

Mr. Speaker: I am just enquiring.

Mr. Hinds: I do not think I, in any way, caused her to say what she said.

There were much criticism of the threshold and the Value Added Tax (VAT), and there were a number of calls for paying teachers, police – public servants – more. We would like that. We are working for the day when we can do just that.

This budget is about producing more, having more with which to pay and paying more. We need to say again what we have said before for the benefit of persons who may not have heard it before and to reinforce and reassure others who would have heard it before. Pay, yes, is about distribution and who are in the political and social positions of power and can determine distribution, but there must be also, firstly, things to distribute, things to be produced through our work. We would not have bread except by the sweat of our brow. This budget and its theme call on every Guyanese to put his or her shoulder to the wheel. We cannot pay ourselves or be paid more than we are really producing. Our pay cannot be determined by what we think we are worth, not even by what we need. We seem to be thinking so and we could forgive ourselves, maybe, for thinking that way during the first twenty years of our independence when we evidently thought so and proceeded to pay ourselves what we thought we were worth, but without the production of the matching goods and services. We know what the results were – rampant inflation over those twenty to twenty-five years.

Yesterday, former Minister, Mr. Nokta, quoted from a speech of late President Hoyte in which he spoke about the Government of the day printing money and the rampant inflation that was associated with it. Mr. Speaker, for those, particularly, like myself and yourself, maybe, who had grown up before independence and were around in the 1950s and 1960s, know that prices today, in numbers, at least, are, on average, more than a thousand-fold of what they were at independence. This rampant inflation was only halted by the very difficult and painful medicine which our people had to drink towards the end of the 1980s. We will give late President Hoyte the honour for initiating that. More than that, that period of rampant inflation contributed greatly to the breakdown of society and the resort to living outside the law. A non-lawful life and culture became the necessity from which we still suffer and have not yet recovered. We do not want to go there again.

Someone on the other side spoke to the sad plight of some of our senior citizens today, blessed with the gift of long life, who are today eighty years old, ninety years old and more, who would have retired in 1985 or even earlier, 1975, and who would have contributed to insurances and pensions in even earlier years and whose pensions now are calculated where their pre-inflation numbers are so small today. I think one of our Members spoke to that. We feel, also, for those people. Such persons are the continuing victims of that period of inflation of the first twenty-five years. We have not been unmindful of their plights. From time to time, minimum payments have been raised both by the National Insurance Scheme (NIS) and the public service pension scheme. Let us not go again in the direction of wages and salaries which could not be sustained and are not in line with what is happening in the production area and in the marketplace.

We of the PPP/C do want a road to a better life. We are not against a better life, but what we are saying is that we have to get to that better life through our work and sustained increases in pay which are in line with and reflect increases in production, productivity and so on. We want a more prosperous life for our people and ourselves. We of the PPP/C know that we can do it. Our past eighteen years have shown that we can do it. This Budget 2011, and all our preceding budgets are about keeping us on the disciplined, straight and narrow path which leads to prosperity, resisting the alluring deceptions of paths which may flatter us today but takes tomorrow back along the first twenty years of independence.

A word about VAT, not for us in this House here, we ought to know the true story, but for the ordinary man and woman out there. There should be no doubt that VAT takes proportionately more from those who have more and proportionately less from those who are worse off. The greater VAT is, the greater the taking and proportioning. This is so because VAT is a contribution taken on purchases of final goods and services so that the person with more money who buys and enjoys more goods and services contributes more to the general national purpose, and the small person with little money contributes less.

We may have forgotten something else, something that struck me when, Hon. Member, I think, it was the Hon. Member Judith David-Blair, was reading out the expenditure of some person with a tight budget. I do not know if she can read it again, Mr. Speaker, but all of the items, maybe, except for the kind of oil that may be bought, are zero rated. No VAT is charged on basic food, basic education, basic health and some basic building materials.

I think the Hon. Members on the other side, who claim that they are very concerned about the people of our country who have little, are deceiving the people of the country by calling for lower VAT. They must let them know that when that happens that those people will be worse off. I thought, in preparing this, I should go into the numbers but, maybe, we should leave that for another time. We can have examples calculated, showing someone, say with \$30,000, or \$35,000 a month and someone with \$200,000 a month and what the effect is if VAT is lowered. What happens is that the person with more saves more and contributes less and, therefore, there is less to spend on which the poorer person enjoys on more or less to the same degree.

More than that, I am sure that a number of my honourable friends on the other side know what is happening with VAT in many other countries of the world. VAT has been raised to reduce the national debts incurred in deficits in the earlier years when it appeared as though those countries were living beyond their means. We, in this House, would know and we should tell our people that in the United Kingdom (UK) our old mother country from which many of us still take some guidance, VAT has been increased from 17.5 % to 20% as part of an austerity budget. In reaction to the present economic difficulties, the UK has raised VAT and it has a range of austerity measures, including some 500,000 to 600,000 reduction in the public service numbers, and so on. I think we need to do a duty for our people out there, to give them a picture of what is

happening in other parts of the world so that they can understand that what we have been doing here is pretty good.

Let me talk a little about the income tax threshold. We have been raising the income tax threshold in a sustainable manner and this year, as it is raised, everyone in Guyana who pays income tax has some more money in hand to spend. I think there has been a calculation somewhere giving about \$1.7 billion in the hands of all citizens for direct spending and that is a good thing. We are glad that we can do that this year and still have a balanced budget. The Opposition, on one hand, called for the threshold to be raised even more and, at the same time, contrariwise, said that many people do not earn as much as \$40,000 per month and, therefore, do not get the full benefit. They have to choose where they are going to sit. Our position is that from year to year, and particularly as the bottom comes up, we will continue to raise the threshold even more in a sustained and balanced way.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let me get on with the sectors for which I carry responsibility and talk about mining. We, as Guyanese, have grown up hearing about our abundant natural resources with which we are blessed. As one who has been in the natural resources area for all his working life, I can say yes we are blessed with abundant resources, with great potential, but we have to work for those blessings. There are no golden eggs on the table waiting to be picked up. Maybe, there were a few early *porkknockers* who were lucky enough to find a canister of nuggets. There are some places that referred to canister – a canister of nuggets. Perhaps they had to and did live the life expected of one who wins the big lotto. They had to celebrate and be celebrated to keep the thousand others believing, risking their lives and limbs, and putting their families in jeopardy, hoping for huge fortune. But the reality for most was, maybe, just getting enough to keep body and soul together. There are stories, too, of some who went into the Hinterland to seek their fortune and were always waiting to get a fortune to go back home and never returned to the coast. It is with this realistic and experienced sense of hard work and deprivation, living in basic camp conditions, freely doing without the many comforts of our towns and villages that I want to commend all our small and medium scale miners from whom there was a declaration of 308,438 ounces through 2010- a small increase in volume, 2.9 % over 2009, but the sixth year of steady increases and a new record.

Foreign exchange earnings on the export of gold, however, increased by 23% to US\$386.4 million, over 40 % of our nation's foreign exchange earnings in 2010. Our small and medium scale gold miners have been contributing much and we want to commend and thank them very much. The increase in gold production has been riding on rising gold prices, attracting and enabling increased investments, particularly in excavators, and providing thousands of direct and indirect jobs. Good operators can receive in the order of GUY\$500,000 a month. Indeed, there is a shortage of skilled operators and associated maintenance men of earth mover equipment throughout the mining and construction industry. There is an area where there is need for jobs and, sensitive to this, our Ministry of Labour has been featuring basic operator training in our Government's National Training Project for Youth Empowerment, providing a second chance to those who may not have made good of our secondary school system for whatever reason - good or bad. I am particularly pleased as a representative Member of Parliament for Region 10 that during 2009 and 2010, 233 young people graduated from the courses offered in Linden and the majority of them are working today. Originally, only 100 youth were targeted for Linden, so this is a story of positive discrimination, affirmative action for Region 10. Perhaps there is need for more of such and whatever we in the Government could do, we will do.

We need to put our gold sector, small and medium scale mining sector, into some context. This declared production came from sales of gold by some 2000 persons selling gold to the Guyana Gold Board and licensed dealers and from the workings of some 815 individual operations, engaging about 10,000 persons altogether, spread over about two-thirds or three-quarters of our country in some areas far apart, but also concentrated in some areas where there is a shout. A few of those operations were river dredges, the larger cutter head dredges with capitalisation of about GUY\$100 million - \$400 million as well as a few restored suction dredges with capitalisation in terms of \$20 million - \$80 million, but the overwhelming majority are land dredging and land mining with excavators and capitalisation, say \$30 million - \$400 million. We still have the individual modern day *porkknocker*, who, these days, would probably have a metal detector, along with a spade, pick axe and *batel*, and he may have to have about \$300,000 - \$400,000 to get set up along with passage, food money, and so on.

Of note too, there are few, but growing numbers, of hard rock mining, many of which include tunnelling. We estimate that small and medium scale miners together have invested about \$150

million in their sector. I put this to paint a picture of the range of situations - the large numbers, the spread across our country and the wide range of capitalisation, production rate and interests, the declarations from the 800 to 850 operations range from say ten ounces to ten thousand ounces. Indeed, I think, our largest declaration last year was about 15,000 ounces, but the person may have also traded or he may have bought from other people. What we have here is a range of a thousand-fold between the different participants in the small and medium scale gold mining sector with wide range in capitalisation, experience, expertise and particular interests. This wide range, coupled with the rising gold prices and the calls for reduced negative environmental and social impact, has created in some people and places, a frenzied, almost anything goes, attitude.

We recall some wild miners repeatedly mining at the Salbora road outside Mahdia, destroying the piping, taking water to Mahdia, and converting it to their own use. I have to admit that the circumstances have brought out the worse in many of our people in mining. I have to admit to the many allegations and counter-allegations that a number of our Mines Officers may be siding with some, may be silent partners with others, and so on. There is a need for a huge increase in policing by the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC), or of the GGMC, whilst there is some concern too that persons who have been selected to train and police should also be above board and not add to the problem.

3.20 p.m.

We need to move faster in the placing of about... and this is our estimate... Looking at what the Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC) has in the field, we think that the GGMC needs to add, at least, about another 160 officers to adequately police this much grown sector.

Mr. Speaker: Your time is up, Prime Minister.

Minister of Home Affairs [Mr. Rohee]: Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask that the Hon. Member be given 15 minutes to continue his presentation.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Hinds: In this regard, the pronouncement of our President to encourage officers of the Guyana Defense Force (GDF) to volunteer for stints in such an assignment is welcome.

You would recall the furor and turmoil in the small and medium scale gold and diamond mining sector from about the end of 2009 and into the first three to four months of 2010. It was precipitated when we called for a six-month notice of felling or in any way compromising any tree in the course of mining. This call sought to reduce the intensifying contradiction between the standards to which the logging and timber companies were being held, “Forest Certification” being the term even before Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS), and the traditional way of operation of the majority of our small and medium scale miners. The majority of our people in this sector are just miners. They seek to get a position in an area that is yielding enough gold and when it has run out they look around anxiously to move within days to some other position where others are making gold.

To those miners our call for six months notice was a demand on them that, having run out of gold in one location they had to sit on their hands for six months before they moved on to mind in another area. With their monthly installments of \$500, 000 and more, I understand even up to \$1 million a month on their backhoes and with many mouths to feed.

From that point of view the furor was natural and we understood it. It was not what we intended but we understood it and the problem is that earlier with much more gold in the ground and fewer persons going after it, our miners could get by with looking ahead, maybe, a week or two but now with their commitments of two to three years of loans and higher purchase payments on their backhoes and their equipment they, for their own good, need to be looking ahead two, three, four years, even if there was not issue of forest certification and LCDS. For their own good, our miners need to know where they will be mining six months or more into the future. I know that this may come easily. Some people may say that this comes easily from someone coming from a bauxite operation where in the old days mine planning horizon could be as much as 10 years out, but when we called for the six month notice, it was a shock to the small and medium scale miners. We saw that there needed to be some time so that people could cool down, calm down and talk things through. In this regard I want to thank my colleague, Minister Benn, a Former Commissioner of GGMC, who, with his reputation for firmness and strict discipline but also known to be sympathetic to miners, successfully Chaired the Land Use Committee which has created greater understanding of conflicting views all around and also gave the assurance that

what this Government seeks is outcomes which bring everyone to a better place – the miners, timber operators, residents in the forest and the growing number of eco-tourist operators.

This call for a six month notice is just part of the challenge to which our small and medium scale miners have a right. As a result of the very success and popularity of the sector, minerals being a wasting resource and the easier occurrences being mined earlier, miners are always facing greater challenges at the next mining location. With the Government and the GGMC helping, small and medium scale miners are making much progress. I hope I am not speaking too early but there are much lesser uproars about turbidity in our streams and rivers. I am not going to say that there is none; I do not what to test fate and tomorrow, in the papers, we see turbidity all over, but for the last couple of months we have not been having furors about turbidity.

Here, again, I want to recognise the work of my Hon. Colleague, Mr. Benn, when, as Commissioner of GGMC, he demonstrated and mandated the use of tailing ponds. That is in place now and turbidity is less of a problem. With the assistance of a number of programmes, and from its own efforts, GGMC has now institutionalised a quarterly sweep through all of the mining camps recording environmental matters including turbidities as well as matters like sanitation. I want to mention that miners have responded warmly to the visits.

We have, to step back a bit, start addressing the issue of reclamation and restoration of mined out areas. In this regard, I want to speak about the miners taking warmly to the visits to French Guiana to see mining there where the necessary disturbance is followed by prompt reclamation and restoration. We have started some trials and demonstrations of restoring mined out areas.

Diamonds have come down quite a lot, I think not even 50,000 carats was declared last year, but we know that demand was low for diamond and prices were low, but at the end of the year both were increasing – prices and demand. It is known to people in the industry that people could switch from gold to diamond and diamonds to gold as the relative prices change.

We are also hoping to have again large scale gold operations in Guyana. There are some joint venture arrangements based on clusters of medium-scale leases, where prospecting is being pursued as if it were a large scale property. Hopes are high that there will be, in Guyana, in a few years, two gold mines with reserves greater than OMAI. After more than 12 years of prospecting, preparatory work has begun for the construction of a mine at Aurora on the Cuyuni River. They

have started the preparatory work, putting in the road to get to Aurora. Here is an instance of collaboration and partnership. They are using the Buck Hall road, developing their own port facilities near to Buck Hall and starting out on a Buck Hall road, and then extending into their own to get to Aurora. I can mention, also, that coming very fast on their heels is a potential gold with copper mine at Toroparu at the Puruni.

Manganese

During the year, we were pleased to expedite and facilitate a serious interest in reviewing and evaluating the manganese deposits in the Matthews Ridge Area with the intention, if it were feasible, to restart production there. This group has quickly gotten down to prospecting the area and has rehabilitated office buildings. They remain very optimistic that by the middle of this year they would have confirmed the minimum quantity of reserves necessary to take a decision to produce. Once this is so, it is projected that a new plant will be constructed and export shipments of manganese from Guyana would be renewed by the end of 2012. This has brought additional life to Matthews Ridge, already rejuvenated with the surge in small and medium scale gold mining activities which began about 10 years ago. The Government has granted access to buildings on the Old Staff Hill and in the Old Mill area. I paid a visit to Matthews Ridge earlier this month and was heartened to see a mobile cellular telephone tower being erected there by Digicel, giving expectations of cell service in that area in three to four months time. My Hon. Members, long years ago if you were out there you would have been cut off, but in a few months we will be able to speak by cellular phone.

Uranium

Whilst one can question the claims that uranium is a source of clean energy and I see quite a few programmes on a number of the international television stations on which the people dealing with uranium are saying “Clean Energy”; others question that nuclear energy is a non-greenhouse gas source of energy – a non-GHG (Green House Gas) source of energy. GHG is an important issue these days in the context of climate change. The mining company U3O8 Prometheus, a newly founded company, which began prospecting in the Aricheng, Middle Mazaruni Area, where Cogema had been prospecting in the 1980s, now believes that it has established reserves of 70% to 80% of what is required for a minimum sized mine. It is hoped

that in another year or two they will reach the minimum quantity and a decision to go ahead. There are other uranium prospecting going on in Guyana, but they are at much earlier stages.

Going back a bit to our small and medium scale operators in gold, when prices are high as happens people increase production and efficiencies or costs are often overlooked. We have been bringing this to the attention of miners. I am pleased that last week we were able to have presentations of a simple small scale plant which can improve recoveries by quite a lot. Currently, people might say that the average small and medium scale minor recovers, let us say 50% of the gold that he has dug up, but hopefully we will move to about more like 80% in time.

Petroleum

By long tradition, the Minister responsible for petroleum has been the President; it is an important resource with great potential, but the petroleum unit is a division of the GGMC. We are looking forward to much activity this year. We are hoping that three or four oil wells will be drilled within this year. One of the possible two wells is now being drilled in the Rupununi area. Offshore Repsol should begin its drilling off the Corentyne coast by April, when the oil rig which was brought to this region by a consortium of oil companies would have completed its drilling programme off the Suriname coast. Repsol has established an office in Guyana and entered a number of local contracts to support the drilling. The other company, CGX, expects to start drilling its own well by about August or September of this year. CGX has begun arrangements to support its drilling and in particular, we could note that CGX has begun the development of a dock and storage area in the Crab Island area at the mouth of the Berbice River. So here we have another step which would turn out to be a big step in the development of a larger and larger port at the mouth of the Berbice River.

We still have some interest in the near-shore search for oil and one of our local drilling companies has put in an application to look for oil, as has been found in neighbouring Suriname, in the near onshore area, and that application is under consideration.

In the case of oil we have had offers which we have welcomed from a number of countries and institutions to share their experience in handling issues which would come about with a find of oil. A find of oil is certainly a good thing but if we look around the world we would see countries where it has brought bad effects.

Mr. Speaker: Your time is up, Prime Minister.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Speaker, could the Hon. Member be given 15 minutes to continue?

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. Hinds: We have seen countries where a find of oil and bringing employment that often may be a number of times more than the average employment wages and salaries than that of other economic activities could afford in the country often leave people in the other activities to become dejected, rather not work than work for the rates that those activities could pay and countries could end up worse off. There are a number of cases. I think that they sometimes refer to it as a “Dutch Disease”. I am not sure of the instance that caused that but that is one of the problems that has been signaled to us and of which we have been aware. Another problem or issue is the question of encouraging our people not to spend all of the money the same year that we have gotten it, but to look at issues of investments for the future and setting up funds for the future, even beyond the time when there may be no more oil. We have had a number of friendly countries coming to offer their experience with us and looking at laws and so on. Our President has requested our Minister of Finance to begin looking at such things and we recognise that there is a model near to hand in Trinidad.

Bauxite

We have at this time two operations going. The BCGI Operation up the Berbice River, whose main product is metallurgical bauxite continue to struggle with soft demand and high costs. BCGI has done well to maintain its employment level during 2010; increasing wages slightly and satisfying some social requirements of the community. For this year, BCGI is projecting and hoping for increase production and sales; maybe 50% more in 2011 with consequent improvements in unit cost as these bauxite operations entail a large amount of fixed cost.

In the Demerara River the BMGGI Operations, which sells and exports calcined and other non-metallurgical bauxites, has fared better during 2010 with only a small shortfall in production and sales volumes but prices were good and earnings and profits improved. This operation, BMGGI, is projecting about 20% increase in production levels and sale volumes in 2011. It is expected that during 2011 addition efforts will be implemented to reduce dusting. Dusting has been a

problem and they have been not able to keep up with some of the earlier commitments. We have been assured that work has begun and that by the middle of this year dust collectors should be in place at the various driers and calciners.

One note which may not be such a good development is that towards the end of last year Bosai reported that their feasibility study did not favour the establishment of an aluminum plant in Linden. Amongst the main problems were the high costs of the bauxite feed due mainly to the high stripping ratio and high cost of shipping product to international markets. Our Government is disappointed with these negative results, but it is better not to proceed if one cannot see profits or sustainability.

In the mean while, BMGGI has put preliminary proposals for production of another aluminum refractory mullite and also for additional calcined bauxite. If and when the cost of electricity for electric arc furnaces are sufficiently low the production of another refractory product, brown fused alumina. As such, our Government is reviewing these proposals. The Russians have also put the alumina on hold. Our bauxite has to be competing with bauxites that are extremely cheap from some other places – metallurgical bauxite, that is. **[Mr. Corbin:** Let them fool you. As if they get their big reserve.] They do not have that big a reserve but even so...

The bauxite operations that I just spoke about began operations, in one case, in Berbice in 1940 and, the other in, 1917 in Demerara, so we have had no new bauxite operations for some 70 years. It is a matter of some excitement that we have been told that a new company has had positive results from their feasibility studies. They have identified adequate reserves in grade and volume to justify the establishment of a mine and plant to produce a calcined bauxite product and other non-metallurgical bauxite products. As such, I could say that because- I think that it is in the media anyhow- this company has been essentially studying the bauxite reserves in the Bonasika area and is looking to establish a plant in the Sand Hills area in the Demerara River.

I feel a need, in the course of this Budget debate, to address the often repeated question- and I think we heard it in an earlier presentation- about this Government's attitude to bauxite when compared with sugar. Both of these sectors have real challenges. We have to get beyond emotions and sentiments and we have to grasp cold realism to make them successful, sustainable, and profitable. Our traditional bauxite is still the best bauxite in the world but it is much more

costly to get it than any other place. Indeed, since after World War II our production has been eclipsed by Jamaica, Guinea, Australia, Brazil, Venezuela, China, India, maybe Vietnam, Indonesia and other places. When we nationalised bauxite in 1970 and 1975, our best days had already past. We would work, and must work, to have a future in bauxite but it would not be based on bountiful, natural, advantageous, cheap resources but, rather, on advantageous people; people who work hard and work smart, work consistently, every moment of every day, throughout the year and also people accepting, perhaps, less than people who have natural advantages on their side – the kind of natural advantages that we used to enjoy in the first half of the last century. We are all sentimental about bauxite and it is difficult to come to terms with the realistic description that I have put, but the truth is that until, maybe, the Linden operations were first privatised, we had not been making real profit since we nationalised bauxite in 1971.

I recall that we had two consulting companies that came to study the bauxite company in about 1983 and one of them made a conventional report. The other one however, which was not accepted, said something that everybody knew was true but was not politically acceptable at the time. They said that costs had to be reduced by 30% and that rational, technical, tangible inputs could only gain 10% reduction in cost and the next 10% reduction, if it is to come at all, would have to come from intangible things – changes in spirit – and so on.

The bauxite operations sector has had two interventions from the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other friendly bilaterals. The first one was in 1983, and that did not make it profitable and then in about 1990-1991 there was a second agreement made for another intervention and that time there was a commitment made with a foreign manager, MINPROC. It was found that bauxite could not be made profitable and that the bauxite company should be closed. Bauxite operations in Guyana should have been closed. But what did we do, Mr. Speaker and Hon. Members? In about 1994 MINPROC- Hon. Member Mr. Corbin has reminded me of the name- said that it could not see any way to make bauxite profitable and sustainable in Guyana...

3.50 p.m.

...and therefore the Government was expected to close the operation, but we did not do that. Government kept it going. Government kept supporting it from the Treasury, like the PNC did

before. Government varied the commitment that the PNC had made taking into account the devastating effect it would have, with its precipitous implications, on our people – the People of Linden, Region No. 10. Government held back and continued to support. We knew that people have to be prepared for big changes and what did Government do? It went ahead and negotiated another intervention which brought us the Linden Economic Advancement Programme (LEAP) – a programme to change the mindset of persons in Linden from employed persons to entrepreneurs.

I heard some people say that this Government is setting out to make the people of Linden and the Bauxite Company entrepreneurs and it does not seem to want to do the same for people who are closer to it. I heard statements like that. I heard people complaining about discrimination from the other side. Yes, we had LEAP to make the people from Linden into entrepreneurs.

Members of the Opposition talk about the sugar industry and how Government dealt differently with sugar. Yes, I understand that sugar had a manager and once it was shown to be profitable, it was supposed to be privatised, but Government did not privatise it. Government varied it for the similar reasons it varied bauxite. We did not privatise it because there were a lot of unanswered questions. If Members want to know one of the unanswered questions, it was what to do with preferences. I heard persons from the same other side who pride themselves on being professionals in economics and all those nice things, asking what is going to happen to the preferences. Would the preferences be privatised or stay with the Government and go to the treasury? That was a big question that had to be resolved and Government had to work its way through it, so it maintained sugar. I would want to say about sugar, too, that it has to be made profitable.

We have had some of my friends from the Bauxite Company writing, a lot of times, on matters. I would like to say, as I had said sometime, that the people in bauxite and bauxite communities should not take the lead up from someone who tell them that the only thing wrong with bauxite is this Government. Similarly, the people in the sugar industry should not take the lead up from those same people who tell them that sugar workers could do anything they want and this Government would always have the ability and willingness to bail them out. Neither of those two things that people tell them is correct.

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

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Speaker, I would like to move that the Hon. Member be given 15 more minutes to continue his presentation.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. Hinds: I want to speak to a matter that has come up in this debate. I have been Minister responsible for bauxite and, therefore, the issue of the workers who were dismissed at Aroraima did not escape my notice, concern, thought and reflection. Indeed, I remember reading about a month or two ago, a letter to the Editor which talked about the 57 people who were dismissed. How they have been without income and family lives have been disturbed even causing separation and such like. If we cast our minds back, this issue began in 2009 with more than 50% cut in production, with the Bauxite Company, there, being very short of money. With discussions going about a demand by the union for a 10% increase in hourly rates, the company put three proposals to the union.

The first one was that the company would pay the 10% increase but they had only reduced numbers by a very small amount and in proportion to the loss in production, if they paid the 10%, they would have to terminate 75 employees; not 57.

Secondly, the company will pay the 10% but will have to reduce the working hours from 12-hour shifts to 8-hour shifts with no termination. No-one would have been terminated but they would have reduced the working hours. So in effect, they would have used more people in the system.

The third proposal was that they would have kept everything the same. Keep the 12-hour shifts and keep all the employees. But they would do is to pay the safety bonus without discounting the income tax – they would absorb the tax.

Of those three proposals, two had no termination but the Union chose the one where there was 10% and the termination of 75 employees. There were a number of meetings and then the union led a strike and there was some rioting. Those workers who rioted were dismissed. The fact is that a union leader, who took part in the negotiations and the strike, did not riot and was not dismissed. The issue of dismissal was related to riotous behavior. I wondered how the union behaved like that. I thought that I sensed an answer last year August when I went to the second

Triennial Delegates Conference of the Caribbean Council of Workers and heard an address by a well known and accepted trade union leader in the Caribbean and, maybe, further afield, Sir Roy Trotman. The presentation is here and even then, I tried to talk it up. In it he said some things:

“Another thought I wish to ask you to ponder is this: the meaning of robust representation. Over the years the form and character of labour management relations have undergone significant change. In the celebrated trade union days of Cmde Forbes Burnham or of Cmde Cheddi Jagan, the term robust representation may have had one meaning. But the employer was different; he looked different. His family was different. The Union was never allowed to forget the gap. Public sentiment almost always started with the union members and got stronger.”

What he is pointing out here is that there has been a change from those days of the 50s and 60s. We, in this House, in our roles as leaders have some blame to carry. We have unfinished business from when we became independent and when we nationalised. We need to sit down and have a discussion with Labour, workers and union leaders and come up with a new social contract that is appropriate for this time. I can say that, because I was in the bauxite company before it was nationalised. A lot of things were done by the workers and it was accepted, tolerated and, maybe, even encouraged because we were there, at that time, in a battle for independence; we were there at the time in a black-white battle and those sorts of things. We were not there, at that time, for production and productivity. We did not have to take on responsibility for sustainability and profitability of the operation. But time is different now; we are independent now. I was inviting Members from the other side to join with us in having these discussions with workers and the unions. However, the more I think about it, they have not moved forward and their criticism of our Budget reflects that they are still in the days of non-responsibility for the whole thing. That is enough on bauxite industry.

Electricity

Whilst Guyana Power and Light Corporation (GPL) has not done as well to satisfy our people, as well as I, management and most of the workers would like, there was improvement last year. There was some 6.93% increase in generation, some 6.3% increase in demand and even though the frequency of interruptions and the durations were very upsetting, there were small reductions

in 2010 in the frequencies of interruptions and in the duration of those interruptions, but still not as low as we would like to get to. GPL continues to struggle with reducing commercial losses. It has recorded a deduction of about 3% - from 34% losses in 2009 to 31.3% in 2010. Government has been taking quite a number of steps, many of them legislative. Members would remember that last year there were a lot of amendments brought to this House so that GPL could more directly and deliberately go after people who were caught stealing electricity. I know and I have received complaints from persons who said that GPL was not doing enough. The fact is we all have seen pictures in the newspapers of all of the illegal connections that are in various places.

Mr. Speaker kindly allow me to speak to two major programmes that are on right now at GPL. Members would have heard about them, but I would like to record them in this Budget. Some US \$20 million is being spent to increase the generation in Georgetown. Another two units of 7.8 mega watts each are to be added. GPL is on a fast track to get it in by August this year. The fact is that GPL has about 18 months of scheduled maintenance on our existing eight Wartsilla Units. One or two units would need to be out for the next 18 months programme. GPL has been advised by the company, Wartsilla, who we have retained to carry on operation and maintenance, that these units are now getting on to senior citizenship. The first units were brought in 1994. They are now 16 years old. We normally think of 20 years as the good life. More than that, in these 16 years we added up the actual running hours for a good life. Those units need to be out for up to six weeks each to do a very deep inspection and overhauling of the alternators.

GPL also has to coordinate the conversion of the first four units at Kingston to a 60 cycle. We brought them in at a 50 cycle. You know we have this two cycle system. My Hon. Friend across the aisle from me knows that since the mid-70s a decision was taken to have Guyana go a 60 cycle. They and we have been doing the best we could and we are now getting to the end. **[Interjection]** Of course, as a man who has experienced the perversity of inanimate matter, some things falling, there is much that we can share. GPL has to convert those units to a 60 cycle and that is going to take some time. **[An Hon. Member: What about the line losses?]** For the line loss, the Hon. Member knows about such things because ever since I came along around 1992-1993, I was being told that there is this report that says, "Your system has too long leads and overloaded leads taking electricity from the generators." One needed, at that time, to have 2 or 3 sub-stations. Today, the need is like for 7 sub-stations and GPL has that programme in place.

About \$40 million is there for some seven sub stations. The problem we have been having on the West Coast of Demerara is that due to the fact that growth has taken place so much there, the conductor going is overloaded. We have had to put in a makeshift generator at Leonora. We have those two programmes going in GPL to improve electricity supply. **[Interjection]** When you go to all 60 cycles, you could retire the very aging conversion system where there are only two out of three working. My. Hon. Friend knows it and I can see that there is great rapport between us, at least, in this area.

We are working to make electricity better. I do not think that I need to speak about the Amaila Falls Project because much has been said about it. **[An Hon. Member: What about the road?]** The road is an access road and it has been undertaken ahead of the closing because when it closes, one needs to have access to three months and then the time starts to count for the contractors. It will take, at best, nine months to get the road in. Even though it is a risk, the sensible thing to have done would have been to do the road ahead of the closing. That is a judgment we made and it is a judgment we will stand by; it was a good judgment.

I think that I heard some comments on smuggling and the smuggling of fuel. I have the report here. It speaks about our continued activities and efforts to counter smuggling. I think members would have read, from time to time, in the newspapers the cases we would have made and taken to court. **[An Hon. Member: The cases got thrown out.]** Maybe you should reflect on it and form a decision as to why it got thrown out.

Mr. Speaker: Your time is up Hon. Prime Minister.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Hon. Member be given 15 minutes to conclude his presentation.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. Hinds: As the Hon. Member before me said, our roles should determine that we and the other side should oppose and we take our presentations in that light. But I would like, because of that, to make this call again. In our budgets from year to year we have been showing and reflecting the progress, continuity, change and transformation that has been taking place in our country. If one drives through Queenstown and Alberttown these days one could see many new

buildings. [An Hon. Member: What about Sophia?] Sophia is all new. I remember flying over the Sophia area in 1992. Look at Sophia today. We have been having that progress. Maybe our roles constrain the other side from commending, at least in these circumstances, the progress that has been made. I know that we have some real differences and my position has been that we do have real differences between our side and the other side. I think it is unfortunate that because of differences in our support, which correlates with other things, people do not see past the real differences. For example, we had the presentation on the other side criticising the housing sector saying that Government gives people house lots but they gave people houses and keys. That was how they were inclined. We are inclined, and we hold to our position, to reach many more to spread the butter that way. We consciously went the way of giving people house lots, showing them a piece of land that is theirs so that they could be motivated to start the savings and do the self help that is required to build the house. We could reach 1,000 people when they could only reach 50 with the house and key. We prefer that road. If you look at the different responses, on both sides, I think you would see that sort of thing going through. We prefer the options that reach the many. We prefer the options that call on people to work. We prefer to help people to work. Rather than giving them handouts, we give people hands-up. We prefer that they get up, help themselves and get to work. That is the way it has been ever since Dr. Jagan got into politics. That is what got him into trouble in 1962 when he brought in the Kaldor Budget. He started to make some of our own savings to start our development.

Members of the other side quite often talk about us being mendicants but we believe that we are the real and true nationals. We make the agreements with other nationals, other members of the human race in equal and full partnership. We have no problem with that. Even though members on the other side talk about Guyana being a gateway between Brazil and the Caribbean, yet still I heard some member talking, maybe not quite disparagingly but, certainly, setting people uneasy, about the Brazilians in Guyana.

If there are problems, we are not going to say that there is no issue because we, too, believe that once there is growth there is going to be change, contradiction and conflict. The issue remains resolving the conflicts or handling them correctly. When I heard that person, I cannot remember the name, speak about the Brazilians and then the Chinese in Guyana, I was left wondering about that group over there. Certainly it was not said in the realisation that growth brings changes,

conflicts, challenges and contradictions. That is what it is all about. We as leaders have to take on the job of meeting these challenges and resolving the contradictions.

Mr. Speaker, on that note, I rest my case for full support of this 2011 Budget.

[Applause]

Mrs. Riehl: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I wish, firstly, to congratulate my colleague, Mrs. Joan Baveghens, and welcome her to this National Assembly. I wish, also, to congratulate us all on this International Year of the Peoples of African Descent.

Year after year, I am never pleased with this PPP/C Budget, Mr. Prime Minister, because no matter how large it is, and every year it is getting larger than the previous year which is natural and signals some progress, I think. My fundamental problem with these budgets, and the 2011 Budget is no exception, is the government's refusal to pay a living wage to workers, especially its own workers. By not paying a living wage, Government helps to create or maintain a lot of people in poverty in this country. Then it turns around and creates agencies and programmes for the poor and unemployed, which in the first instance it helped to create or maintain by its policies. You help to maintain poverty and then you create programmes. A dependency syndrome is being operated here. I blame it, generally, on what I call your "socialist hangover".

4.20 p.m.

Moneys for health, education and infrastructure looks good on paper but too much waste and unaccountable losses occur in the execution and implementation and, thus, diminish the value of your projects.

I have looked around for an analogy of this cycle of waste and unaccountable losses, I think, I found one in the Government's own corporation- the Guyana Power and Light. The Hon. Prime Minister seems to have left the House. The GPL generates electricity; let us say 1000 megawatts of electricity, but only a percentage of this is paid for by legitimate customers. The other percentage is called transmission losses, which is really outright stealing, the Prime Minister alluded to this, by some who genuinely cannot afford to pay for it and some who would not pay for it. My colleague at the back heckled that there is a Chairman of the Board who forgot to pay for his electricity but I say to you, Hon. Members on the other side, and I urge you to cut the transmission losses.

Reducing the personal income tax threshold of employees earning \$40,000 a month and over is merely academic to the plethora of security guards, factory workers and domestic workers- that lower echelon of workers- who earn less than \$40,000 a month. It does not bother them. It does not touch them. This is the category most desperately in need of relief and if this moving of the threshold was accompanied by-let us say- a 3% VAT then that group would have had something to smile about in Budget 2011.

On page seven of the Budget, the Hon. Minister of Finance stated that the Caribbean Countries, and he was dealing with the global macro-economic development...in the last paragraph on page seven he said:

"Closer home the Caribbean economies are estimated to have recorded marginal growth of 0.5% in 2010 and are projected to grow by 2.2% in 2011."

While we boast of a higher growth rate and a projected higher growth rate of 4.6%, it is in these very neighbouring CARICOM states: Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Antigua, St. Kitts and the Bahamas that thousands of Guyanese who continue to leave our shores now live and work either legally or illegally. Why did they leave and why are they leaving? For one reason only- a better pay packet. They are able to live in rented rooms and small apartments in those Caribbean countries, look after themselves, and send home periodic sums to their families in Guyana to pay hefty utility bills, fix or renovate homes, and generally to assist with the steep cost of living here. This they cannot do in their own country. Remittances may have slowed from the North but they still flow from the Caribbean. I urge you, to see the wisdom of paying better wages. Keep your citizens at home and grow your population which has been stagnated for decades at 750,000 or their about.

I turn to my remit. It appears that the Low Carbon Development Strategy (L.C.D.S) with its concomitant financial benefits has finally awakened this Administration into understanding the rewards to a small developing country, such as ours, in vigorously pursuing and maintaining key foreign policy initiatives. Our chief diplomat has worked the environment and issues of climate change as his personal pursuit but, as the Stabroek News paper pointed out in an editorial of December 21st, 2010, the downside of this was the exclusion of Foreign Service officers from a critical area of foreign policy specialisation. What will happen when the chief diplomat demits office in the upcoming elections? All doors are now open to him because of his position but a sound foreign policy must be premised on having skilled diplomats in key positions and not only rely on your Head of State to go knocking on doors.

I ask the question in all seriousness. Who will assume the mantle of being the promoter of Guyana in foreign lands in the context of all the political appointees in our embassies and High Commissions around the world-the United Kingdom, Canada, India, etc? There is a letter writer who commented that all of these men are of one racial group. That also has not eluded people.

In this brave new world where expertise and specialisation are prerequisites to good diplomatic work, what do our Missions abroad offer? Within recent times there were two career diplomats, with an abundant of experience, who were brought home and allowed to twiddle their thumbs until their contracts ran out and were not renewed. I refer to Mrs. Sheryl Miles and Mr. Timothy Chritchlow. Their names, of course, speak for them. There is an argument to be made for your diplomatic service to be a mix of career and political appointees not only 100% political appointees. Just consider this Government going out of office after the upcoming elections. Every Ambassador in every post will have to come home. Mr. Rohee knows all about that. When the Government changed in 1992 and he was the first Minister of Foreign Affairs he went around and cleansed all of the embassies forthwith. While on this issue, since Ambassador Insanally left the Foreign Service- I think it was about two years ago or thereabouts, I stand corrected if I do not know the number of years- the U.N Mission has been vacant for want of an Ambassador. Of all the diplomatic posts this is, if not the most important, then one of the most important. Having a skilled Ambassador at the U.N is one of the least expensive ways to work your foreign policy. The U.N is the hub of international activity. Every country of the world is represented there. Maintaining a well equipped U.N Mission can offer excellent opportunities for a small country, such as ours to meet, interact and create entrée with many countries of the world.

At page two of the Budget Speech, the Hon. Minister of Finance declared that in the area of physical infrastructure the completion and opening of the Takutu Bridge was effected through a strategic alliance with our Brazilian neighbour. Discussions are also ongoing with Brazil for the paving of the Linden to Lethem road and for hydro-power. And we learnt from the presentation from the Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs that a Brazilian/ Guyanese team are collaborating to map the borders between Brazil and Guyana. I wonder, however, whether both of these Ministers are aware of the history of Guyana's alliance with Brazil and their Party's early response to the friendly relations nurtured and developed by the P.N.C in Government. In his book, "Guyana's Diplomacy" former Foreign Minister Rashly Jackson chronicled the history of our relations with Brazil. He had this to say on page 42 of his book:

"The decision to establish an embassy in Brazil drew the ire of the P.P.P. In a press release in August 1969 the P.P.P. proclaimed "the latest waste of public funds is the setting up of an embassy in Brazil." The P.P.P. called for the condemnation of the Government for aligning Guyana with reactionary regimes. The release stated further "with the diplomatic posting to Brazil we are witnessing the worst aspects of the Latin-Americanisation of our own politics and culture."

Today, we are the Chairman of (UNASUR)

"The PPP's tangent and ideological tendentious criticism continued for some time. An editorial entitled "The Question of Brazil" in the Mirror of August 10th, 1972 stated in numerous articles and editorials in the Mirror "we have had cause to draw attention to the close relations developing between our Government and that of Brazil. The editorial went

on to assert that" despite repeated warnings the Burnham Government went on to be deeply connected with the fascist Brazilian Government. Indeed so close are the relations with the Brazilian regime that the Guyana Government sends army personnel there to be trained."

Indeed, not only army personnel but young diplomats were sent for training at the prestigious Rio Branco Institute through the Brazilian scholarships. Relations with Brazil comprise an essential component of the coherent internally consistent frontiers policy. Today, we hear of that study to map the border between the two countries. They were also important in helping to consolidate the role of Guyana as a South American state without diminishing its role or impacting negatively on its character as a Caricom state. So why does the Government still have Cuba? Why is everyone wrapping up with Cuba, and Russia for that matter?

It should be recalled that it was the then Foreign Minister Jackson who signed the agreement for the construction of the Takutu Bridge and a slew of others at that time. Brazil is now an emerging world power with the "B" in the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) group of nations. Last November our President bestowed our Country's highest honor, the "Order of Excellence" to the outgoing President Lula, of Brazil. This administration has, certainly, gone a vault fast. As Minister Jackson puts it:

"In looking back on the evolution of our relations of Brazil the correctness of pursuing from the time of independence, a neighbour friendly policy despite the urgings of the PPP to the contrary is manifested."

I need say no more. One has to be friendly with their neighbour whether they are communist, fascist etc. In the Stabroek News of Sunday, January 23, 2011 an article appeared entitled "Guyana Venezuelan Foreign Relations Solid." This is a view expressed by the Foreign Minister Hon. Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett. This article was a result of the disclosure on the Wiki Leaks cables. Various other opinions on the topic from said former Foreign Minister Jackson, from Mr. Norton, who is here, and Mr. Raphael, were canvassed but I wish to endorse the view of Mr. Jackson. Notwithstanding the claim of the Hon. Minister Rodrigues-Birkett, I will not opt to put all of my eggs in one basket of bilateral relations. Let me read the view given by former Foreign Minister Jackson. It reads:

"But former Minister Jackson in an invited comment observed that while Guyana is building better relations with Venezuela, this country needs to be prepared mentally and physically for a possible attack from its western neighbour." "I am not saying that Venezuela is going to attack us; I am saying that we ought to be prepared in the event that they do. Strategies need to be devised as to how we deal with it," Jackson said. He believes that this Government cannot take the issue of an invasion off the table and assume that Venezuela has dropped the issue. Mr. Jackson went on to say that there is a possibility that Venezuela could again take military action in the Essequibo

adding that this country must have a counter strategy. He explained that the strategy could mean having the defence force on alert in the area. In addition to swiftly mobilising support within the international community particularly the U.N Security Council.

I wish to endorse the view of the former Foreign Affairs Minister. The claim to Guyana's territory is pretty well entrenched in the psyche of the average Venezuelan. It is thought of as a geographic fact in their schools and each succeeding generation is imbued with the idea or the belief that the greater portion of the Essequibo belongs to them. At one time it was even displayed on certain maps in that country. It is not because Venezuela buys our rice and is constructing a homeless shelter for us that we are secured from a possible invasion. We must recall the border incident of 2007. This was unexpectedly sprung upon us. When the two dredges were demolished, Guyanese were killed and to date I am not aware that an apology was forthcoming or compensation was granted. I am not certain about that, I stand to be corrected if it were so. On November 26, last year when Guyana assumed the chairmanship of UNASUR, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez had this to say:

"We know of the will of President Jagdeo and also of the Guyanese people. We are certain that President Jagdeo in taking the reigns of UNASUR is going to be a masterful chairman. He is going to lead us with objectivity and with concrete action. We are with Guyana and we are with UNASUR.

President Jagdeo, however, in his address at the Guyana Police Force's annual officers' conference on January 26, 2011 said this:

"Through UNASUR the country has had serious discussions with Venezuela that focus on a whole range of developmental opportunities outside of the border."

Why, I ask, outside of the border? Is this not an opportune moment in history, with Guyana assuming the chairmanship of UNASUR and solid bilateral relationships, as the Minister spoke of, to ask Venezuela pointedly to drop her claim to Guyana's territory. Just testing, as they say, just testing. I am aware that Professor Norman Geovan has been appointed as the U.N good officer in the quest to settle this question of Venezuela's claim to our territory but there is no harm in asking as Head of State to Head of State. In the mean time, in addition, to those measures outlined by Mr. Jackson with an army in place, I would seriously advocate the establishment of settlements along our borders with Venezuela. Populating your border area is one of the best known ways, in International law, of staving off aggressive claimants to your territory. Your border resident's would become your eyes and ears. With the relevant infrastructure put in place and offers of grants of land, as they did in the colonial days, you may yet unleash the latent pioneering spirit of many Guyanese-both at home and in the Diaspora. By such a move, also, you will contribute to the internalisation of Guyana. Note when Brazil started the process to create a new capital in the interior-I think it is the Brazilians, really, who coined

that word- out of maiden forest they created a new capital "Brazilia". If you look at the recent history of Brazil...that is the time that Brazil really took off as an emerging world power. We are only asking for settlements to be created. Is this a too farfetched a vision for Guyana? When Israel was created out of nothing Jews came from all over the world to create a state.

My colleague, Mr. Keith Scott, on this side, when he spoke the other night, talked of moving the capital to higher ground. This is a concept, an idea that was mooted several times around. After all we cannot forever live on this narrow coastal strip, subject to periodic floods and the vagaries of the mighty Atlantic, especially in this new era of global warming. I would expect that a Government after four terms in office would begin to dream big dreams on behalf of its citizens.

I turn to the Foreign Service Institute within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which was opened with great fan fare by then Foreign Minister Rohee. I was critical of this, at the time, saying that our diplomats may be better trained at the University of Guyana. Upon reflection though, I think it might be a valuable instrument to identify and to train suitable candidates for our Diplomatic Missions overseas. Diplomatic training schools are a common feature in many countries. Two of the countries in the fast lane economically, India and China, both have prestigious diplomatic schools. I am told that India boasts some of the finest Diplomats on the world stage. I have already alluded to the Rio Branco Institute in Brazil, where some of our earlier Diplomats were trained. I remember Ms. June Persaud, a very bright young lady at the time, who was trained at that school. The Foreign Service Institute has been without a director since the death of Mr. Lloyd Searwar in 2006. It has been, obviously, downgraded as, indeed, the entire Ministry has been. What a shame! Guyana surely needs a well trained cadre of competent diplomats trained, today, to ensure that Guyana's interest internationally would be amply protected tomorrow. Put that in your Budget.

I wish to advocate to the Hon. Minister, that the Foreign Service Institute be resuscitated under a new director. If we are going to talk "togetherness" let us walk the walk. There are still, residing here, former diplomats of the cadre of the aforesaid, Mr. Jackson, Mr. Bartlan Scotthland, Mr. Ron Austin to name a few. Their political affiliations aside, we are talking about togetherness, these gentlemen could contribute to the training of new young career diplomats. In addition, the occasional sojourns to Guyana of Sir, Shreedat Rampha and Dr. Mohamed Shahabadin could see those eminent Guyanese giving guest lectures at this institute. Lectures in skills, in the environment, in tourism, could also be brought in this era of specialisation in the Foreign Service. This recommendation coincides, somewhat, with recommendation Six of the UN advisory to Guyana on the restructuring and reorganisation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This was a report commissioned by the Ministry and then ignored almost in its entirety by the said Ministry. Let me quote from that document.

On page nine, Recommendation Six of the Report of the United Nation's Advisory Mission to Guyana states this:

"To provide international, political and economic training to Government Ministries, put the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) officials in every Ministry require updating on international development. It is a cliché but true none the less that given globalisation most domestic issues have significant international implications..."

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

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Speaker, I rise to move that the Hon. Member be given 15 minutes to continue her presentation.

Mr. Speaker: Continue.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mrs. Riehl:

"...it would be too costly for each Ministry to arrange for its own training curriculum. The FSI is more cost effective to provide training across the Government compared to un-coordinating expenditures by every Ministry.

This is advocating that the Foreign Service Ministry could also help in the training of other personnel from other Ministries and to keep the country generally up-to-date.

I would also like to read another important recommendation. That is Recommendation Eight. That recommendation says:

"A policy unit should be established to advise on global functional issues with individual officers assigned to areas such as drugs, climate change, governance and human rights..."

4.50 p.m.

"...The Governance Unit in the Office of the President should be transferred to this new policy unit..."

Did you hear that Mdm. Teixeira?

"The Office of the President and other clients will profit from the existence of a clear point of contact and expertise for each of the significant global thematic issues..."

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (M.F.A.) currently does this for drugs only, and the practice should be extended to other issues publicised in the names of officers responsible.

"The issues should be selected in consultation with the Office of the President and the Minister of Foreign Affairs."

This is a very good report, which, as I said, has largely, if not entirely, ignored by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs today.

Guyana ratified the Treaty of the Union of South America in October 2009, we are now well aware that Guyana has assumed the Chairmanship. In the Budget presentation last year, the Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs stated that UNASUR has established links with the African and Arab group of countries. Given this, the visits of our Head of State to the countries of the Arabian Peninsula are somewhat explicable. The posting of Ambassador Ishmael to Kuwait is also better understood in this context. May I ask the Hon. Minister whether there are any planned visits to any part of Africa? Already the Head of State made three visits to the Middle East within recent years. There are many known crisis areas in Africa; one only needs to think Sudan, Darfoe, the Niger Delta, Congo; these are largely left untended by the international community. Guyana needs to take a proactive role to ensure that peace is brought to some of the conflict areas of Africa. Any help in resolving conflicts anywhere ultimately redounds to world peace. Let us not forget that it was the role played by small countries such as Guyana which contributed ultimately to the demise of Apartheid in South Africa. Having said this, it must also be noted that Africa is now one of the world's fastest growing regions, so said the Economist Magazines. I wish to quote from that Economist Magazine headlined January 6th, 2011,

"Africa is now one of the world's fastest growing regions" Much has been written about the rise of the B.R.I.C. group (Brazil, Russia, India and China), and Asia's impressive economic performance, but an analysis by the economists finds that over the ten years to 2010, six of the worlds ten fastest growing economies were in Sub Sahara and Africa. On the I.M.F. Forecast, Africa will grab seven of the top ten places over the next five years, our ranking excludes"

the author says,

"countries with a population of less than 10 million as well as Iraq and Afghanistan which could both rebound strongly in the years ahead, over the past decade the simple un-weighted average of countries growth rates was virtually identical in Africa and Asia.

Over the next five years Africa is likely to take the lead. In other words, the average African economy would outpace its Asian counterpart.”

There are some statistics which they have given here: Angola 11.1% growth, whereas China is projected at 10.5%; India is 8.2%, Nigeria 8.9%; Ethiopia 8.4%; Chad 7.9%; Mozambique 7.9%; Rwanda 7.9%, and it gives the whole table for projected growth rate in Africa.

At the beginning of my presentation, I offered congratulations to all of us, in the International year of Peoples of African Descent. I did that deliberately. It is a scientific fact now, if we believe in science, those of us who do not believe in religion, that our ancestor the great Eve if you want to say, the mother of all creation, is an African woman striding the plains of Africa. Africa is, therefore, the cradle of humanity. So let us not bypass her. That is from DNA evidence, that our common ancestor, if you do not believe in religion and you believe in microcondial DNA – I am sorry Dr. Ramsammy is not around, he might have helped me with the word – but it has been proven scientifically that the mother of all creation was an African woman who strode across the plains of Africa. So, let us not at any stage eye pass or denigrate that great continent’s huge natural resources that we could not ever hope to have.

The PNCR-1G welcomes the Government’s recognition of Palestine as a free, independent and sovereign State. The PNC in office had always given support to this Country at the United Nations to in-alienable right of the Palestinian people to a homeland of their own. At the same time, with this move, we endorse the hope for a speedy resolution of the Israel/Palestine conflict and the creation of lasting peace and stability in the Middle East.

As I said earlier, peace in any area of the world ultimately redounds to peace worldwide. We have already passed the first decade of the 21st century, and it is hoped that before the second decade is passed, the whole world would be peaceful. We must strive to ensure that we leave a world free of conflict to ensuing generations. Before I leave this area, I have a question for the Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs. It is a very practical question, and I hope that her colleagues would relay it to her. Her predecessor in office, Dr. Samuel Rudolph Insanally (a.k.a. Rudy), sometime before he demitted office in 2005 had indicated to the Foreign Relations Sector Committee that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was in the process of making an inventory of the skills of Guyanese in the Diaspora, with intention of tapping in to these skills for developmental

purposes. My question to the Hon. Minister is whether this exercise has been shelved or whether it is still pursued, or what is its status?

I turn now to some issues of the Court. I wish to welcome the law revision alluded to on page 48 of the Budget Speech. We, on this side of the House, had spoken ad nauseam on the need for law revision. We had also asked for law reform. My colleague Mrs. Backer brought a motion, which I co-signed, requesting a Law Reform Commission be put in place. Needless to say, this was rejected outright by the Government. Minister Manickchand, however, told me privately sometime in 2010, that they are about to reform our archaic Divorce Laws which are still based on fault. We are anxiously awaiting law reform in this 21st century; even on a piece meal basis we will take it. I hope to see copies of these new volumes in front of us pretty soon. This law revision which has brought our laws up to 2006... I hope the Hon. Attorney General sees that we get new copies of these up-to-date revised laws, taking all of our laws up to 2006.

I wish to speak briefly on matters of bail which is a buck-bear of mine. Magistrates still refuse to grant bail for many *bail-able* offences at the behest of police prosecutors without paying much heed to defence lawyers. As a result, there are hundreds, if not thousands, of bail applications to the High Court by those defendants who can afford to hire lawyers. The others are simply remanded to clog up the prisons. One prison officer told me that they had a man in custody who was accused of stealing five eggplants and was remanded to prison-obviously this was to feed his family.

The irony of this situation, which I want to bring to this Hon. House, is that the applications for bail in the High Court are all granted with the consent of the prosecutors from the Director of Public Prosecution's (DPP) Chamber. This shows that bail ought to have been granted in the first place by the lower Court; most of them- 90% or 100%, I would say. Laying aside the injustice to those who must languish in prison because they cannot afford a lawyer even to get bail, I must decry the waste of judicial time. The Chief Justice hears bail applications the entire Friday morning. Whilst on the aspect of bail, I must single out the acting Chief Magistrate, Mrs. Priya Sewnarine Beharry, who, from Newspaper reports, appears to have been, in recent months, exercising her judicial discretion and granting bail. I hope some of the Junior Magistrates will follow soon.

With all the training and manuals outlined on page 48 in this Budget, I hope that the training will be absorbed by the Magistrates. I have grouse with a particular Magistrate whom I have sat down in a court and heard shouting at witnesses. I wanted to challenge this young lady, because she is a very young lady, part of her remit, as a Magistrate, is to help protect witnesses from harsh cross-examination by Defence Council, not to shout at them. As it is, many persons are afraid to go to court and give evidence in matters, that is why they see and say they did not see; they are afraid of the Court. If you, the Magistrate, are going to shout on witnesses...**[Interruption]** You can suck your teeth all you want, because when you get in the witness box to give evidence, hopefully you never would, you would not like the Magistrate, who is supposed to hold the balance, shouting at you at the same time as the Defence Council. I would like to write about her to the Judicial Council, because it happened more than once. You can call a staff from this very Parliament Office who was there the other day. she came away crying to me, I was not representing her but she was crying to me on the phone. She said her child-father jumped her fence, went into her house and cuffed her up, and the police charged him. She was in the box giving evidence of this assault and the lawyer was shouting “answer the question, answer the question, just yes or no”, and the Magistrate was shouting at her at the same time. She said she was so confused. In the end her case was dismissed. I can call her privately and let her tell you- a member of this staff, a girl in Registry. Do not tell me about bias, Minister, you do not know a thing about what you are talking about. You are out of your dept with these matters. You are a “Johnny come lately with legal matters”.

I hope that, as I said, the manual and all of this training that the Magistrate had will help. My colleague Mrs. Backer told this Hon. House on Wednesday last that 139 murders were committed last year. Right now the criminal assizes are on, and in Demerara alone there are 59 murders, 24 manslaughters, among the 91 cases listed for trial. That is in the Demerara assizes only. These would not include that 139 which were committed last year. Their preliminary enquiries have not even begun to be heard, many of them in the state of report, and file gone to the DPP’s Chamber et cetera. The point I would like to make is that these alarming statistics of murder should attract the Government’s attention and should trigger some response.

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

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Speaker, I rise to move that the Hon. Member be given 15 minutes to conclude her presentation.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mrs. Riehl: The issue for us here is the fact that with these 91 cases, 59 of which are murder, and 24 of which are manslaughter, there are two judges sitting on the criminal assizes. There are only two judges assigned, simply because there are not enough judges to go around. The Hon. Chief Justice is at his wits end. He has been operating one judge short of his compliment of ten judges for more than a year. One Judge is assigned fulltime to the Commercial Court out of the nine he is left with; that leaves eight. Two are assigned in the county of Berbice, the criminal and civil, leaving six. Two are assigned in the Essequibo, leaving four available; two at the criminal assizes, leaving two. The Chief Justice has put in a request for a compliment of at least 15 judges. The irony of it is that the request is to the Judicial Service Commission of which he himself is a member. He is unable to persuade that Body to raise the number of judges and to even appoint. It is not that they are not competent people around. I do not know what malaise has infected this Government and the Chancellor to appoint Judges.

Long ago people were asked to apply. The Judicial Service Commission looked around, and if there are competent lawyers, they would invite them to apply for positions in the judgeship. There are at least two persons, which I know right now, whom ought to be judges. I cannot name them. Where the criminal assizes are concerned, judges are only able to conclude three or four matters every assize, each judge. That is because of the many voidiers they have to conduct. A voidier is a trial within a trial, Mr. Rohee. These voidiers are because police would beat the caution statement out. Ask Mr. De Santos, he knows all about that. It is not the first time around it is happening. The police are beating statements. There are no proper investigative skills within your force. The judges are spending hours of judicial time trying to get statements either in or out. In many instances, when the statement goes the whole case collapses. My learned friend and colleagues the former Attorney General spoke two nights ago and corrected Mrs. Backer that the prosecution sometimes cannot make bread out of stones. The evidence is just not there. If the caution statement goes, that is it, your whole case collapses. The judges, as I said, could not help it.

There are some defects, I understand, with the Sexual Offenses Bill, - in fairness to Mrs Manickchand- which are causing matters under this Bill to be stuck in the Magistrate's Court. I am not sure, but I listened when Ms. Manickchand made her intervention in the budget debate and alluded to the fact that there are some defects and that she would be bringing amendments in some of the laws that she has put. I do not know where they are. The Constitutional right to be heard in one owns defences cannot be transposed from the Constitution to the Magistrate Court. It has to be enacted, because Magistrates are generally, as I said, creatures of statute. Whatever they do has to be there in the record; how they do it and why they do it. The garnering of evidence is key. If we do not have judges, then what we are doing is building another backlog of cases. I suppose the government instead of going to the IDB for money to help in the developmental process of the country will have to pay judges, again like they did, millions to get rid of the backlog; that was when they brought new judges on. You create this endless vicious cycle of having delays in the justice system. Forget all the niceties that are said on paper. The justice system is broken; Justice George herself said that at the jail delivery of the last criminal sessions ending in October, because of shortage of judges and all these associated things. So, I urge the Ministers that have responsibility to take command of the situation and let justice prevail in this country for all those people sitting and rotting in the prisons waiting for trials. Let justice prevail.

Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Members, I think this is an appropriate time for us to suspend for a few minutes.

Suspended at 5.20pm

6.09 p.m.

Assembly Resumed at 6.09 p.m.

Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Mr. Charles Ramson): Thank you so much Cde. Speaker. I can say that it is much less costly to be here at this time, with you, than wherever I would have been. So I thank you for detaining me.

I am very happy that the debate has been conducted in a such a way, on this occasion, that I may not have to fire on all my cylinders in defence of not only my work at the Ministry, but in defence of the administration to which I belong.

Last year, in my budget presentation, I had cause to describe my colleague, the Hon. Dr Ashni Kumar Singh, as, he himself, having gubernatorial potential. Today, I stand proudly here before this august Assembly and declare that this 2011 Budget is empirical proof of his ability to translate potential into concrete reality. An irrefragable index, if I may so describe it, driven by common sense, this presentation was crafted with such lucidity, mathematical precision, fiscally professional acumen, and accounting skill, that the progress of our country is well nigh guaranteed.

This Budget is sufficiently visionary, not only because of the diverse measures of relief, but for its integrative capacity to combine the undoubted adumbrations of the industrial age and the benefits of the knowledge economy. This is a concept embraced by no less a person than the legendary Bill Gates. I applaud him and concur with the collective sentiments of support and praise my colleagues, on this side of the House, have already attached to his effort.

It would not be appropriate if I do not refer to the strategy which the former Government had, that is the PNC before it became the PNC/R, prior to 1992. They alleged that they had, after the demise of the “Great Kabaka”, devised a programme called the ERP. Well, when the Government of Dr. Cheddi Jagan took over in 1992 it was then discovered that the ERP, which they euphemistically referred to as the Economic Recovery Programme, could truly and manifestly be classified as the “*Empty Rice Pot*” programme. That says a lot for Cde. Greenidge’s tenure as Minister of Finance. I say this because in 1992 the servicing of the debt, as I understand it, and I am not 25 years old, that was incurred by an administration which could not account for it (we will come back to Mr. Goolsarran’s forays into what he determined to be the law in relation to some other matters when he condemned this Government before he hurriedly left the jurisdiction) was that 94 cents out of every dollar of revenue had to be paid to service the debt. And I may be corrected if I am wrong, that in 2011 the repayment is 4 cents on every dollar. Is that not sufficient for me to now say, assuming that it is the PPP/C that rode into the sunshine of progress on something called the ERP, instead of it being now the “*Empty Rice Pot*” economy it is now the “*Extraordinary Revenue Production*” economy? I say this without fear, even though I have no qualifications in the economic field, because my reading tells me that in 1992 we were the pariah of the Caribbean, economic pariah; a suitcase economy. What are we today? We are now the cream of the crop. We are the only economy that can sustain the buffeting of the recession all around the world. This must be a blessed country. And you do not have blessings from above because God only help those who help themselves. You can’t have blessings from God if you sit down and expect gold nuggets to fly out of the ‘*bush*’ and into your pockets.

Let me say something about Mr. Anand Goolsarran. I have absolutely no personal dispute with the gentleman. He and I belong to the same religion, he and I belong to the same cricketing fraternity, he and I belong to the same residential area, so there is a lot we have in common. **[Interjection]** No, he does not drink. And it is not a discredit to have what is called social libations, if I may say so. It has not done anything to me, I can assure you. It has kept me out of the hospital. This gentleman by the name of Mr. Anand Goolsarran, who is touted by the forces which are only out to criticise this administration, led us to believe year after year, after year, and I almost fell for the same false impression... I used to say he is the Auditor General and whatever he wrote there are better people equipped in the society to redress any wrong he might have committed. But in the last two years, or year - I can remember how long since my return to this political office - I discovered that all he was saying about the lotto funds was a figment of his imagination, led by his untrained or untutored knowledge of the law. I cannot imagine that a man of his distinction, being the Auditor General of a country. He is like me; he was the AG of Guyana; fortunately he is not the Honourable AG, if not he would have been sold down the river. I feel there was a responsibility and duty imposed on me, having returned to this office, to be a little more careful and professional in the work that has to be done to improve the image of the country, because the country belongs to all of us. The more we paint a negative image of the country the less people would want to associate with us, and especially the investors. **[Interjection]** I am coming to allegations of corruption momentarily. The Opposition never missed an opportunity to miss an opportunity. Listen carefully to what I am saying, it means something, because now you have exposed yourself. You might not be the persons who were involved but you belong to the same Party. So Mr. Anand Goolsarran mislead us all the time, so much so that they had to justify it by filing a court action. They do not want the court case to go ahead.

They also accused my good friend, the Hon. Irfaan Ali, of all kinds of financial wrongdoings or irregularities. I will tell you, I have had cause to look at the various Acts that require fiscal oversight - and I am putting my professional certificates on the line - that whatever has been happening with respect to the Housing Ministry and the Lotto Funds is unequivocally and irreversibly lawful. Any man or woman with sufficient courage to challenge what I am saying, I am ready to listen to their arguments.

I was very glad to hear the narration of some of my colleagues on the other side. One actually stood up and, to much laughter in the House, she claimed that it is a misfortune for the country when people are required to retire at age 55. She gave us the assurance that when she reached 55 she was as good for anything and she has all the experience to make a contribution. Well, I do not know about her standing in the teaching profession or whatever profession she belongs to, I do not know about her claim to fame financially, but I prefer to be associated with people who have been in business or who have, by their innovative skills, acquired wealth beyond comprehension.

I have a document... I do not know whether I have to photocopy it but you have to take my word because, as a barrister and a gentleman, when I stand up, especially in the highest Court of the land, I am expected only to tell the truth. There is a certain man called Gates and the story is entitled “A Case of Senioritis – Gates Tackles Education’s Two Headed Monster”. Basically what they were saying in this little summary here impinges on whatever our conversation or discourse was in this National Assembly. The question is of whether persons who have been there a long time should defer to persons who might be more energetic, youthful, educated, and who might bring a new sense of direction. When he was asked about pay and promotion of teachers connected with seniority, this is the comment,

“This is contrary to everything the world’s second richest man believes about business...”

Our life here is about business. You cannot do anything in this world unless you approach it in a businesslike manner. As far as Cde. Ashni Singh is concerned, he is only interested in ensuring there is “Extraordinary Revenue Production”.

He said that this is contrary to everything he knows about business. And rhetorically he asks the question, and I quote:

“Is there any other part of the economy where someone says, ‘hi, how long have you been moving lawns?’”

His response:

“I want to pay you more for that reason alone”.

In the case of the learned parliamentarian, her attempt is to make us and the nation believe that it would be good for persons, only on account that they have been so long in the profession, that there must not be a cut off retiring age. “How long have you been moving lawns? I want to pay you more for that reason alone”. Well, we have to be guided by people who know about money. That is not the only *faux pas* I observed from the other side.

I do not see the Hon. Mrs. Riehl who alleges that there is some deficiency. It does not matter what you do for Guyanese people, it is my sad experience there is always a sense of ingratitude. Here it is what has not been done for 33 years in this country, not the PPP/C administration alone the PNC side too. It was the responsibility, and within my remit, in the last year to ensure that the law revision be brought up to date to 2006. We so succeeded by the end of November last year. All the substantive laws were revised and were made, not only available on diskette for distribution, so you can print them out yourself, but there is something, I understand, called the website - something unheard of in this country for the lawyers - and the lawyers are now able to access the website of the Ministry of Legal Affairs, and are able to identify whatever law they want. They do not have to lug around big books; this has not been done for 33 years. That alone

should compel them to send me a big thank you letter, because if I sit down and do not do the work I get the same pay; I produce at the end of the day. So I would have thought they would have said thank you very much. I even went further. The same arrangement we had in place we saw it fit to extend from 2006, which was our obligation, to 2010. I am duly informed, because the last meeting I had with the consultant was on Tuesday or Monday, that they are in the process, so that by Monday, 31st January, 2011 they would have brought all the Substantive laws up to date to the end of 31st December, 2010. That was one month ago. In other words, although the entire revision would not have been completed by the end of this month, because of the Christmas holidays, they would need at least another month to do all the laws apart from what they are going to give me at the end of this month, which is three days hence.

I wish to place on record that this team of consultants, I believe, consists only of Guyanese. The leader of the team is Mr. Colin Bobsemple who is a lawyer residing in England and one of his principals, another Guyanese by the name of Rambarran Mangal, is a retired Guyanese lawyer. Those who went to law school in the Caribbean might remember him because he used to be a senior lecturer at the Norman Manley Law School, which is the equivalent of Hugh Wooding Law School. That is only part of the story, Sir. We have had difficulty Cde. Speaker, as you know. Parliament has been very helpful in providing the database for a lot of the work that is contemplated under this programme. There was a period that could not be readily traced. I understand it has been traced and what has not been traced has been supplemented from somewhere else. So the Subsidiary legislation, all the Orders and various regulations, and other paraphernalia that congeal into a complete body of laws, would be ready at the end of March. There is a lot to be said, and that is why I am saying to you that some people never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity. You do not criticise when you expose yourself to certain things.

What about this law reform? I do not know that there is need for more progress in law reform than at the rate we are going. It could be better but there is so much that is humanly possible because of the human resource capacity. It is a question of capacity. And there are lots of people who sit on the other side, and sometimes I might add even on this side, who do not find that it is financially rewarding to make that ultimate sacrifice that some of us are prepared to make. Maybe when I was as young as the Hon. Mrs. Riehl, and some of the other practitioners over there, I may not have answered the call to service. But, that is another story. This question of reform is not a formal thing. What has happened to the Judicial Review Act? They themselves called it historic when it was being debated. Is that not a measure of reform? What about this Alternative Dispute Resolution Act? For years, since 2003, they were operating in an illegitimate or illicit architecture about mediation. This is the Act that gives it legitimacy. And it is I, having been prompted by Cabinet, have put it in place.

6.39 p.m.

Mr. Ramson: I may not have answered the call to service, but that is another story. This question of “reform”... Reform is not a formal issue. What has happened to the Judicial Review Act? It was they, themselves, called it historic when it was being debated. Is that not a measure of reform? What about this Alternative Dispute Resolution Act? For years, since 2003, they were operating in an illegitimate or an illicit architecture about mediation. This is the Act that gives it legitimacy and it is I, having been prompted by the Cabinet, who have put it in place.

Mr. Speaker: Your time is up.

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

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. Ramson: If I may, Sir, thank you very much. What about the Money Laundering legislation, this Anti-Terrorism...? We have never had this kind of law before in our country and I can assure you that I am not taking the credit for it because, I think, it antedated my presence. All of that is part of the reform process. We may not have a formal gathering of people in a smoke filled back room somewhere drinking coffee and doing all these things, but it is the same back-breaking exercise. What about those paper committals? Those predated me too and the Courts would not take the burden of putting them into effect. There were never paper committals during my practice. Is that not a reform? What about this audio-visual admissibility of the evidence? We have never had that. We have joined the metropolitan areas. What more reform is needed? Those are only some examples, and I wish that we would not be criticised for having done what we did.

Now, let me say this, Cde. Speaker, as I am on that topic... Let me just continue to draw to your attention and be rid of this portion of my exercise. I do not regard it as a burden. I believe it is my duty as the Minister who carries the portfolio to let the public know, in an accountable manner, as is our wont...

The Guyana Law Report: There are several segments to this exercise - the Guyana Law Reports. The last volume was with respect to the 1976 reports emanating from the Courts, and that was done in 1996 as a one-off thing. But there is, currently, in process a programme for our law

reports coming out of our Courts by a Canadian firm called Lexum. I do not know all those technologically imbued firms, but it is going to put in place, in early 2011, thirty years, that is, from 1997 to 2007, all reports online. So for all those lawyers who are now blaming the system that they do not have access to law reports, let us see if they can still sit upon their sit upon and then complain. [**Mr. Corbin:** We can get it now. There are CDs available.] These are Law Reports, not Law Revision. It is not available. You can send it to me if you have it.

We are even thinking of, once we are assured of the consultancy's productive capacity, bringing the entire sets of law reports of 1931 – Guyana Law Reports from 1931 –..., as soon as we are finished with this thirty-year span which had been left in a abeyance. I am not saying that the PNC did it. We did it too. I attached blame where blame is to be attached but everything needs money. The Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) did not provide for it, but now our ERP, which is the Extraordinary Revenue Production, the same ERP, is now able to access the liquidity so as to promote this kind of exercise. Then they will all be printed. [**Mr. Nandlall:** They will have one laptop.] I do not think they are entitled to it. They will be in volumes, as well.

The laws, which I described earlier, will be available by the end of March, that is, right up to 31st December, 2010. Those will be all the laws and the statutes, subsidiaries and whatever they are. I am putting the reports in the *Kabaka*'s colour - the purple mauve that your *Kabaka* used to use. [**Mr. Corbin:** It is lilac.] Well, that is the colour, instead of green. It is going to be in lilac. I am showing how accommodating I am. Within the first half of this year, I guarantee that all of the laws books be printed. I planned to do four hundred of those law books which will give, I would think, about 150 sets - all will be done. I am spoon-feeding the nation now, because it is our baby.

There is a lot of talks about there being no progress. The police are not able to do the work and they are beating people. I do not know whether they do beat people, and so. I have not been arrested by the police for a long time so I do not know if they beat them now. I know during the PNC time they used to beat me bad, and it is not that I have never given them some back too.

Fun apart, there are some work being done quite imperceptibly. At the Director of Public Prosecution (DPP) Chambers there are three dedicated police officers who have been assigned to

the Chambers and some foreign tutors giving them some advice and training on how to do prosecution. So relief will come but it takes time, everything takes time. As you know, everything takes money. So what Cde. Riehl was saying is only half real because she does not know the full extent of the work. She does not have her ears to the ground. She could have called me before. I am always accessible. Ask Mr. Basil Williams, as soon as he need help, the first man that he would call is me. Even my friend in the corner...

I was hoping that Cde. Ramjattan would have come to let me tell him something about this corruption. The Hon. Member, Mr. Ramjattan, has even marginalised his leader. The gentleman got sick right way and did not worry to contest the election. Mr. Ramjattan tried that with Cde. Cheddi in 1995. I went and begged for him. He was to be thrown out of the PPP since 1995. I am not talking anything out of school because I have never been in the PPP, but he came and cried on my shoulder in 1995, on the corridor at the court. He wanted to take over Cde. Cheddi's position. It was something to do with some congress which he went to and he wanted to change the Constitution. Is it that just like that the PPP's Constitution can be changed?

I was never in the PPP, but I know political party business. You have to tap the leader gently. I will tell you that I persuaded Cde. Cheddi to keep him inside there. I want it to be heard because I want somebody to tell him. I persuaded Cde. Cheddi that I will try to reform him - slow him down. Lo and behold! Behind my back he has gone again and he made Cde. Ramotar *pitched him out on the road*. I do not know what the process was, but it was quite clear that he had to give up. He could not make it anymore. Cde Cheddi was a nice easy-going fellow but I do not believe that Cde. Ramotar has that kind of fatherly affection. He cannot bend Cde. Ramotar. I am telling you, anyhow, just to get rid of Cde. Ramjattan's aberration. He has succeeded in achieving his objectives, that is, to become the candidate of presidency. He even marginalised his own leader. Poor Mr. Trotman!

There are lots of things going on and we...Let me go back to my remit. I would like to get into these political forays just to ensure that people do not believe that I am sitting in Carmichael Street and I do not what is going on. How many of us in here know that there is, in process, a paralegal system and training is actually going on in the communities, especially in the Hinterlands communities? I do not believe many people know that, but I am now announcing it. I hope that kind of information will be peddled. This has nothing to do with elections. It is going

to be involving a lot of volunteers, not a lot of money. It is to try to get the final alternatives for the formal justice system which is being clogged up. Guyanese are a too litigious set of people. For example, "inside a house there was a fight – husband and wife. There was some cuss up or something. He ran to his policeman over so and she ran to her policeman over so, and both of them ended before the Magistrate. Both of them have to pay cost because they do not want to lose each other. They did not give evidence against each other. One was in the lock-up over here and the other was in the lock-up over there, until they have to go to court. It does not make sense. If there is a little tiff and so at home...tongue and teeth always bite. I am not encouraging people to fight." [Mr. B. Williams: You are not encouraging domestic violence.] No. I am the one who put the Domestic Violence Act in place in 1997. So be careful.

So there are lots of things which are going on and we are trying to stock the various libraries with all the texts and the various case laws. Soon that will no longer be a source of contention among the Parliamentarians or the lawyers, or whoever else, want to find excuse for not doing their work on time. I put in place, in this very House, statutory machinery for judges to account for their decision making and, until today, not one judge has complied with it. The report was supposed to come to this National Assembly last August. I have not seen even a draft and these are judges. Judges cannot be babysat. I cannot go and knock at the door and say, "You know you are supposed to do this, that, and the other." They are always complaining that "Ramson says that whatever he passed in the National Assembly they have to abide by." It is not I who made the law.

This very thing is happening in Trinidad on a voluntary basis. What is the name of the Chief Justice? Is it Mr. Ivor Archie? I have a document where he went to open some law term, two years before, and he announced that by agreement, with his judges, that they will provide decisions within four months at the end of the case – voluntarily. He did not have to have law pass for it. Let us say that we, in this Government, are bad and we pass the law, we cannot be so bad if the judges over there are agreeing to it. It is not that one night I sat down and said, "Ah, let me enslave the judges." I was a judge. I do not know why it takes so long to write a decision. Well, whatever I am saying here today will get out in the streets by tomorrow, and if I need you to come and represent me...

Those are the essential things which come within the remit of the Attorney General and Ministry of Legal Affairs. Do not worry about building Courts, and so. We are all the time in the process of building courts. All of those Magistrates' courts, at the head of this street here, at the junction, are soon to be moved. The building is slated to be refurbished or rehabilitated completely and a new place had to be found, I am advised.

I understand that very soon the Magistrate courts are going to move to a new building somewhere, temporarily, so that this building here can be completely redone and be given the varnish it needs to make it look like a Court. A brand new Court at Charity, a concrete building, was just constructed at Charity. We are going *dutty by dutty - one, one dutty*.

Now, I have come to something that has been troubling me a lot. I must give praise to how Cde. Clarissa Riehl... I did not know that one day I would have to hold on to her skirt hem, but I am glad she referred to Eve. She said that Eve was a black woman. Is that not what she said just now? [**Mr. B. Williams:** No. Africa is the creator of civilisation.] Yes, but I am saying that she said that the lady was an African, of an African descent. Well, do not worry fiddle-faddle with me. I hear very well what she said, [**Mr. B. Williams:** I agree with that.] Well, I want you to listen to this now.

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

Prime Minister: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Member be given fifteen minutes to continue his presentation.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. Ramson: Well, however long it takes me to make this point it will be done. This was prepared as a manuscript by me before I heard Cde. Riehl. I think I mentioned it outside, because I feel terribly concerned about all those divisive, emotive concerns, as far as the Guyanese nation is being regarded. It concerns the International Year for People of African Descent. I can assure this House that it was a Cabinet decision long before it was announced that the Government would support – Cde. Teixeira, is that not correct? - the declaration at the United Nations. I sat at the sub-committee and I had my reservation at first, but having listened to some of the other

persons who know more about these things than me... That is why I have come to this conclusion now.

The year 2011 is identified by the United Nations, and supported by Guyana in a formal sense as far as the declaration is concerned, as the International Year for People of African Descent. At first blush and given its narrow construction - Cde. Lumumba is here. I am glad. I am going name you just now - this would have appeared to have limited this celebration to people whose physiological appearance is different from mine. I want the Members to listen very carefully, and I feel proud of saying this: my *negrian* credentials are no less than Cde. Lumumba and those credentials are no more that those of Cde. Ramkarran, our Speaker, or any other Guyanese. In fact, I may need Mr. Robert Hermon Orlando Corbin to call his colleague Cde. Backer, because I believe I have a greater attachment and more entitlement and *negrian* credential than she has. I will show how it is, just now.

Those credentials are invested in not only Guyanese of visible African ancestry. I say this conscious of all the peccadilloes and the idiosyncrasies of many Members of this House, and even those who are sitting in the gallery, and even of the members of the media. Some of it though, what I am going to say, may be too sensitive or rather unduly self-flagellation in the expectation that our glorious origins of birth could not rescue us on this present political cul-de-sac. If Cde. Riehl is right, and she does not appear to be wrong, she may be right for the wrong reasons, but nevertheless right, because she can rely on serious scientific and academic learning, and with every difference to the optical dilution of our individual ethnicities, historically and anthropologically. So, you were quite right, Cde. Opposition Leader.

Based on palaeo-data, I reputedly am an urban East Indian. Nonetheless, I traced my ancestry to forebears from the Continent of Africa. Well, I do not know how it will be described. I believe that I understand English as good as, and no less than, any Member of this House, and if you say that you are of an African descent and it is traceable to Africa, it means you can go upwards, so it has to be downwards too. So I am out of Africa too, when I am finished. So I do not want to be left out of the loop when there is the celebration. I do not hear Cde. Lumumba is complaining now. When I first raised it with him, he told me it would not be true, and I am not being vulgar, Cde. Speaker. When I raised it with him on the way out his gun fell out of his

pocket. He could not believe. He thought that I was speaking about some other accoutrement. It had nothing to do with our physical gifts. It is all in the mind.

The scientific literature of late is replete with unequivocal evidence to this effect even confirming the theory of Charles Robert Darwin, and it is not without some significance. I will come to what is readily available in the budget. It shows what clairvoyance sort of Government my Government is. It is our axiomatic historical and genealogical roots on which I rely. You cannot have it both ways. You cannot say Eve and Adam were the only two people and they born in Africa. They were not born in Guyana; they were not born in Poland; they were not born in Australia; they were not born in Alaska; they were not born in Brazil. But I can assure you that you cannot have it both ways: you cannot have the cake and eat it at the same time. I am ready to concede without having any sense of association with Adam or Eve.

7.09 p.m.

My training from a little boy I used to be told, “*Bharat Matha is across the Kala Pani.*” Well, I do not know why persons would want to go over the Kala Pani. When our forebears were coming they came over the same place and had so much trouble, hundreds of thousands of them died. Now we want to go back there. I do not know why they want to. Even if I am invited to a conference I do not want to go. I am satisfied right where I am. This is my *BharatMatha* - this same one here.

So I ask rhetorically - listen to this - can you separate the roots from the off shoots? This is a manuscript. Nobody wrote this for me. It is right here in my own handwriting. I saw some persons, over the other side, cannot even call the words they were reading. They never saw anything like that coming from bauxite – mullite. The other Member said *mulelite*. As you know, not everyone must attach themselves to that kind of beast of burden – *mulelite*. You are not a *mulelite*.

Alex Haley would find it difficult to logically differentiate this botanical analogical conclusion from his published treaties. Let me take you closer to home. It must be with some significance that my known forebears came out of two villages which are not renowned for being East Indian villages. My father is a *Buxtonian* by birth, and my mother is a *Plaisancian* by birth. That is not coincidental; it must be a feat of history. Fate must have brought them there. That is why I took

the trouble to go and turn the soil for Tipperary Hall. My father would have been proud to do it himself. I am only his extension.

So I tell you now that there are all those people who are talking about being left out in the cold. This thing is highly politics - this International Year for People of African Descent. Will it be given Eric Phillips, a man named Lincoln Lewis and Norris Whittaker to do this work? That is why there is the skilful Minister who called a meeting, since last August, with all the persons, all the groups. When I was at the International Convention Centre, I saw them adequately represented, some of those who did not turn up in the kind of clothes that they are now readily recognised. They came in their African garbs. Some of the persons who were calling for boycott did not notice them, but I noticed them though. They were in the front seats. My friend Ras Leon Saul went to town with us.

So this singular event is the responsibility of the State. Anyone having a fleeting familiarity with the protocols, driving relations between the United Nations and member States, would readily acknowledge that it would be looking to the member States to effectuate the purposes adherent in the declaration, and for that to be done the States need to have the money. I am guaranteed the budget has made adequate provision and if it is one time... I understand the Cde. President has already announced that come hell or high water any interference in the due effectuation of whatever programmes there are, he is going to ensure that all the bottlenecks are going to be removed. In the budget, even before this programme came in place, I see it is listed, \$71.740 million, in what is called a ballpark allocation, omnibus allocation, not only for that programme. Remember, I am here long enough, I know that if there is need for supplemental the Cde. Finance Minister has the capacity to come here for it, because it is an international obligation.

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

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

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. Ramson: I will do a little fast forward. Just let me deal with this question of hijacking. You cannot hijack what is yours. The State has a responsibility to give effect to the International Year

for People of African Descent. More so, now, I am trying to hitch my wagon to train, I am going with them too, and I will make sure it is done. All those fellows believe that this is a peanut event; it is not a peanut event where you would go by the Stabroek Market and put up a stand, “Get you peanuts here, get your peanuts here”. [Mr. Nadir: Get your grenade too.] Well, I do not know about that part.

Now that I have dealt with those various aspects, I want to come to this question which has been the leitmotif of the presentation of the other side, every presentation, barring Cde. Norton. It is not the other Norton; he is not responsible for much of what he said. Even Cde. George Norton, the Hon. Member, was not quite aware of what he was saying, if he had been among us in the days when I was around. He spoke about the medical supplies - that same Cde. Norton. He did not talk about corruption, but I am going to dispel any doubts about the quality of service that is given, through Cde. Ramsammy and Cde. Bheri Ramsaran, in our health service, and what used to happen in the 70s.

This book was published in 1989, with, the data extracted from the historical records of this country. Medical Supplies, page 117, “Essential medical supplies were often not available...” [Mr. Corbin: What is the source?] Do you want me to tell you? [Mr. Corbin: You have an obligation]. Do you see whose picture is on the book? This is a serious book. This book was written, apart from Cde. Benn’s father who was an indefatigable fighter against colonisation, by a man called Mr. Ashton Chase, one of the more creditable sources. He is still alive. You can always challenge him if you want. But I have never heard anyone criticised this book. He even wrote another book and I would suggest that you people read it, *Arise Africa*. It shows his disappointment with his people of his own race, although he does not want to say that that is why he wrote the book. *Arise Africa*, that is the last book he wrote.

“Dubious practices aimed at stretching out supplies of recycling needles and other disposable appliances were introduced. The equipment could not be upgraded, and the quality of medical practice declined. Care of the sick and the aged left much to be desired. Two patients on one bed...”

I hear them crying out that this is a PPP thing - a PPP phenomenon. I did not know that. I use to live opposite the hospital and I use to see them...

Mr. Corbin: Cde. Speaker, on a Point of Order. I know the learned Attorney General, the Hon. Justice, is aware that if a Member asked for the source, and he is insisting that we follow rules, he should let us know the source of his quotation. He, himself, in his presentation, said the author that he is quoting from wrote several books. I would like to make a note of it. I am grateful if he can do so in accordance with the rules.

Mr. Ramson: I will give it to you. I apologise. There is no such rule, but I apologise. I have read the Standing Orders.

Mr. Speaker: There is a rule, Hon. Member.

Mr. Ramson: Is there a rule?

Mr. Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Ramson: Well, we will discuss that rule after we have finished this presentation, if I may. But I apologise to Cde. Robert Herman Orlando Corbin. The name of the book is, *Guyana A Nation in Transit, Burnham's Rules*. [**Mr. Corbin:** Is it political?] I do not know if it is political. It is a matter of your subjective thinking.

“Two patients on one bed, patients sleeping on public hospitals floors became commonplace. Survival had its element of luck and chance, and there may be many who went to the great beyond, whom in circumstance of better care may still have been with us today.”

But listen to this portion.

“Patients where required to provide their own linens, bed bugs, vermin, rodents and stench could not be controlled as the necessary inputs where not in place. Trained nurses also made their exit, or never returned so that the standard of nursing care fell appreciably. As to the old destitute people, by the time this is ready the main building of the Palms, an architect's dream, may have collapsed due to total neglect. But for the church's own efforts, together with overseas endowments, the majestic St. George's Cathedral, reputedly the tallest wooden

building in the world, may have suffered the similar fate due to the malice of the political authorities.

Persons in public hospitals often had to arrange to get the drug prescribed for them, either from overseas contacts or at very high prices outside of State control. It is unnecessary to state the fate that befell those who could not get these or for those for whom time was not on their side.

The public laboratory...”

It is not the public lavatory. It is the public laboratory.

“...testing facilities declined appreciably and for many years there was no full-time bacteriologist and pathologist at our public institute.”

This is only in relation to Cde. George Norton. As to Cde. Ramjattan, who spoke about all this corruption, and so ... I am throwing out a challenge today, in this House, on all those allegations which were being made against the Ministers. I am speaking for myself, and I believe that I can speak for the rest of the Ministers too. I want to throw out a challenge to the Members of the House, there is the media at their disposal right now, before the debate is finished, for them to find one example, from the time I went there in 1996 to now, even in the Court of Appeal, in public light, that I have ever solicited or accepted, unsolicited, anything outside of my salary or whatever emoluments or benefits I have had as a Minister or as a judge. I dare say that I throw out that challenge today to everyone. We have to put an end to this rampant desire to run this Government down. I am apart of the Government and I feel sick at times. When I get home I do not even know if I can look at myself in the mirror, wanting to know if this is the same corrupt man. I have never brought a drink with Government's money, never had meal either, although I have the authority to do it.

I am going to read a page, Cde. Opposition Leader, the headline is “Fraud”. I did not say you were involved in any skulduggery. I would not do that; I am your old party comrade...[**Mr. Needkumar:** How did you say that you do not belong to no party?] Quondam, if I may use the exact word. But the *Kabaka* would have trained us in such a manner. Here is what is being said about Mr. Forbes Burnham.

“While the small man got away with being paid for doing little or nothing...”

That was how they kept them in check.

“Some big ones were making deals and raids on corporations that paid off handsomely.”

I did not write this book, and the man has never been sued for liable.

“Things reached epidemic proportions and got so far out of hand that through public speeches...”

Listen to this. It is said that my President and this administration are interfering with the judges and the magistrates. Listen to what this states:

“Things reached epidemic proportions and got so far out of hand that through public speeches he directed magistrates to inflict peremptory imprisonment for misappropriation of public funds. Those who were guilty were to be condignly dealt with. At the peak of his ‘reign’...”

And the word reign is in inverted commas. There had to be a beginning and it was allowed to run rampant. If there is any corruption we have not reached the stage where there is need to stamp it out.

“Fraud charges were instituted in many areas of both the public service and corporations, the President’s Office...”

Could you remember the man, the remigration officer – the fat man - who used to remigrate persons who never left the shores? He was before the Courts. He died while the case was ongoing. Canterbury was his name.

“The army, customs, many Ministries and public corporations were all affected, special magistrates were appointed to deal with this type of fraud.”

May I pause here, Cde. Speaker? A Member of this very House, at the time, husband was in charge of something called the Knowledge Sharing Institute (KSI), and I know the man. Call his name and I would whistle. He used to break up all the PPP and Working People Alliance (WPA)

meetings. He used to wear a basket hat. I will tell you that while she was a Member of this House, she was a Junior Minister... I am not calling her name because she was not to be blamed. It was her company to be blamed, her husband. The *Kabaka* had him inside the Georgetown Prisons, at Lot 12, and she had to go there every morning and walked with her basket of food. For months he had her doing that until she got so ashamed and ran out of the country.

Those were high placed officials. Do you know what the Knowledge Sharing Institute use to do? It was one of the highest regarded institutions of this country. It had nothing to do with sharing of knowledge. Where the Rayon House of Fashion is located now that was where he used operate from. I know the man and you know the man too. So there are talks about corruptions. Allegations are made about corruption here, but I am identifying for the Opposition Leader where his Cde. Leader actually passed the order. He set up a special Court and he was right. I think he should do the same. [**Mr. Corbin:** What have you done in your tenure?] You set the Court up and I will prosecute the cases.

“Several officials of corporations and Ministries ended up in the USA, with valuable real estate and bank balances that could not be acquired from the salaries they have been receiving. The corporations paid the heavy price. Corruption permeated the public service and corporations. It was compounded by poor salaries aided and abetted by the miscellany of regulations that were introduced from time to time, the more the merrier. Those involved had a field day out of the regulations, but boat had gone a falls and there was no turning back.”

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

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker. I move that the Hon. Member be given another fifteen minutes to conclude his presentation.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. Ramson: I like to be a little charitable to some of the persons whom I have some regards for. But I must give you one last passage at pages 127 and 128. I see the Members of the Opposition always attacking my colleague, Cde. Irfaan Ali. And this was what happened in the water sector.

“Paradoxically, the land of many waters under went many other water problems. There was flooding from poor drains and broken down pumps. Water delivery services to the city and its environs were frustrating to housewives and a pain in the neck to others. Residents of South Ruimveldt, for example, at times went for days without water issuing through their pipes in the yard. Often there was no potable water, the water that flowed from the pipes was discoloured, and boiling before use was recommended. Foreign exchange to acquire the requisite chemicals was the bugbear. Many wells in rural areas were not maintained and the drudgery of dredging water in the rural areas continued unabated.”

This is not so today. [**Mr. B. Williams:** It is up to today.] It is not as far as I know. I do not see that. I understand there is a man called Cde. Yuri Chandisingh, who used to be the Managing Director for Guyana Water Inc. (GWI). He is also like me, and I do not know the gentleman. He has his roots high up in the PNC. Mr. Chandisingh, his father, who was the Chairman of PNC, party had assured this nation in the recent past that 90 % of the households in this country have access to potable water.

On that note, Cde. Speaker, I crave your indulgence to stop, or bring this presentation to an end, and say that it was a pleasure remaining beyond my normal time.

[*Applause*].

Mr. B. Williams: I rise to make my contribution in this the International Year for People of African Descent. First of all, my colleague and comrade, Mrs. Joan Bavegens- she is not in here at present, but I still wish to register for the purpose of the Hansard, my congratulations to her on her election into this august Chambers as the new Member of Parliament. It is a recognition that is truly deserved. She is the foremost freedom fighter in this National Assembly here of ours, and I salute her.

This budget is presented against a backdrop of joblessness, intense poverty, and starvation wages, and yet it is called the “biggest budget ever”. In fact, for the last three years we have been having the “biggest budget ever”. Unfortunately, the budget has not impacted on the Guyanese people. It is not as what the Hon. Member, the Prime Minister, said that VAT takes more proportionately from those who have more. I do not know where the Hon. Member got that from.

But all the relevant learning states that VAT impacts the poor people more than any other category, that is, pensioners, single mothers, persons on fixed salaries and persons who are unemployed or underemployed. They are the persons who are impacted more by the incident of VAT in this country and not the rich.

In addition the Hon. Prime Minister was praising the Government's effort of adding \$5,000 to the income tax threshold. For an increased income tax threshold to be meaningful it must address real wages within the context of the economic environment which exists. Real wage is determined in purchasing power, that is, whether the money can buy things that are needed. Even of higher wages, in the absence of applicable measures to make sure that citizens can pay for goods and services they need puts it right back where we started, that is, workers on the breadline.

There had been other contributions, for example, the Hon. Prime Minister referred to the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS). In fact, the Prime Minister to me, in his contribution, seemed to be abandoning the LCDS. I do not know if that is because no money has come through as yet or he thinks no money will come at all. But what has been happening is that he has been postulating the virtues of increase mining – bring two large mines. He said large scale gold mining operations are on the horizon. In other words, whereas the LCDS was touted to more or less put a moratorium on mining activities that could impact the cover. The Hon. Prime Minister seems to be saying that they are right now on a drive to increase mining once again and to allow persons to have a free hand to do small and medium mining, and the Government will bring in the two large scale miners, far more than Omai, as he said. What he was saying is a good thing, because the opportunity costs of scaling down on mining and forestry operations will have to be looked at, in the hope and expectation that funds will come into the kitty.

7.39 p.m.

Another issue mentioned by the Hon. Prime Minister was that of the Russian Aluminium (RUSAL)/ Bauxite Company of Guyana Inc. (BCGI) workers and he, to me, appeared to be making a claim for the workers to be dismissed. He has determined that it was riotous behaviour. I do not know how many persons were charged by the police. What has happened is that the company has dismissed 57 workers and they are dismissed up to this day. I think it raises this

question, again, of companies coming into Guyana...I have always told people that we welcome companies to come into Guyana. We welcome foreign investment but we, at the same time, have to banish that against the rights of our workers, and that is, the protection of the rights of our workers. No matter how big the company is there must be laws in this country that protect our workers against arbitrary actions of companies such as RUSAL, or BCGI, its surrogate company.

Also, the Hon. Prime Minister spoke about there being a new epoch since independence and that the unions must understand the changing role and we must have a discourse. The Hon. Prime Minister must know that under the People's National Congress Reform, trade unions understood that role and had moved from the positions that they had adopted during colonialism and recognised that they had their own national, independent Government, and that is why they were accused by the People's Progressive Party for not being militant against the Government of the day. We passed through that already. I do not want him to trap me into going into the past. What I want to say, at this time, is that the trade unions of today are beginning to reassert themselves. In the Guyana Agriculture Workers Union (GAWU), it is clear that the people believe that the politburo of the PPP/C must not run the Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo). That is very clear. The workers believe that the political members of the board should not be there, running that company.

Two, it is clear that Mr. Komal Chand, an Hon. Member of this House, has decided that, he is a trade unionist, he is looking after the interest of his workers. I applaud him for showing such strength. I applaud you, Mr. Komal Chand for showing such strength and discipline, but, quite frankly, we must remove the politicisation of GuySuCo so that the sugar industry could breathe again in this country of ours.

I do not want to stick to the Hon. Prime Minister alone. We just heard the Hon. Attorney General. I see he has left, but the Hon. Attorney General got it wrong when he tried to say that the PNC strategy, that is, to which the Economic Recovery Programme was merely an 'Empty Rice Pot programme. As I understand it, the positive effects of the ERP continued up to, on and around, 1996 under the PPP Government, and after that there was negative growth in Guyana from 1997 right down to 2003/2004. The Economic Recovery Programme that was instituted under the People's National Congress Reform has always had proper and acceptable acclaim by

all of the relevant experts in the world. That was a misrepresentation of the importance of the ERP.

I tend to think that... I do not want to get back into the past, but the Hon. Prime Minister was actually telling this Hon. House that the manner in which the lotto funds are used is lawful. I will like to respectfully refer this Hon. House to our Constitution, Title 8, Finance, article 216. It reads thus:

“All revenues or other moneys raised or received by Guyana (not being revenues or other moneys that are payable, by or under an Act of Parliament, into some other fund established for any specific purpose or that may, by or under such an Act, be retained by the authority that received them for the purpose of defraying the expenses of that authority) shall be paid into and form one Consolidated Fund.”

So I do not know where the Hon. Member got that from. What is clear is that to have the lotto fund in your back pocket could never be lawful in any country in this world.

The Hon. Attorney General spoke of some ingratitude. What ingratitude? That is, that for 33 years nothing was done in law revision, because he is now doing it. Unfortunately for him, of those 33 years, the PPP has been in Government for 18, so he was attacking his own party when he was saying that they are ungrateful. In the first place, he was talking about having computerised some of the reports. Thirty-three years ago, I am not sure what kind of consciousness the world had about the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector so I do not know where he was going. If he wants to come and tell this Hon. House that he is doing something now, let him say that, but do not go back... This Administration just likes to go back into the past. This time, he has made a mistake in going back into the past. He is doing something now because he has the chance to do it now. This is not the first time we have heard about law revision. We know about a law book scam, but he never mentioned that. We got a CD which purported to be an updated account of all the laws in Guyana. I discovered that in the Mark Benschop case when he was charged under a wrong section which was the wrong section. When we were looking for it, the same CD was used and he was charged under a wrong section. That CD was so inaccurate that it had to be discarded. I do not know how the Hon. Attorney

General lacks knowledge of that - wasteful Government spending; the taxpayers' moneys have gone down the drain.

The time has come for some form of permanent law revision committee. It is not for the Hon. Attorney General to sell to this Hon. House that it would be to go to the back room, drink coffee with the boys, and all of that. That is not what the PNC has envisioned for law revision in this country. A motion was brought by the PNC and it was rejected in this Hon. House.

The Hon. Attorney General likes to amuse us, so, again, he spoke about judges' decisions. Not because Trinidadian judges could agree to give their decisions in four months it means that we have the conditions here for our judges to do the same. As a practising attorney-at-law, I would love for decisions to come within two months.

Firstly, we are understaffed in terms of judges. There is need for far more judges than what are there, right now, labouring in the High Courts. There is need for better facilities and conditions for them. They, obviously, must have to have assistance in doing their research. They must have young lawyers to help them delve into the research material, and the courts must be updated so that there could be recorded evidence. All these things will facilitate any judgement in two months – two weeks even – if it comes to that. I must say this: with the volume of cases they have to deal with, I do not know what time they have for themselves. They would have to make the decisions when they are not at work; when they are at home, after hours. I do not know what life they have but they are very overburdened. I am not saying this out of any small consideration. They have to be given the facilities so that they could be charged with that responsibility, like the Trinidadians, to give us decisions in four months.

The Hon. Attorney General spoke about *building one dutty here and building one dutty there*, in terms of Courts. I think the time has come, since he referred to Trinidad, that we follow Trinidad and establish a judicial justice complex of Courts, certainly for the higher Courts, we should try do something about those. We should put them in a proper area and then let us get the business of the Courts going. Justice is a low priority for that side of the House, Hon. Prime Minister. That might be a pipe dream, but I can assure you that that will be high on the PNC-1G's agenda when it wins the next elections this year.

I do not want to be involved in any discussion other than my presentation, so let me say that in addition to intense poverty, joblessness and starvation wages, there is a frightening health care system in this country. It is so amusing that when the Hon. Attorney General was reading, just now, from some book in the past, to anyone listening who wanted to hear, it sounded as though he was talking about the present health care system in this country. At least he was not talking about people being killed in the institution whimsically or precipitously, and infant mortality. One goes in for the slightest thing and never come out. Let me tell you this, Mr. Speaker, I have only just returned from the United States where I visited Guyanese in the diaspora. It is on two pages on Facebook: Basil Williams Profile and Basil Williams for President. All those who want to verify what went on it is there for them to see. I want to say this: Guyanese in the diaspora care very much about this country of theirs. That is the first thing. Two, they braved record temperatures, wintry conditions, to attend those meetings. Let me tell you two things that they were concerned about: our appalling health care system and crime in this country. You, next presidential candidate for the PPP/C, could smile but they are very serious about those two issues. Do you know what they are saying? They do not understand how only now we could get some dialysis machine. That is one. Why does the Government hospital not have a CT scanner of its own? How come there is no neurosurgeon? Why did Mr. Murray have to die because a neurosurgeon could not be found?

[Laughter]

I am serious. Go and laugh when they ask you about it over there. Visit them and then laugh. They say that where they are the health care system is good. They would love to come back home but they do not want to know that in Guyana when they enter an ambulance all it will be doing is to provide taxi service. That is what they are concerned about. It must be equipped and hospitals must also be equipped.

They are scared about crime. They want something to be done about crime. I told them that they will have to put the People's National Congress Reform in power so that it can deal with crime and allow them to come home to enjoy this country.

It is relevant to note that in all of that, in every State, the majority of Guyanese in attendance were very interested in shared governance in this country. That is something, I suppose, we could

ignore at our peril, but it is clear that the Guyanese people are tired of the partisan politics, tired of the fighting and that we are not going anywhere as a nation. They are attracted to that concept of shared governance in the governing system. So I thought I should let you know that. There is the frightening health care system existing here, in Guyana. I did not have to tell them about it. They told me about it.

Then there is the dysfunctional criminal justice system. My honourable sister spoke about that earlier, but I want to zero in specifically on this aspect. Right now, languishing in jail, are a number of political prisoners. I have to call them political prisoners, but they are young men who have been charged nearly six to seven years now and cannot get a trial as yet, despite the fact that the Hon. Justice George insisted that all the prisoners in the jail who are awaiting trial in the High Court must be brought before her. After they came to her, she said that the ones who are in there the longest their case must be dealt with first. She ordered, three sessions ago, that a young man by the name of Quincy Mc Clennon should be given a trial at the next session. Three sessions have passed and Mr. Quincy Mc Clennon, who went to jail when he was seventeen years old, cannot be given a trial as yet. He was one of those, when there was some killing on the East Coast of Demerara, who was just picked up and thrown into the police station and given a confession statement. Do you know what happened in that case? It was discovered, when he came to the trial, that he was given a confession statement for another murder case. Can you imagine that? The case was thrown out by Justice George. Now, another case was brought in which he was charged with. Would it not be affected in the same way?

I have spoken to the Hon. Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) about this matter. I would have thought that it was a simple matter and that it was recognised that it was the police did that, but he is waiting for the other case which will go the same way because there is no caution statement for this. They put it in that and that is how they confuse themselves. Mr. Mc Clennon is seventeen years old and most of them are young. They have lost their adolescence in the jail. They have lost their young person status in the jail. When they come out - because they will come out - what system does this Government have to make them proper citizens again? I have a list of them. We are going to put them up all around this country. These are political prisoners because police know they do not have evidence against them and they are embarrassed to bring these cases up.

So much so, that when the Hon. Justice Bovell-Drakes directed that at the next session one of the cases with Sumner and Mc Clennon must start, they came the next session saying that they were not going with it. He said, "You are not going to go with it. Okay, no worries. I am going to give him bail." No sooner than he was granted bail, an approach was made to another judge of the similar jurisdiction to stay that decision of the judge. Could you imagine that? He was not being tried after six or seven years, and an honourable judge gave bail under the circumstances that he is entitled to do and State went to stop that. We have to worry now, what really the agenda of this Government is. How could it counter on something like that? What has happened? The matter was heard by the Hon. Justice George and she has ruled on the matter. She has ruled that Justice Bovell-Drakes was right and that he had the jurisdiction to make the order that he made. I did not see it publicised, as yet. She also ruled that the procedure that was adopted by the lawyer who represented the State was the wrong procedure and she dismissed the matter.

We are not hearing any noise. We are not hearing Mr. Nandlall making any noise because he is the lawyer who filed the wrong procedure. When I told him that the last time, he said I was a liar. What I am saying to him is that we, as professionals, must have an appreciation for the poor people of this country, one. Two, an appreciation for justice to be done in this country, and not just try to bolster our position in the hope of a gain that we could become another Attorney General (AG) and allow those things to happen to hapless young men.

We have a duty. I tell you this: I will ensure that we correct this justice system and we will ensure that there are speedy trials – speedy justice. We will abolish the preliminary inquiry and we will...[**Mr. Nandlall:** Would you abolish that?] You have taken something to the court and it could not find anything to do with it, so you had to come back and get it to be done. You have not done that. You have not taken anything to the court and that legal giant, the Hon. Member Mr. DeSantos, over there will confirm that. We have to get this thing right. Why are we oppressing people? Why are we using State apparatus to take away the rights of those young, ordinary people? What are we doing? What are we creating in this country? We will have to correct this dysfunctional criminal justice system.

We have a tattered Local Government system. Look at what it is doing: it is playing political football with a garbage dump. Could you imagine that something like that is happening in a country where there is supposed to be mature people? Garbage is piled like a mountain, right

next door to people? The stench! How could someone be so unfair and cruel to their fellow human beings? You cannot say you are a caring Government. I was shocked when I saw it. The political football is this: the problem is that the other dump site that is there will smell. It is at a place named Eccles which, I think, the Government Members believe has their constituents. So all they are doing is stretching them out all the time. Whenever the people complain, the Government says that they are not going to go ahead with it and they play for time. Then they go and cover more graves in the cemetery, and when the people make noise...I have noticed that we did not hear anything up to now. But when you go there, nothing is happening. They pushed it back to another month. We are watching it. But I am saying the Local Government system is in tatters and it has to be corrected. The People's National Congress Reform will implement those Local Government reforms when we take power and office in this country. This is the backdrop in which this "biggest budget" comes to us.

Let me now deepen, in terms of my remit, my take on what is happening in the trade union movement.

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

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Speaker, I rise to move that the Hon. Member be given fifteen minutes to continue his presentation.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. B. Williams: Mr. Speaker, the Guyana Postal and Telecommunications Workers Union (GPTW) won a famous victory against the Bishop. As I was saying earlier, the trade unions are beginning to reassert themselves. GAWU also has won a famous victory against GuySuCo; it is beginning to reassert itself. The National Association of Agricultural Commercial and Industrial Employees (NACCIE) is a giant; it is not taking on NACCIE. NACCIE gets its way. The Guyana Bauxite and General Workers Union (GB&GW) is resolute in the representation of those workers who were wrongfully dismissed at BCGI/RUSAL. I am happy because the Leader of the Opposition, out of a recognition that this thing was taking too long... You have to allow the grievance procedure to work. You cannot just jump in every time there is a problem with the union and the bargaining unit, the employer. Give them time. They will negotiate. If negotiations fail they will conciliate. That is where the Minister comes in. But the Minister was not going in. I

see the Hon. Member is here. In my absence, I understand that he criticised my sister and I did not like that. When I criticised him he was annoyed, but he was not doing his duty. [**Mr. Nadir:** Well, you do it for me.] No. You were not doing your duty, Hon. Member. You should have ordered an arbitration ever since in this matter.

The Hon. Minister of Labour ought to have ordered arbitration in that dispute to resolve that matter. Since the Armstrong Tribunal Award, this Government is scared stiff of any arbitration of that nature. It has nightmares about arbitration. I am happy that the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Robert Corbin, intervened because he recognised that it could not have been an industrial matter. It was taking on the trappings of a political matter and so he intervened. Even then, the company did not turn up at the meeting that the Hon. Minister of Labour ordered. I think that is gross disrespect to my honourable friend, the Minister. I am happy that the Minister is affronted and is now asserting himself, but, maybe, he will tell us how far this matter has reached. The fact of the matter is that problem has been simmering for the past two years. The workers are not employed, not earning a living, but the company is so arrogant that it is now seeking to get rid of the union as the bargaining agent. That is the kind of arrogance...I agreed with the Hon. Prime Minister when he said that we have to examine these foreign companies which are coming into Guyana to employ poor people in pursuit of profit.

I think it is even worse because this particular company took a leaf out of the book of this very Government by breaking off negotiations and imposing its own wage increase. That is what RUSAL has done. Does that sound familiar? [**Mr. Hinds:** That is not accurate.] Yes! It broke off and imposed its own increase on the workers. [**Mr. Hinds:** The union chose option one.] You had your turn, Prime Minister. Where did they get that gumption from? It is because the Government has been doing that for the last decade. Since the Armstrong Arbitration Award, the Government has been breaking off and derailing salaries negotiations with the Guyana Public Service Union, the bargaining agent for the workers in the public service, and imposing 5% increases without fail. Do you know what? The Hon. Minister of Labour has never sought, as he has the power to do, to sanction the Head of the Presidential Secretariat. He is the person that is representing the Government and is the custodian of the negotiations on behalf of the Government with the union. He is reneging and resiling from his powers.

8.09 p.m.

This was prepared before I understood that the Hon. Dr. Luncheon has had an incident and I wish him well. I do not know what it is but I wish him well, whatever it is.

Remember in previous years I told you about the contrived division in the movement. I must say now, from where I speak, the state of Trade Unionism in Guyana appears to be righting itself because only recently, I saw a stated intention of both umbrella organisations, FITUG and the Guyana Trade Union Congress, to get back together as one unit. I think if that could be achieved it would be a great victory for the workers and people of this country. I urge them to pursue this.

The Public Service Ministry

I have stated *ad nauseam* in this Hon. House that that Ministry had embarked on a programme of establishing a parallel Public Service. They protested, but how were they doing it? They were doing that by creating a category called “contracted workers” where they could reward their political cronies; pay them more than the normal traditional public servant is getting on the traditional scale on the establishment and they have no union rights. It is like in Germany during the war when there were the normal soldiers, but then there were the “SS” – Hitler’s own special troop. That is what you all have their with the contract workers. You are putting in your cronies inside there; you pay them more than you pay the normal establishment pay and they have nothing. They are getting gratuity, high salaries and everything after two or three year contracts, and the ordinary public servants are languishing on starvation wages. A very serious problem is developing there and we, in the People’s National Congress Reform, believe that all of the workers in the Public Service must be under the one and same establishment so that all of them will be entitled to look forward to the same treatment, benefits and protection. I do not know what we are supposed to do next. Every year they are budgeting for the Public Service Appellate Tribunal but they do not constitute it. This is a very important body to give quick redress to workers so that they would not have their matters tied up in the normal slew of cases in the court and they do not constitute this body. What are we to do?

We have brought a question to this Hon. House and the Minister who is supposed to be responsible for that said that she could not answer the question because she is not responsible for it. In those circumstances, there is little that the Speaker could do but I am sure he really must be querulous as to who is responsible for the Public Service Appellate Tribunal, if not the Public

Service Ministry or the Public Service Minister. However, that body needs to be reconstituted and again we urge that this Government does the honourable thing and reconstitute the Public Service Appellate Tribunal.

Now I see a large sum budgeted under this head for training. I am looking forward to the next session when we could ask the Minister questions about who is being trained and under what categories. She was speaking about problems with pregnancy the other day and how that disrupts a programme in Cuba. We will deal with that when the time comes, but the point of the fact is in terms of its stated mission, the Public Service Ministry ought to be doing more to engender transparency and accountability within the public service. I see that the Minister is not here and she knew that I was going to speak now. I am not saying that her behaviour is not transparent. I do not want you to go and misrepresent what I am saying.

Local Government

When are we going to implement those constitutional reforms? We have participated acidulously in the deliberations of the task force for eight years. The Government aborted it arbitrarily, sent us to Parliament and in Parliament, they did the same thing. So what is happening with Local Government Reform? As I said earlier, the Local Government System is broken. Nothing could be done. In America, Guyanese are asking, “Why is the Mayor not getting money to pay the garbage people?” I had had to explain to them that the Government is holding back the Mayor’s money. I explained to them that these councils that are having the problem in Guyana with the Government are councils that are PNC/R councils and that the Government wants to make them look bad, and so they withhold the taxes from them and then they blame them when the garbage piles up and they cannot pay the people because they are the biggest debtors of taxes to the City Council. They do not want to give them power to raise their own revenue. The people were appalled. Everywhere they were appalled.

I told them, also, that you have this tactic of giving the councils – the Regional Development Councils in Linden, New Amsterdam and Region 4 – the money in November knowing fully well that they have to send back moneys not spent at the end of December. They were appalled at that too. I am waiting to hear when you all go over there for these meetings. The Local Government System, as it is, suits this Government because the Minister could ride ram shod

over the system. He knows that the Mayor cannot dismiss any senior officer, so if the senior officer refuses to do the bidding of the Mayor and Councilors, only the Minister could dismiss them and so they like that, but I do not know how much longer they are going to continue this system? The original members were exhausted. They say that they are resorting to Public Service Officers being Councillors and that is not working either. As such, we have to get these reforms in place and give the people the opportunity to be masters of their own destiny, as is contemplated by the reforms, and empower them to make decisions in their own communities and run them.

As I pointed out, once this autonomy inheres in those communities, it means that they could go and look for direct diaspora investment because, as I said over there, Government is doing nothing with all that money that it has. They could identify projects in Guyana and invest the money. It is their own country that overseas based Guyanese want to come back to and they seem to be very interested in doing that so we need to get the reformed in quickly. I also told them that the Government cannot do everything from the center. They cannot run the country from the center; they do not know what is happening in Corriverton and Rupununi, so we need to have the introduction of Local Government Reform in this country. I can assure you that the People's National Congress Reform, on winning the next election, would immediately implement a Local Government System through the Local Government reforms.

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

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Speaker, I rise to move that the Hon. Member be given 15 minutes to conclude his presentation.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is very important that we decentralise decision making so that people would have a feeling that they have a stake in the running of the country. All over the world, in all of the major countries, decentralisation has taken place and you cannot deny the value that brings. We must end the situation where people wake up over night and see a set of people coming into their community saying that they are coming to do a project which is often badly sited and then, to add insult to injury, they come bringing their own workers instead of employing people, firstly, in the communities in which they go to execute these works. We

have to change all of that, but the Government does not want to do that. The Government likes the system as it is. The system is broken. We are tired. Throughout this country there are problems with all municipalities, all councils and things have to change. We want to be able to have those local bodies raising their own money and garnering their own resources and for the Government to be able to equally and with equanimity, transfer funds to the various NDCs around this country – equanimity meaning “in an even-handed way” Ms. Shadick. [**Ms. Shadick:** That word does not mean that. Look it up] You would learn that word if you look in the dictionary. You would see what it means.

At the end of the day, when all is said and done, we must take care of this country. We have a duty to make this country somewhere that each and every Guyanese feels he/she has a stake in it. I, personally, would tell you that I am upbeat about shared governance. I know that this Administration is not going to deal with it because it said that we must build trust. you are saying all kinds of things because you are in power, but as soon as we win the next election I can assure you that we will start dismantling the structure that we have in the Constitution and prepare the foundation for a new vibrant, modern, competitive and prosperous Guyana.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister of Amerindian Affairs [Mrs. Sukhai]: Good evening, Mr. Speaker. This evening I too wish to congratulate my colleague, Dr. Ashni Singh, and his team for presenting to this Hon. House a Budget under the theme *Together Building Tomorrow's Guyana Today*.

The presentation of our Budget reflects our commitment to fostering our nation's development and inclusiveness to which this is achieved as it is implied by the theme. In spite of the many global challenges and unprecedented changes, we continue to enjoy consistent growth rates. We have maintained macroeconomic stability while at the same time keeping our fiscal deficit low. The remarkable performance and the robustness of our economy are not by coincidence, but it is a direct result of the astuteness of our leadership- the leadership of the People's Progressive Party and its Government and our commitment to the Guyanese people. Never have we abandoned the mantra of putting people at the center of development. Our democratic style of leadership has been filtering down to everyone and has benefited all in our country. It has benefited every segment of our society in spite of geographical location, class, ethnicity, religion

or political affiliation. This again is another People's Progressive Party manifesto commitment which we have made and we have been true to.

The criticisms that are heaped by the combined Opposition and their cohorts, the constant electronic blogging all over the world about corruption, discrimination, crime and VAT have impacted in some quarters. However, the People's Progressive Party/Civic Government has publicly debunked these spurious claims. For example, even in this Hon. House the Hon. Basil Williams raised again the issue of VAT. As an aspiring presidential candidate, I am shocked that he, at this current time in his life... **[Mr. B. Williams: inaudible]** I will speak to you. Since he claimed that the vulnerable and the poor in this country, those who receive the minimum wage or low wages and salaries, are the most affected by VAT... if this is what he is telling the population, which is brighter than he is, if this is what he is telling those he is encouraging from overseas to come back here to support him then we, in this Administration, would wish to say that an ordinary Guyanese – a Guyanese who is earning the minimum salary or wage – food basket mainly consists of basic food items and if one understands VAT, all of the basic food items are zero-rated. This is “VAT-free”, if you do not understand what “zero-rated” means. In addition to that, public transport is zero-rated and many people who earn a salary travel by public transport so VAT does not affect them when they are travelling. Building materials in this country for poor people who have received house lots which this Government has been distributing at a subsistent price is available. Most of the building materials which our people use are zero-rated. The vulnerable and the poor, in this country, benefit from a lot of our social welfare packages which exists, and, therefore, when one speaks about the impact of VAT and those who are willing to listen to them, must know the truth. Those who are aspiring to be presidential candidates must be truthful to our people. They must be truthful to the electorate and that is one of the reasons why they have not been attracting the number of voters which they so desire.

I also wish to say that we have written, wrote and ridden the high waves. That is why we can stand here very proudly as Members of the People's Progressive Party/Civic Government and say that we remain committed to building a strong and competitive economy; one that all of us, in this country, are enjoying the benefits of. For example, with our public infrastructure programme and the combined investment among all of the sectors we are providing the

assurance by this programme to our people that while we are not the main employers of our people, we can assure them that we are going to guarantee employment and this matter must be addressed. No doubt the projects to be implemented this year will demand not only professional, technical skills but they will demand skilled and unskilled human resources.

We need to encourage our people and, in particular students, to be guided by our national priorities and to seek to appropriately acquire the skills to match the evolving development programmes which are executed by this Government and which offer employment to some people. I say some, because the private sector, the engine of growth which has been growing and expanding under this Government, has been the main employer of our Guyanese young people. Therefore, what the Hon. Basil Williams spoke, just now, about the Budget not addressing employment, is a non-issue. It is a non-issue, Mr. Basil Williams, through the Speaker. Further, recognising the need for skilled resources to match the jobs that are created by this Government and the programmes... this mismatch is being addressed by our Government. This Government is investing in training opportunities for those underprivileged and yet determined young people with a variety of skill training rages that will gear them to meet the needs of our labour market. If you want to find out, you can speak to the Hon. Minister Frank Anthony and the Hon. Minister Nadir who over the years have been churning out young trained, skilled people to take up the jobs which those who choose differently, are unable to fill.

Turning to Amerindian development, the growing population of the Amerindians has not been left out or they have not been divorced from the process of development. Allocations in the 2011 Budget clearly represent the support for activities to be carried out this year to enhance their standard of living and the development of their community. Earlier in the day, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition enquired whether my absence was due to sharing election goodies to the Amerindians. My response to him was that we share goodies all year round. The People's Progressive Party has for its 60 years of existence...

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Corbin is denying that he said so, Hon. Member.

Mr. Corbin: On a point of clarification, I must say that that was in my thoughts but I do not recall ever expressing those views. I do not know whether or not the Member has clairvoyant

thoughts and, if so, if she will remind me as to where and when I said this, in this Hon. House, or else she should withdraw it.

Mrs. Sukhai: Mr. Speaker, I did not mention that he said it in this House. I said earlier in the day. If he wants to name the location, he was standing in the corridor whilst I was coming upstairs and I responded to him saying that all year round, this Government provides goodies to our people. Over the last 60 years of the existence of the People's Progressive Party, we have stood tall beside the people. Over the last 18 years, the People's Progressive Party/Civic Government has promoted inclusive growth and in so doing, the Government has a very strong connection with the Amerindian population; something which Members on the other side have never developed with our people.

Today, Amerindians have a stable platform from which to engage Government and increase their participation as equal partners in their own development. That resulted, of course, in a changed economic and social landscape for the hinterland. Today there is also a vibrant National Toshias Council with an executive lead by a female whose leadership, I am confident, will complement our Government's credible effort in supporting equitable development. Such a situation was unheard of in the past under the former regime, so they can smile and make snide remarks, but the focus of this Government is to never divorce ourselves from the people.

Today considerable resources have been expended in the areas of health, education, water, agricultural support, the social and productive infrastructure and we have also spent a lot of effort building trust. This is another PPP/Civic manifesto commitment, admittedly, fulfilled. While the gaps are narrowing, there remains challenging situations and we admit that there is room for improvement. I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that the People's Progressive Party/Civic Government will continue to address frontally providing improved access and quality service to Amerindians and hinterland residents. This being so, this year, with a budgetary allocation of \$486.3 million, I am confident that our continued focus on expanded access and quality of service will be what we will be addressing.

8.39 p.m.

Mrs. Sukhai: The Ministry will also advance focus on supporting village projects – meeting the need for equipment and other resources and encouraging increased sustainable economic

activities to support the transformation of village economies for advancing community development. The investment of \$73 million in the Budget will be spent to provide machinery which includes tractors. It will also be spent to provide implements. The Ministry will be providing to communities ploughs, harrows, trailers, tools, communication sets and processing equipment to support village projects. This, essentially, will enhance the position of the villages to pursue reliable and sustainable development with regards to agriculture, tourism ventures, sports and culture among various other activities pursued by the Village Councils and the members of the villages and communities.

Budgetary allocation, this year, for water and land transportation is expected to result in further increases in the available transportation facilities which impact not only on transportation of individuals, but it also supports communication and increased access to education, health and other social services within and outside of the villages. This Government is willing to make the necessary interventions to reduce the gaps which remain with respect to many of the services, and it has never used the geographical locations of our communities, villages and settlements as an excuse not to do so.

As a PPP/C team, we will always take offence to those who are critical of Government's procurement and delivery of essential equipment and supplies for Amerindian Villages. Usually those critics refer to it has handouts. On our side, we take such utterances as a reflection and position which their parties or institutions hold and, in my view, are tantamount to a direct assault on a segment of our population whose development is still reeling from the onslaught of neglect and marginalisation under the past regime.

The allocation of \$33.7 million for advancing the activities under the National Secure Livelihood Programme is most welcomed. It amazes me when parliamentarians or politicians, who are aware of the advancement of people's livelihood options in their villages or communities, come here to this National Assembly with a long list of complaints. I wish to make a few highlights. The National Secure Livelihood Programme currently supports approximately 150 farmers comprising of young people and women with the least skills and resources. It provides assistance to building skilled livelihood through the cultivation of citrus, passion fruit, pineapples and ginger. The persons in the programme are engaged in aquaculture and apiculture. I am sure that Mr. Whitaker, who may have made a presentation in this Hon. House particularly as it relates to

his constituency, would have gone into details about this initiative which is impacting on the lives of many in the Mabaruma Sub-Region. [**Mrs. Backer:** We have forgotten. Remind us] I am very willing to remind this House. Last year, the processing buildings along with the procurement of processing equipment for value-added production of ginger, cassava and crab meat processing were completed, while this year's investment will be made to bring all of the processing units into operation. If the Members want me to remind them, which I was not hoping to do, I am very willing to do so. At Yarikita, the installation of equipment for processing of cassava will relieve women of some of the tedious manual activities associated with the production of cassava. Achieving commercial processing of cassava and its by-products will enhance the secure livelihoods of these women, the farmers and their families. It will also see the local demand for cassava root increase and incentivise farmers to return to consistent cassava cultivation.

There is support for the full establishment and cultivation of Hassa by the members of the Tobago Hill Village, a community which was neglected, isolated and marginalised by the PNC regime. This Government was able to relocate, support and help them. It may be a laughing matter to some of the Members on the other side, but I am sure that when they visit Region One, they will want to solicit the villagers' votes. As a politician, I will remind them of the neglect they suffered under the PNC. Currently, we will move to increase capacity building and training in aquaculture on the complementary local and traditional knowledge of the residents which will assist in the cultivation of fishes closer to home. By freeing up productive hours, residents can now also concentrate some extra time on the cultivation of necessary food crops.

The settlement of Imbotero will benefit from the crab fattening farm and processing plant which will come into operation this year. This year, the group in the Waini will expand and their existing production facility for crab seed production of oil and cream will also be mechanised.

The apiculture project engages communities in the Arouka River and will continue to complete construction of the remaining number of hives and honey production is expected to increase this year. Mr. Speaker, why are these activities that benefit poor people not appreciated by the others on the Opposite side of this House? It just reveals the true nature and the focus which they never had for the people.

The National Hinterland Secure Programme is expected to be further rolled out to another 100 communities this year with moneys to be disbursed under the Guyana REDD+ investment fund or the fund which is popularly referred to as GRIF. The funds will be invested in low carbon economic, and social development projects in accordance with the Community Development Plans (CDPs) prepared by each village. Currently, a total of 158 communities have submitted to the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs their development plans which consist of small and micro enterprises for Amerindian Villages, settlements and communities as their priority projects. Agriculture, tourism and aquaculture have emerged as the lead areas of activities. These projects, as I have said before, will be funded through resources generated from the Low Carbon Development Strategy as implied in paragraph 3, page 19 of the Budget 2011 document. The CDPs serve as a good tool for informing Government with respect to the direction that many villages plan to go. It also supports the planning process and, therefore, it is a document which is being developed by the villages and communities themselves and Government believes that it is an important tool for it.

In keeping with Government's drive to promote Amerindian Development and to effectively address community development, the implementation of the CDPs, which will commence shortly, will further help to transform the Amerindian village economies. To complement this, increased focus as was directed from the CDPs, mainly agriculture activities, this year the Ministry will be providing additional support to augment this sector. The Ministry will be providing tractors, fogging machines, spray cans, pesticides and agricultural equipment to several Amerindian Villages.

In 2010, a tractor with implement was provided to the village of Nappi. Chainsaws were provided to four villages and agricultural tools and knapsack spray cans, among others were also supplied to aid the agricultural development in many of the villages throughout the Hinterland.

In 2011, the Ministry will provide tractors, trailers and ploughs to the villages of Sand Hill, **Wongna** and Kamwatta in Region No. 1 and Parabara, Ruperti and Wowetta in Region No. 9. In a few days time, an excavator will leave the city for Lethem to support the developmental expansion of aquaculture in the region.

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

The Prime Minister and Minister of Public Works and Communications [Mr. Samuel Hinds]: Mr. Speaker I move that the Hon. Member be given another 15 minutes to continue her presentation.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mrs. Sukhai: While I speak about the Ministry's support, it has also been supporting, financially, many of the villages across the Hinterland with respect to the presidential grant. A total of \$433 million have been expended over the last couple of years. For last year alone, the Ministry disbursed \$110 million to aid in economic projects across the region. Approximately 70% of these projects are already completed and works on the remaining ones are in progress.

Again, Amerindian ownership of their traditional lands remains at the forefront of the PPP/C Administration. The legal process was laid out in the Amerindian Act. In 2010, the demarcation of lands was completed for three villages, namely Three Brothers in Region No. 1 and Toka and Shulinab in Region No. 9, at a cost of \$40 million. Apparently, there are attempts to create delayed tactics. Some have been building a case to stymie the process of demarcation by saying that when one looks at the Amerindian Act 2006, one finds it very extremely difficult to see how the process can cost any huge amount of money.

I also understand that in my absence from this Hon. House, the Hon. Member, Mrs. Sheila Holder, who is not here today, made mention of the cost of demarcation referring to it as "massive" as outlined in the 2011 Budget. The Hon. Member pointed to corruption in respect to these spending, especially, when the demarcation process is so simply outlined in the 2006 Amerindian Act. How can some politicians be so naive? The process for requesting demarcation is simple. What is not simple is sourcing the fund to conduct the cadastral surveys. The critics need to do research on the cost of surveys. They need to know that large tracts of land owned by the Amerindians were left without defined boundaries by the PNC. It is this Government that took the plunge to address the most...I wish to repeat what I said earlier for the benefit of this House. I said the critics need to do research on the cost of surveys. They need to know that the large tracts of land owned by Amerindians were left without defined boundaries by the PNC. It is this Government that took the plunge to address the most emotive concerns of Amerindians which have to do with demarcation of their lands. This resulted in the completion of 73

Amerindian villages being demarcated and eradicated. The most burning concerns of encroachment were pervasive and affected the security and safe development of villages under the PNC. The process of land demarcation will be intensified this year with approximately \$78 million budgeted for this purpose. This will allow for the issuing of land titles to 13 villages spanning Regions 1, 7, 8, 9 and 10 and the commencement of the demarcation process for an additional 22 villages across the various regions. The demarcation exercise, this year, will be funded from money expected to be disbursed from GRIF. **[Interjection]** The money is not from Norway; it is Guyana's fund.

Since Members of the Opposition are grumbling about the money from the Norway Fund, I wish to raise the issue in this House. I did not intend to deal with this matter but since the grumbling has begun, I wish to tickle them a little bit more. There is a lot of talk about Amerindians and the LCDS. This Government has ensured that Amerindians are given the right to freely determine whether or not they wish to opt in or not. This Government has applied no pressure on any village to deal with the matter of the LCDS. We are true to the principle of free, prior and informed consent, leaving the decision to be made by the members of the villages themselves. Without the Amerindians deciding to opt in, our Government is already committed to supporting their development with funds which has already been accrued to this country under that strategy.

To further improve the level of governance in Amerindian Communities and empower the village leaders, there always seen to be competing forces and influences trying to take over the administrative management of villages by a few. I say a few because there is one major organisation that seems to want to speak on behalf of Amerindians. I find it very focused that the Ministry will continue to support the empowerment of our people so that we will be able to stand and speak for ourselves and, therefore, we will have no need for competing influences with respect to the management of our communities.

The establishment of village offices has been completed in 65 villages – the last being completed in the village of **Pakwaranou** in Region 9. This leaves not much more villages to be equipped with space from which they can function. Through constant dialogue between our Government and Amerindian leaders, I can allude to the fact that this Government has provided platform for our people to be able to interact with the Government of the day. I say so since some on the other side usually accuses this side of not having enough interaction. We have been able to provide

most communities with community visits and Cabinet retreats whereby the villages can meet their leaders and Ministers to discuss issues that are affecting them. This Government also complements that by ensuring that for the past three years, it has been able to engage all the leaders of all the communities including the few who did not sign the resolution on Climate Change. That conference has always brought a lot of encouragement to this Government when the Amerindians gather to discuss with us their developmental projects.

The Solar Programme

Over the years the Government has embarked on an initiative to equip Amerindian villages with solar power. The provision of electricity to Hinterland and Amerindian households is critical to the further advancement of our people. To this end, a solar electrification programme was developed. Under the Un-served Areas Electrification Programme, 1,432 households and four primary schools are now receiving electricity in Regions 1,2,7,8 and 10. In addition, 1,000 15watts solar panel units were distributed to households in Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9. As stated in paragraph 4, page 32 of the Budget 2011 Presentation, \$4.2 million is earmarked this year under GRIF, through the LCDS, for further electrification of households in Amerindian Villages. It is expected that there will be an additional 11,000 solar panels being delivered to homes and other critical service centres in the Hinterland.

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

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker I move that the Hon. Member be given 15 minutes to conclude her presentation.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mrs. Sukhai: Thank you Mr. Speaker. Given the geographical layout of the Hinterland and the remoteness of Amerindian communities, which has never been an excuse for us to deliver to our people, Government believes that it is essential to provide and maintain frequent communication and transportation to make mobility easier for our people. As such, last year Government expended \$12 million on the supply of water transport to 19 communities in Regions 1,2,7,8 and 9. This was to increase mobility and access as well as to assist in the transportation of goods and services.

9.09 p.m.

We have supplied five All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs): one, each, was given to villages in Regions 7, 8 and 9 at a cost of \$16.5 million.

In 2011, vehicles for the villages of Chenapau, Wax creek, Rukumutoo and for the use of our Community Development Officer in Moruka will be procured and supplied. The Government is also very supportive of increased information and communication technology. This year we have already seen, at the launch of the One Laptop per Family Programme (OLFP) Amerindians have already begun to benefit. The intention is for computer centres to be provided to villages where our people, that is, the Amerindian population of this country, will enjoy the opportunities that this Government will offer with respect to ICT. This project is expected to be implemented over the next two years.

Our Government has never failed our students. Bridging the gap in the Hinterland is of high importance to us as we seek to provide equal access and opportunity to education to all of our children. This has led to significant investment in the education sector, in the implementation of programmes including the construction or rehabilitation of nursery, primary and secondary schools. The expansion of the school uniform distribution programmes, the school feeding programmes and the scholarship programmes continue to impact on the lives of Hinterland students.

In 2010, three Amerindian students were among the country's top performers for the National Grade Six Examinations. The students John Atkinson, Jonathan Jacobs and Dawn James were from the Ishalton and St. Ignatius Primary schools. They are now attending Queen's College in the city under full scholarship by this Government. In addition, a total of seventy two students have completed the 2000/2010 academic year and graduated from the Hinterland Scholarship programme. A total of 50 students wrote the Secondary School Examination Council Certificate (CSEC). There was 90.3% passes for grades 1 to 3 in the subjects they sat. This year showed an increase in student performance when compared to 89.1% obtained in 2009. We must, tell this House that the recently commissioned Hinterland student dormitory at Liliendaal, East Coast Demerara will allow for increased and improved accommodation and a better environment for our Hinterland students. A dream come true for many. We expect that with this improved environment, facilities and others that the performance of our children will further improve. We, also, wish to say that while we speak of scholarship programmes for those who performed with high grades, we must also speak about the expanding secondary education services in the Hinterland. This year the Sand creek Secondary school completed with dormitories will be made operational. I must, also, mention that approximately 16,000 primary school children attending Hinterland schools receive a daily meal. This is investment into our students by the People's Progressive Party Civic Government!

In 2010, a total of \$63 million was invested in school uniforms for our children. This programme will continue this year. I am willing to provide the details. The Opposition asked for the details so I am giving them the details.

Other Regional Intervention that ensure that our Hinterland communities receive the kind of attention from this Government includes the construction of teacher quarters in Ruruwau, Yupukari and Marurawau in Region 9, Taruka, Mountain foot and El Paso in Region 8 will cater for improved teachers accommodation. To cater for improved accommodation and facilities for students and teachers rehabilitation work was done on the St. Dominic Primary school and the construction of sanitary blocks, kitchen and mess hall for the Santa Rosa Primary and Secondary schools. Extensions were done on the Baramita, St. Francis, Morewau and Acuweni primary schools.

The Amerindians in the Hinterland and other communities will benefit from various housing and water programmes. In 2011, under the second Low Income Housing Settlement programme core houses will be provided to villages in Region 1 and 9.

With respect to water, under the Hinterland Water Development Strategy several projects were completed and the installation of photovoltaic pumping systems was done in several communities. The constructions of trestles, upgrading of the water supply and distribution systems and the drilling of wells was also done. A total of 86100 persons benefitted. This is not confined to the Amerindian population only but to all Hinterland communities.

The Guyana Water Incorporated will invest a total of \$61 million for the installation of photovoltaic pumping systems this year and the distribution of network upgrade to benefit approximately 6550 persons.

This party has never missed the boat. We have never missed the election and we have always won the election. As I close, I wish to say that the Budget 2011 is one which provides benefits and will impact on all Guyanese. As I have said before, the budget is a furtherance of the People's Progressive Party and its Government in putting people at the centre of development. That is the solution to the winning of elections later this year.

Mr. Everall Franklin: I would like to welcome Ms. Baveghems. It is probably the worse time a Member could choose to come into Parliament. I would also like to wish Dr. Roger Luncheon a speedy recovery. What would the PPP be without a Dr. Roger Luncheon? With that I mean in all seriousness. It will be a weak PPP.

We are assembled here to re-read, on the one hand, that is, Government and dispel doubt and complement if sparingly, if at all, on the other hand, that is, the Opposition, these estimates presented by the Minister of Finance on behalf of the Government.

The Guyana Action Party's (GAP), long standing view on this yearly pantomime- yes play acting- where the pretence of democracy in action is on wide display, even my friend, Hon Member Neil Kumar. G.A.P has expressed on many occasions that the time expended on the debate could have been more meaningfully spent in dialogue and discussion prior to 'L' formulation of a National Budget. Someone on the Government side stated that all the Opposition offers are criticism. Maybe so, but explain to the people of Guyana when and where ideas, suggestions and recommendations to this deaf and sometimes dumb Administration can be sensibly delivered. It is no secret that the Government, after making its own cool aid, believes that it is the best drink ever produced and swallows large mugs of the mixture, truly believing its own propaganda and sometimes getting delirious in the process. The Hon. Minster of Local Government, Mr. Lall, suggested that the Opposition should present its own budget. I must let him know that will come next year.

The Government will glibly state that it consulted widely and the resulting budget Together Building Tomorrow's Guyana Today. May I remind the Government of the reality of speaking to oneself and answering back, better described as madness? Nothing new or innovative will result.

Comparative Years

After almost two decades in office the PPP/C continues to believe that they can divert the populace's attention from sometimes corrupt and wasteful stewardship of the economy by making comparisons with the state of the economy under the worse years of the PNC. Chalk and Cheese cannot be compared, just as the Speaker cannot be compared to Ms Gail Teixeira.

The basis on which the PPP must assess its performance after 18 years in power ought to be on its own record and performance from 1992, stop hiding behind the PNC Boogey Man.

Size of the Budget

Allow me, on the behalf of GAP, to make it absolutely clear, that we have no problems with the Government bringing the largest ever and even encourages this administration during the short time it has left to manage the affairs of the people, to increase the spending. Our people deserve it. It was never an issue of how much was spent but how well allotted funds were spent. Accountability, value for money, timely completion of projects and other quality indicators are of importance. There can be no doubt that monies are haemorrhaging from so many areas in an almost shark-like frenzy fuelled by greed, downright incompetence and poor to non-existent supervision all of which can be substituted with one word "corruption". It is for this reason that it is becoming exceedingly difficult to support initiatives of this administration.

I quote "accountability, good governance, transparency has removed extravagance. The Government is waging a war on corruption and bribery" – so it existed.

"More and more people in the North are asking their leaders questions about aid to developing countries: a substantial part of which had indeed been misused. It is essential that all Governments put themselves in order so the real issues of development can come to the fore and attract serious consideration and resolution. Development of Guyana must be based on a harmonious mix of improved social and physical infrastructure, adequate and efficient production levels, just distribution of national wealth, and general cultural upliftment within an ever expanding democratic process." - Paper: Sustainable Development in the Americas by Dr. Cheddi Jagan, President of Guyana, York University, October 31, 1996.

[Mr. Nandlall: We are talking about Budget 2011] The fundamentals remain the same. Young *turds* do not understand that you have to have a philosophy. Something to work by and you do not even recognise Dr. Jagan.

According to Minister Robert Persaud, corruption is fictional. I am sorry that the Speaker of the House is not here because he will have to change his three-point plan. One of the pillars of his campaign was going to be fighting corruption. As I said before, to bury one's head in the sand will expose other parts of their anatomy to abuse but maybe some people enjoy such abuse. If we cannot look at the problems of corruption and incompetence squarely in its face and admit that we have these issues, and fight to correct it, no progress can be made.

One could go around this country and ask any high school student, what field of training they see themselves pursuing, as a result of studying this and previous Budgets, they would be clueless. We cannot blame them. This Administration is also clueless. There is so much adhocery; making it up as we go along. Kind of stumbling and hopefully we trip over something good: the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS), large scale plantation farming, Information Communication Technology (ICT) and tourism, this is one of the biggest jokes we have. Some areas are so poor that even vultures cannot be found there. The Hon. Minister of Trade rambled at length about the rising tourist population, then gave a few stuttering sound bites about the efforts to reduce airfares-something fundamental to the tourist industry. The Government has failed to solve this fundamental requirement in the industry.

We must be fair to the Government and to all concerned. Guyana is a high risk investment due to the tonnes of cocaine which leaves these shores with regularity. If the Government would agree to pay the fines of the airlines, I am sure we will have companies lining up to take on this very lucrative route that we have. These two realities: cocaine and high air fares are tied together. Can we expect relief? I hope so.

As a consequence of the above, dealing with the problem of cocaine and other illegal activities, I reread the Finance Minister's Budget presentation looking for reference to the parallel economy and its effect on our legitimate business environment. The absence was, indeed, striking. Are we to assume that it does not exist, and has no effect on financial indicators such as the Gross

Domestic Product (GDP), interest rates, cost of living etc.? I find that an omission that is very damaging. And it is precisely for these reasons that the financial projections must be taken with a pinch of salt.

Mdm. Speaker, a Boston trained student of economics, the Hon. Manzoor Nadir, who use to boast about the superiority of his degree, while on the Opposition side, over the Lumumba University trained economist, now President of this Republic, should be relieved of his portfolio. Since, he has failed to produce one meaningful statistic on the state of 'un and under' employment in this country; relying on some ball park figures of an American report pegging unemployment at around 10%. Adding insult to injury, this superior trained Boston individual went on to say that the figure, 10% could be even lower since there were many individuals who could work but did not want to. What a shameful statement. I implore all those people who are qualified, made applications, have skills to find themselves at the Ministry of Labour on Monday morning with all of their information. And they should not leave until this Minister finds jobs for these individuals because those who turn up are those who really want to work. How could you say something like this when you go to the villages, the towns and the cities and ask you hear strands of the areas in these villages, towns and cities where young people qualified, frustrated and without work. This I call incompetence. No such person should hold such an important office. However, I dare say that the PPPC has found an ideal partner of convenience: the United Force proponent of reactionary capitalist sentiments who gladly will do the dirty work that the legacy so long ago of the PPP would find difficulty in carrying out.

Certainly, this Government has helped the business class with the 5% reduction in corporate taxes. Each business may now keep their profit, reinvest or buy property in North America or Europe. There is no guarantee whatsoever that these savings, by the tax relief given, will be reinvested to expand business, and create employment. None whatsoever! When windfall profits of companies are examined prior to 2009, those companies that expanded did so regardless. There can be no guessing, however, that if tax relief were calculated for ordinary workers based, for example, on the amount of children and dependents in their car much could have been achieved.

9.39 p.m.

Mr. Michael Carrington over many years had proposed that extra savings would stay in this economy to assist in the alleviation of poverty and stimulate economic activity. But, this is a loving Government which boasts of an increase in public assistance instead of job creation and the removal of persons from public assistance role due to bettering their existence. I would have

thought that after so many years the Government would have come and told the population that they have had so many people on public assistance, and the economy is doing so well that we could reduce the amount of people on public assistance because they could look after themselves. People have to be able to look after themselves. The widening chasm gets even wider. You are proud to say that you are giving people, lovingly, public assistance. We must be proud to say that we have very little people on public assistance; that is what we have to be saying, that we are reducing it.

I am certainly not longwinded, but I will touch on a few areas in the Budget that struck me, "Special Housing Areas for Retirees." Economic activity must be encouraged in all areas, but I will like some questions answered in regards to this particular issue. This project as far as I am concerned actively discriminates against Guyanese living right here in this country. I would like to find out what infrastructural service or services and other amenities are to be introduced in this scheme that other Guyanese people do not deserve. What do they not deserve? Whether it is on the website or not it is irrelevant. The question is: why are Guyanese living here not entitled to the same amenities? That is the question. You have to explain, can anyone apply? We will have to double check that; the Prime Minister, sometimes, is not right.

One of the most respected presidents of this country had an American accent. Oh, you do not know who it was. You did not know the colt was from Mr. Cheddi Jagan either. Mdm. Speaker, this budget debate, as I said before, is, really, a stressful exercise. It is an exercise in futility. There is nothing that will be changed, not a comma nor not a full stop, and one better not even change a zero, because you would be in trouble.

One recommendation is that we revisit the rice drying floors that have been built around the country, which has at least five to six million dollars extra in it. The recommendation is that we get a designer to build a sliding cover so that when it rains the farmers can cover their rice. That is improvement in 21st century. Do you want more? I do not think you can deal with anymore. The hour is late and the effort, most likely, will fall upon deaf ears on that side, but the people of Guyana hopefully are listening.

We will print the Hon. Member Sukhai's presentation, and distribute it in all those areas she had been. I think that is enough for the people to decide if it made sense or not. With that, I thank you.

Mr. Ramotar: Thank you Mdm. Speaker. First of all, let me join with other Members of the National Assembly in congratulating the Minister of Finance and his hard working team in presenting what I think is a very good budget. I would like, also, to welcome the new Member of this National Assembly and others who have been here before, and to recognise this very important year, the year of the People of African Descent. I think no people deserve such recognition than the People of African Descent who have suffered so much and have contributed more than any other in construction of the whole world. I think it is very well done.

The budget of a Country when examined closely gives the philosophical underpinning of their Government. This 2011 Budget is no different, in that regard, from budgets that have been presented here, by the PPP/Civic since we got into Office in 1992. The measures taken and the expenditure plan, gives an indication of the direction which the Government and the country will be taking. Since we got into Office, we expressed that the PPP/Civic Government will be building a National Democratic State. Emphasis must be placed on democracy. In that regard we see a very important role for the Opposition parties in the whole democratic process. I wish to quote from the last speech that Dr. Jagan made in this National Assemble in 1992, in relation to the role of the Opposition or how he sees the Opposition will function. He said, "Opposition Parties will not be treated with the arrogant disdain of the past. There will be no harassment of political parties in their search for political support. The attainment of political power by democratic means will be recognised as a legitimate objective which is the right of every political party and not the preserve of the ruling party."

From the very beginning we recognised that in a democratic State, the Opposition has a big role to play. If we also examine some of the fundamental measures that we look for in democratic societies you will see that they are all here. Freedom of the press is recognised. Every day this Government and Members on this side of the House are constantly slandered, sometimes, in the newspapers.

This National Assembly has been functioning as a truly deliberative body, as was mentioned in the Budget Speech. In this session alone, from 2006 to now, almost 500 questions were asked by the Opposition and not a single one has remained unanswered. We also have, as was mentioned before... No Government in the Region and, probably, very few in the whole world in which Officials of the Government are so accessible to the people of our Country. We have been doing this because we are philosophically convinced that there is a direct link between development and democracy. We have always worked on that basis. That is why it is very important for us to uphold democracy. We do not believe that the progress we have made will be sustainable unless we uphold that democracy which we are talking about.

In a National Democratic State we expect that all the legitimate classes in the society will have a deep interest and that the State will look after the interest of the various classes of people. In our case, we have never hidden the fact that we are deeply oriented towards improving the lot of the working people and the poor in our society. The poor and the old age pensioners, since we got in Government, were the ones that removed the means test to allow our senior citizens to have a better life. We have been improving it almost every single year as the economy expands.

We have also expanded in order to give equal opportunity to poor people's children; access to education, we are providing hot meals in schools, and snacks and uniforms so that all our people can have equal opportunities. We have passed laws to protect the most vulnerable and we hope that they will be protected by these laws. Among working people, they have seen their disposable income improving every year not only as a result of better wages and salaries, but as

result of improving the threshold. In 1991, for instance, the income tax threshold was only \$4,000 a month or \$48,000 a year, that is the last full year of the PNC in office. In 1995 it raised to \$144,000 a year, three times an increase. In 2006, it was \$300,000 a year, and this year it has gone up to \$480,000 a year. Clearly, we have been improving- giving people more money to spend within their economy and to improve their quality of life.

The conditions of farmers have also seen drastic improvement under our watch: drainage and irrigation helped to increase production; duty free concessions were given to the agricultural-sector for agricultural equipment; investments on farm to market roads; more access to land; the State spent on research and development, new varieties; improved quality of livestock; better breeds, and constant interaction with farmers and their organisations.

The business people have also done a lot and have seen their conditions improved. I remember when we got into Office one of the big complaints of the local private business sector was that they were not given an even playing field compared to foreign capital. The last Government had given great concessions to foreign capitals while the local business sector was given no type of concession. One of the first things we did was to allow the traditional industry, those that existed, to retool their factories by giving them duty free concessions. Banks DIH, the Demerara Distillers Limited (DDL) and others all took advantage in retooling their factories so that they can improve production and modernise the industry.

We have no apologies to make for giving concessions to the **real** sector. It is this sector that produces not only wealth, but also jobs for workers- higher paying jobs than normal services in the industry. As our economy becomes stronger, broader and deeper, more concessions will be given, and today, in this budget, we have reached the stage where we are lowering, further, the corporation tax in our society to give companies more disposable income for investment.

DDL had new lines introduced, new products, which are topping the world. Banks DIH is increasing its spending. Look at all the newspapers of January 20th. It stated,

“Banks DIH spending \$3 billion from their own resources in order to increase their company and production in a new line that they are putting in place.”

The stories of banks are amazing. Hundreds, if not thousands, of banks internationally have been closing down, since 2007- in the United States, Europe and in Japan- going into bankruptcy or some being bailed out those that are too big to fail are being bailed out by their Government. Here in Guyana the banking system has been enjoying big profits. That is why they have been investing more and more in the economy in different areas. This is what some of them have said,

“The Chairman of the Republic Bank Ltd takes confidence in the performance of the economy which has been commendable despite the setback in the sugar sector and in the global economy”.

Then we have the quotation from the Managing Director who said,

“as it is to be expected, growth in many Latin American and Caribbean Countries was negatively impacted by the slowdown in the world economy, however in spite of the contagious effects of the global financial crisis, development in our country’s economy enabled the bank to deliver strong returns to its stakeholders.”

Clearly, we were able to do this because of good management of the economy. One of the things that we emphasise from the very beginning when many people were saying “just make more and more concessions to encourage investments”, we emphasised the need to have stability in our macro-economic fundamentals. That was one of the most important points we recognised to help our country move forward and to attract investment to keep the fundamentals in the macro-economy stable.

We have expressed that we think it is important for the economy to invest. A lot of effort has been made and is being made to ensure that these fundamentals are managed properly and are seen in the budget. The inflation rate has been controlled in the lower single digit levels; the debt has reduced substantially; regulations of the banks have also helped in order to prevent them from going through some of the problems that they have made. Our success is now becoming case studies. I have here with me an article written by Carey Grenada from the Caribbean Development Bank, and Brian Francis, Professor of the University of the West Indies. I will only take up a few minutes of your time in looking at the conclusion in this paper. I am doing that because these are intellectuals who studied Guyana and Barbados on the decline of output volatility of too small open economies. This is what they had to say as to why the volatility in Guyana and Barbados was not very much in our economies:

“The findings of Barbados suggest that both internal and external factors have contributed to the fall in output volatility in Barbados, especially large tourism inflows and small external shocks have been the main contributors to lower domestic output fluctuations”.

This is a recent study done in August 2010. In Guyana, domestic factors have played the greater role. It appears that internal policy improvement, nominal exchange rate stability, fiscal stability and financial marketing deepening have been the main contributors to the fall in output volatility in Guyana, which is extremely commendable for our country. The point I am making is- if you have failed to catch it after I have been speaking for so long- the whole issue that macro-economic fundamentals and stability in that area are very important for development.

The Opposition, of course, is finding it extremely difficult to criticise the Budget. We have just heard a whole regurgitation of all types of accusations being made. The PNCR-1G, for instance, has been criticising us for what they call, bringing supplementaries to this House. Let me make this point. Maybe what has happened to the PNC is that when they were in Government the Budget was so small that they thought they were doing a good job. The reality is, analysis of the

PNC's last five years in office, from 1988 to 1992 revealed that on average the total supplementary approved by this Hon. House amounted to some 57% of budgetary allocations. While in this Government, over the same period, it was 14% of the allocation. These are the same people who are lecturing us and criticising us for what we have done.

There is a criticism about VAT, but again, it does not hold water. VAT has replaced many taxes including the consumption tax. VAT is at one of the lowest rates in our country. It is higher in Barbados, Trinidad and, as someone mentioned, it is 20% in the United Kingdom. More than that, someone also mentioned earlier that, what the Opposition is not saying is that all the basic items that people use everyday have been zero rated by this Government. On the point that the Hon. Mr. Franklin was making about how the money was being spent, what is important to note is how the VAT money is being spent to raise old age pensions, wages and salaries, to help with social securities, to help in Drainage and Irrigation, and to help in building farm to market roads. That is how it is being spent. That is also what justifies us. Look also at how often we have used taxes to manage our inflation rate. For instance, when the fuel prices go up internationally, we remove taxes from fuel in order to control the cost of living in our country. That is why even though we had periods of times when we had big spikes in the price of fuel abroad, we maintained a low inflation rate. Compare that to what is happening in several countries of the world. I have some news papers headlines of riots because of rise in fuel. Here is one quotation,

“The French fishermen and farmers who need fuel for trawlers and tractors say that their livelihoods are threatened by soaring prices, and have blocked all alternative routes and shipping channels around France to demand Government's help. British and Bulgarian truckers are staging fuel riots as well.”

That cannot happen here, because of the caring Government that PPP/Civic is. Even someone who, I understand, has some sympathy for the AFC, grudgingly, recognised our holding the macro-economic fundamentals as being very important for stability. There is an article I have in my hand, dated December 15th 2010 from Stabroek News written by Tarron Khemraj who recognised that:

“Guyanese investors lost some money in CLICO, but the banking system continues to be liquid and very well capitalised. The exchange rate remained stable, and there is no rapid flight of capital from Guyana.”

He went on to say that the growth continues to pickup notwithstanding the crisis in the sugar belt and that the GDP continues to expand. I think coming from someone who represents an opposition party is testimony to how well this Government is doing.

I think the team of the budget is also very appropriate, *Building Tomorrow's Guyana Today*. Though we can speak here all night pointing out the changes that has affected the lives of people positively in our country, we still remain a poor developing country. We still remain a main exporter of raw materials. We still remain fundamentally an agricultural country.

We have been developing at 3% - 6% some years, but we need to leap forward and grow much faster. Therefore, there is a need for us to have greater physical infrastructure and modernisation in our society so that our people's quality of life can improve at a faster rate.

We are headed in the direction of modernisation and in advancing Guyana to improve its position as a more developed country in the world. We have to see the drive in modernising our education, health, housing and water as part of this new strategy and also generate cheaper electricity as part of the general strategy. Bringing in the new ICT cable and the distribution of laptops to ensure that the children of the poor are not disadvantaged, is the new process we are driving towards. We have to continue to develop the infrastructure such as the Linden/Lethem Road, and the deep water harbour.

Modernisation and using the modern tools of today is vital. To use IT technology to develop our society is extremely important. With cheap electricity we can move to more processing and manufacturing in our society. Information and Communications Technology can revolutionise life in our country in a very short period of time that is why we are investing in bringing this cable in our country. to ensure we have reliable and robust IT technology for development in our society. We can see its benefits not only in call centres but in revolutionising our traditional industries. For instance, let us say in tourism, how could it be used? Look at the example of Thailand. Thailand's www.tourismthailand.com receives 1.8 million visitors every year. This can help to make Guyana a real destination for tourism, not just the trickling that is happening. Improvement that is so gradual can be improvements in leaps and bounds. Our whole industries, the traditional industries, can be automated. We could introduce robotics and other important factors to help in the development. We can introduce in agriculture rain gauge and measurements to measure fertiliser in soil and how it is to be done - watering the soil and so forth - to improve technology, apart from giving more information to farmers about market's position, how they can produce, and where they can sell. We can use it to monitor our forests, because as we build more infrastructure, more roads, and as we are convinced that we need to protect our forests, we can prevent them from fires as is being done in Kwazulu Natal in South Africa. We can use the satellite imagery to look at illegal logging and mining to protect ourselves from what is taking place generally in the world.

Software companies can also be developed fairly rapidly - as I said not only call centres. We have the human factor. The University of Guyana has been graduating some very brilliant students in computer technology, and we have a lot of students coming back from Cuba that have the capacity to develop software technology companies that do outsourcing and develop things that can make our society much stronger.

Let me talk a little on the sugar industry because my friends, maybe, think that I want to avoid the subject. What is taking place in GuySuCo is a reflection, it relates to a restructuring that has to go on. In the modernised world the industry is facing a lot of challenges and cannot continue in the old way. Let me tell you why we had to restructure and have some of the problems we

have. I have with me here an IMF Report which gives a lot of recognition to what we are doing correctly in our country.

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

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Hon. Member be given 15 minutes to continue his presentation.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Ramotar: Thank you Mr. Speaker. This report points out that in 2006 the European Commission started to implement phased reduction on quota import prices, starting from the level of 523.7 Euros per tonne of raw sugar and the final reference price will be down to 335 Euros per ton. We are loosing in the sugar industry, per year, some \$10 billion just because of a price shift in Euros. Obviously we have to try to make a turn around. We have to improve the industry. We have to make different arrangements in the industry. That is what we are doing now. The Skeldon project was designed in order to alleviate many of the problems. It is true that it has difficulties and problems but there is nothing to gloat about. We must work towards correcting it and letting it realise its potential.

We are also putting value added to sugar. The packaging plant in Enmore is almost completed. And that should be going into operation in the not too distant future - before the first half of this year. As I have said it is necessary for all the stakeholders in the sugar industry to understand what is taking place - that as our economy as a whole improves, as job opportunities become more and more, people tend to move away from the arduous labour of the fields and there is a necessity for us to begin to mechanise some of the practices presently been done by labour within the industry.

I think the problems in the industry are really problems of restructuring. We should not mistake that to say it should be acclimatised, it has no future, and things like that. I am convinced it has a very good future. I know a lot of people in the industry have been bombarded by a lot of attacks particularly from the Opposition, who seem to take particular delight at some of the difficulties the industry has. Let me make this point: yes, you have to beef up the management of GuySuCo and give them more technical skills, but the skills we have there and the level of management, are a bunch of people I have been proud to associate myself with. They are people who have been working extremely hard to turn the industry around. They need your support. They need the support of this House, and not necessarily the attacks.

I think the PNC has been extremely good at developing slogans. They have been excellent the whole time they have been in Government in building slogans. I therefore want to close my presentation by using a slogan that the PNC developed when they were in office. We have a lot of challenges, and the question was asked: Can we do it? Yes, we can.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Lumumba: Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to be here today to join my colleagues, in particular the Minister of Finance, Dr. Ashni Singh, for presenting such an outstanding Budget. I think many of us have been caught up with the goodies of the budget but we, on both sides, have left something out. We have left out the democratic process that led to this budget. This Government does not wake up in the morning and willy-nilly present a budget. Our budget has a process. One of the fundamental aspects of this process is an outreach programme. We go to the people- the communities- and we hold discussions and meetings, we have conversations; and there is proof. We went to Region 10, 2, Bartica and Berbice and we communicated with the public. We ask our citizens, our people, if they are pleased with the services they receive from the Government. We do this continuously. We are not a dictatorship; we have moved away from dictatorship. We are now a democracy, and because there is democracy we believe there must be a process to get to this budget. So this budget is based on the wishes of our citizens.

It is very important, before I comment on the budget, that I respond to a few issues. I find it unfortunate and distasteful that during the discussions my friend and colleague, Hon. Minister Robeson Benn, was called a “House Slave”. I find that disgusting. I think we as mature politicians must move away from this. The Opposition cannot be seriously talking about governance, power sharing and race relations, and at the same time participate in throat-cutting, wickedness, and maliciousness. This year is the year of Africans, so we should not castigate each other. I think if an African is in the PPPC he should be embraced especially, and in particular, if he has the credentials to be a Member of the National Assembly. Hon. Minister Benn is a brilliant geologist and engineer. He is quite competent. Should we call Mr. Clarence Thomas, who was recommended by the Republicans to be in the Supreme Court, a “house slave”? Should we have called Senator Brooks from Massachusetts who was the first black Senator in the Republican Party in the US Congress a “house slave”? Should we call my Indian brothers and sisters in the PNCR-IG “indentured slaves”? We cannot go down that road.

This Government has continued to participate in activities or continues to present itself as a Government of all people.

I want to quickly deal with the Globe Trust issue. Globe Trust was not brought down by Indian people. Globe Trust was not brought down by the Government of Guyana. It is the Government of Guyana that is responding to the needs and requirements, of those poor people who lost their money in Globe Trust, by providing them with some funding.

My understanding is that some of my brothers, and my good friend Mr Aubrey Norton – he is a good friend of mine - had made some comments about discrimination and racism as it relates to housing. In 15 years of the People’s National Congress they distributed 40 house lots. The then Minister Patrick McKenzie told me once that there was no land for housing. He told me that in the presence of my good friend and attorney, Member of Parliament Basil Williams [**Mr.**

Williams: And the man gave you all the lands for yourself. That was for agriculture. [**Mr. Williams:** I got rice lands for you.] I am going to do you a favour in a minute. I will take care of you in one minute.

Member of Parliament, Mr Norton said we discriminated in housing. When Sophia was being developed, the PNC, under the leadership of Mr. Hoyte, sent dogs and policemen on the Afro-Guyanese in Sophia. We built roads and provided lights and water in Sophia. How can anyone with limited commonsense say we discriminated. What about Amelia's Ward? Who built that? What about Eccles? What about Diamond? What about Vigilance, Buxton/Foulis? And we can go on and on. The records will show that over 40 % of the house lots distributed in this country were given to Afro-Guyanese.

How can they say we did not do anything? They talk about water. I am sure you remember the days when you drove to Berbice, you had to see people pulling carts of water, and an old lady with a tub on her head with water. My good friend Mrs. Baker used to take baths in the "*blaka*" because she had no pipe water.

I am very disturbed that Member of Parliament, Mrs Holder could stand in this House and accuse the Ministry of Human Services of having 17,000 phantom pensioners on the list, without any evidence, without any facts. And I am, particularly, disturbed about that because I remember, you were correct, that once I raised some issues about GT&T when the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Corbin, jumped up and knocked his knee in the process – poor gentleman he nearly broke his foot – and said, 'Mr. Speaker, where is the source?' I was asked to withdraw. I did not want to withdraw but I sat down. Because, I do not want to face the wrath of the Speaker so I sat. Mrs Holder was allowed to present an unscientific document, an unscientific personal survey. Are we saying now, in this Hon. House, that when those issues come up we all can say it is our personal survey? If that is the way it goes, let it go. I will move on.

I understand that my good friend Mr. Patterson – they all seem to run away when I come to the table and I do not know why - spoke about the Youth Choice buildings as white elephants. I want to clear a few things up. I am proud of those buildings, I am proud of those playgrounds, and I am proud of those young people. Let me say this: it is our responsibility as citizens if something is going wrong to bring it to attention. If you say there is a building in Bartica and it is not used properly, form a group and come to me and you make it efficient. These buildings are not for the PPPC; these buildings are not for African Guyanese or indo Guyanese. These buildings are for all of us.

I want to ask a question. Have the Members of the PNC/R visited Black Bush Polder and seen the Youth Choice Building and the community development work being done, the skills training service, the sports and educational classes? Have they gone to Port Mourant and seen the building used as a documentation and training centre? Have they gone to Rose Hall Town and seen what the Fosters are doing in that building? Are these blind people on the opposite side?

Where do you guys live? Do you live on Mars? [**Mr. Basil Williams:** You insulting Members of the Opposition] I am not insulting. Obviously you do not know where Rose Hall is. It is a fact.

I acknowledge that in some of these areas we have problems. All I am saying is that instead of coming to the National Assembly and “run off your mouth” every day, form a group and let us try to put it together. That is what being a Guyanese means. Come to me! Have these Members of Parliament been to Albion and seen what the building is being used for? Skills and training for youths. Have you been to Eccles? Have you been to Tucville Ground? Have you been to Tuschen Ground? Have you been to Buxton? Where have you been? Are you just gaffing? Have you been to Evesham? What about Cotton Field IT Centre? What about No. 58 Village? Where have you been, in the bushes?

My friend Mr. Norton has raised questions about what we have done in various villages and communities. I want to start with the roads we fixed in Linden and Wismar. The last time the Leader of the Opposition could not remember the name of a street, so I prepared a list which I could pass out as a handout. If he has problems with geography we are going to help him here tonight. These are the roads we have fixed – I am not going to go through all of them, but I want to give you some of them.

- Thomas Street, North in Karakara;
- Rainbow City, second street, Gaskin Road;
- Silver city, first cross street,
- Section B Christianburg, Stewart Path, Beauty Street
- Section C Christianburg, Front road
- Blue Berry, Circle Road Network, South
- Wisrock, as it relates to Wisburg Secondary School
- One Mile extension, Fox Street, Cross Street,
- McKenzie, Pine Street

This is a long list and I do not want to do this to you. Why are you silent? Tell me I am wrong. I want you to answer.

Buxton is supposedly the base of the PNCR-1G, but this year I will show you “lashes” with the vote count. I want to start with Tipperary Hall. Tipperary Hall has been in disrepair for years. For decades you did nothing about it [**Mrs. Lawrence:** How long it took you to fix it?] As soon as they requested we dealt with it. [**Mrs Lawrence:** Eighteen years.] The people of Buxton have been asking for roads and water for years - thirty years of the PNC. Even a banister for \$5 was not fixed for a primary school.

These are the roads in Buxton:

- Side Line Dam, west. Do you know where that is?

- Middle Road
- Webster Street
- Second Cross Street
- Joy Street
- Company Road
- Gas Station, Friendship
- Post Office Street
- Abrams and Watson Street.

Ms. Ally open your eyes, I am now starting; I am warming up.

- Grosvenor Street
- Brusche Dam
- Side Line Dam.

[**Mr Neendkumar:** That is a city. Tell them Odinga.]

We have had difficult times in Guyana but this Government has moved us from difficult times and put us in good times. I know the days when MP Lawrence never looked so good because of economic pressure. Look at you now Mrs. Lawrence, all because of the economy of this country. You know that. I want to bring to your attention the hard work that the PNC has caused us. I have a document here from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This document outlines some interesting things from the past during the PNC period. MP Williams should listen to these things because they will help you in his debate. During that period of time when the economy was destroyed it was handled by your rival Mr. Carl Greenidge. It is important; you might need this in your debate. I know, but I am going to give you some stuff to destroy him.

“During 1976 to 1988 State control over the economy intensified and widen to all sectors of the economy, including the financial sector with the nationalisation of foreign-owned banks. The Government...”

The PNC Government, let us be clear -

"Instituted foreign exchange rationing and price control to imposed restrictions on external current and capital transactions. The resulting resource misallocation coupled with poor policy implementation led to a sharp decline in real economic activities."

[**Ms. Selman:** you were a part of it then.] Unfortunately.

“Guyana’s external debt reached unsustainable levels in the 1980s; 276 percent of GDP by 1989. The country defaulted on all its obligations.”

Today we have met all our international obligations.

“Following the prolonged period of decline, Guyana’s economic and social indicators were lower than other English speaking Caribbean countries in the context of high unemployment and massive out migration of skilled personnel.

That is tourists. When people travel now they are going on tour and come back.

“By the end of the decade the public sector controlled the majority of productive activities and the financial system. Public corporations accounted for about two-thirds of economic activity and employed well over ten percent of the population. Public finances were characterised by exceptionally high revenue expenditure ratios to GDP and large fiscal deficits in the early 1980s. Tax revenue declined as domestic economic activity deteriorated; administration weakened and evasion increased. As a result the fiscal deficit, which generally was small in the first decade after independence, ballooned and reached over 60 % of GDP in 1980 and 1985. These deficits contributed significantly to a worsened inflationary pressure, a rapid build up of external debt, underground economy, and pressure on the balance of payments.

Those were the conditions of Guyana that the PPPC met when they came into power. It is important for us to understand that this Government, as part of its activities to restore Guyana, ensured that there were several major projects - projects that were important to our development, projects that would create employment and sustain our economic growth.

10.39 p.m.

I want to speak about this briefly. I know that the Hon. Prime Minister has spoken about this, briefly, earlier, but I would like to quickly touch on the gold industry. Under the PNC’s administration – I am going to give you some production under the PNC’s administration of gold production – there were 21,000 ounces in 1987, 19,000 ounces in 1981, seventeen thousand ounces in 1989, 38,000 ounces in 1990, 59,000 ounces in 1991. [**Mr. B. Williams:** What is the relevance?] Well, I thought that you were logical. But you will see the logics. You have a hard time being a presidential candidate. I now know why Christopher Ram had to destroy you... In 1992 and after: There were 309,000 ounces in 1993 to three hundred and eight thousand ounces in 2010, with a high of 436,000 thousand to four hundred and 32,000 ounces between 1998 and 2002. Do you see the relevance now, Sir? I thought that you were bright. In addition to that, here is the potential for new gold production for over the next five or ten years, and that is important. A country can only grow and develop if a country is able to have access to revenue. Revenue is needed to build bridges; revenue is needed to build roads; revenue is needed to fix the hospitals; revenue is needed to increase the salaries of workers. For example, Guyana

Goldfields Inc., Aurora, 200,000 to 300,000 ounces per year per projection; Romanex Guyana Exploration Ltd., fifty thousand to sixty thousand ounces per year; Ontario Inc., five thousand to ten thousand ounces per year, SandSpring Resources Ltd., two hundred thousand to three hundred thousand ounces per year; Tassawini Gold Mine, one hundred thousand ounces per year. In essence, Mr. Speaker, within five years, Guyana will be producing a minimum, those companies, of 670,000 ounces of gold per year or \$871 million per year. Those projects will place millions of dollars in the coffers of the Government by means of royalty and corporate taxes. They will also create a minimum of twenty thousand jobs.

How can a human being, who is pretending to be a presidential candidate, having heard that we are going to find twenty thousand jobs from those industries, is going to ask me, what is the relevance of that? What is the relevance of this candidate? How can this man be a serious candidate? This man is supposed to be my young brother.

Our development programme also include a four-lane high way on the East Bank, Marriott Hotel, Olympic-size swimming pool, a modern athletic track...[**An Hon. Member:** We did not hear all of that.] I want you to hear it again, because you all do not understand it... seventeen thousand house lots. RUSAL will spend \$900 million investment in 2011. Amaila Fall will resolve the block outs that been create historically by the PNC. [**An Hon. Member:** When?] It is as soon as it is completed.

As a Government, it is not our intention to browbeat the Opposition. It is our intention to serve the citizens of this country and in the process to give service to humanity. We are an open Government; we are a democratic Government. Our Government involves everyone - all races, all sexes - except my friend. But, we, as a Government, understand that there are hard decisions which have to be made sometimes. Sometimes those decisions are very difficult to swallow. Therefore it is important that the opposition party, or parties, plays a more responsible role in governance.

I have said for years that the Opposition must do as the Republicans and the Democrats do in the United States of America, come up with its own budget or come up with an alternative to what we have and try to have amendments, and try to have discussions. But it cannot, because it is no capable. There is no economist on that side of the table. The only economist it had was my dear

brother, the late Mr. Winston Murray. It has no economist; it has no planner. It just has a lot of people making a lot of noise, and I am saying to them that they cannot produce a budget by noise. We are prepared, at any point in time, to sit with the Opposition and go through the budget with it - go through the specifics - because we understand the weaknesses and we do not have any problem with that, but it cannot continue to come to this National Assembly and abuse taxpayers' money. It cannot continue to come to this National Assembly as representative of its constituency and participate in nothingness - emptiness. It has a responsibility to its constituents to come and have proper discussion with us. We are willing and waiting.

I am urging my friends, in particular, the beautiful Member of Parliament, Mrs. Lawrence, to consider working with us in a friendly atmosphere. I am appealing to them to sit with us in our sub-committees and try to understand the logic of the budget process and the economics of growth and development of our country. Once those are understood I think they will be in a better position to be a more respectful, understanding and responsible Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

[Applause]

Ms. Baveghems: Thank you Cde. Speaker. Before I go into my presentation, I would like to thank you and the other Members of this noble House for the warm welcome.

I am a simple, ordinary Guyanese who has spent all my grown life representing the ordinary citizens against injustices and fighting for them to have their deserved treatment as citizens of our country. I, therefore, consider it as a privilege to have the opportunity to represent them at this highest forum of the land. I assure you and my party, the PNCR - 1G, that I intend to represent them with the same vigour that I did while outside of this House. I thank you.

I would now like to make my contribution to this budget debate of 2011. Over the past few days the Government speakers tried very hard to tell us that this is not “an election budget”, but they spent quite a lot of time speaking about their manifesto and how well they thought they have done. Let me say that I have been active in politics all my life and whenever I begin to hear of manifestos that tells me that we are thinking about elections. *The proof of the pudding is in the eating and a rose by any name smells the same*, so whenever they want to deny that it is “an

election budget”, it is not important. The words will not change the fact that it is. So like the king who was fooled into thinking that he had a magic suit they will soon discover that all Guyanese will see the nakedness of this budget in really addressing the problems suffered daily by the ordinary citizens of this country.

I am talking about the vendors who were so cruelly uprooted; their stalls were broken up by the hammer of the PPP/C Government without notice. How heartless it is of this Government to destroy the livelihood of so many citizens who wanted to make an honest living; they wanted to take care of their children and not be a burden on the Minister of Human Services and Social Security by depending on social assistance, which, in any case, cannot carry them through a week. It is those citizens livelihood which were ruined without any concern by this Government. I have looked at the budget carefully and I have not seen anything for them, unless the Minister believes that they must live on handout from the State, which is not really much. With all the billions of dollars that the Minister of Finance boasted about, at least he could have put aside a small amount for the proper resettlement of the vendors at Stabroek Market, at La Penitence Market and at Parika Market. That would enable them to carry on an honest living without being a burden on social assistance. In fact, that would result on savings in the amount needed for payment under that Ministry. Instead, not a cent has been allocated to help vendors. I, therefore, cannot see how this budget is building a better future for the vendors today.

What about the ordinary citizens who have to pay the high electricity bill from the Guyana Power and Light; high water rates to the Guyana Water Inc. for the water that they do not get, and when they get it in Georgetown it looks like mauby or the colour of their skin; to pay bus fare everyday for their children to go to school; to buy the books for their children; and to buy food at the high prices in the market? How does the rising in the income tax threshold to \$40,000 help them when most of them do not even work for that sum? How can that increase in pension really improve the quality of life of the senior citizens when they have to pay the same prices for the goods in the market and they have to pay VAT too when they purchase goods? It is good for the Minister of Finance to shout about big figures in economic growth and how Guyana has improved, and what a wonderful budget this is. However, I can assure him that there is nothing that the ordinary citizens will shout about.

I wish to refer briefly to some sectors.

Agriculture

The Government boasted about supplying rice to Venezuela, however, the rice is graded in the country of export. My concern is whether the millers will be given the correct grades for their rice. Is this caring Government comfortable with this arrangement?

Sugar

Mr. Speaker, sugar is sweet. However, the sweetness is going out or has already gone out of sugar. The Government has and still is taking taxpayers hard earned money in an attempt to put back the sweetness into sugar. It must be noted, here, that the taxpayers are already not getting a livable wage and they are burdened with the huge bill of trying to make the Skeldon factory successful. A better solution to the sugar woes is needed, instead of constantly putting money into that sector with no measureable returns being realised.

Education

The School Feeding Programme is too limited. This programme should cater for all students - those in nursery, primary and secondary schools. I include secondary schools because the students face the same economic problems as those students in the nursery and primary schools. To add a bit more to the school, I note that the Minister in his budget did not mention anything about the visual impaired and the handicapped children. They too can go to school and there is nothing for them in the budget. I do hope something will be put for them, or a school can be built somewhere so that they can go and have their own teachers and not go to the ordinary schools with the other students.

This brings me to the uniform assistance programme. Issuing of one uniform per student is inadequate since no child can wear one uniform everyday for the entire school year, unless, I am thinking, the Minister will change the school uniform to black shirts and black pants. Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that one uniform will not even last for one school term, much less for an entire year.

Another area of concern is the large sums of money being spent on infrastructural works in schools, but the reality does not reflect on those large sums which are being spent. Schools are still in deplorable states - improper toilet facilities, inadequate furniture, and most importantly a worrying lack of qualified, trained and experienced teachers. All of these problems translate to a decline in our students' academic performance. With it all, the Minister is saying different. I, at the grass root level, know it is not so.

Housing

The talk about house lots being given to prospective homeowners is indeed house plots. I say this, since most, if not all, of the allottees have to do landfill before they can start building their homes. This is especially so in the low income housing areas. The persons can ill afford to bear that extra cost. I would prefer for those house lots be properly prepared before being distributed to allottees.

Another area of concern is the fact that those lots are distributed without the basic infrastructure of water and electricity being provided to those homeowners as such. Prospective homeowners who can afford it have to purchase generators and water tanks. They also have to obtain their religious materials in order to pray for the rain to fill those tanks.

Some of the schemes which were established seem to have been forgotten. The Grove/Diamond Housing Scheme is a case in point. That house scheme is a glorified cow pasture. Cows graze all over the scheme and they sleep wherever they wish – in people's yard, and even on the roads. Many accidents happen there in the nights when the cows are roaming. The streets in this housing scheme are another area of concern. The best road in the Diamond area is the portion of roadway in front of the Diamond Secondary School. It is so, because it was repaired to facilitate the PPP/C hosting its congress at that school. To add insult to injury those dams are named as avenues. They should not even be called roads.

I wonder sometimes about the meaning of Accident and Emergency in the A&E Department at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation. I say this because persons, who went there to seek medical attention after some accident or for some emergency treatment, had to wait between two

and three hours before being given medical attention, and some of them died before receiving it. Instead of spending huge sums of money on building buildings, the money should be spent on recruitment and continuous training of medical personnel to cater for this problem.

There is no operating theatre at the maternity ward, instead the patients have to go to the other operating theatre and sometimes, most times, they have to wait because it is in use by some other department.

Mr. Speaker, do you know why this Government has failed? It is because the Members are walking and looking backwards. I am referring to the 28 years mantra and that is a lot of looking back. By now, they must have stiff necks. Mr. Speaker, \$3.4 billion has been expended on water treatment plants including the one at Central Ruimsveldt. The Hon. Minister claimed that this is the third year since implementation of the water company's turnaround plan. However, residents living at the East and West Ruimsveldt area have to buy drinking water and, in some cases, water to wash their white clothes too.

With respect to the dump site, tell the population, and especially the residents of Lodge, East and West Ruimsveldt, East and West La Penitence, when exactly the dump site will be closed. Citizens who have their loved ones buried there and have the desire of painting their tombs or fixing headstones cannot do so. It is so sad.

I wonder if the Hon. Member Mr. Ramotar talks to his Minister that the grass roots people are the most important and should be treated as such, instead they are chased and moved from those selling places, and that renders them unable to earn an income to maintain their families.

There is a Minister who likes his Ministry so much that persons have gone back in time as he has brought back a song to mind and wants the radio station to play it for his birthday. I sing: "If I had a hammer, I hammer in the morning, I hammer in the evening, all through the night..." That is just part of it.

I would like to end by saying that the budget was given the wrong theme. It should be, "Delivering More Poverty Tomorrow Today"

Mr. Speaker, thank you.

[Applause]

Ms. Teixeira: This budget debate has been a rather interesting one. I think we have had some new faces and new promotions in terms of a woman Member of Parliament, Mrs. Volda Lawrence, now leading off on economics, for the Opposition, taking the former Member of Parliament, the late Mr. Murray's place. I think that she should be congratulated. We have a new Member of Parliament also, female, on the Opposition side, Ms. Joan Baveghems. I think this is an omen for Guyana and the Parliament. We are already ranking very high in the number of female parliamentarians in the Commonwealth and on the World Parliament website. Therefore, I think this will even improve the number as we are probably around twenty-four out of one hundred and seventy countries. That is one ranking, as parliamentarians, male and female, we should all be proud of.

I want to recognise, first of all, my Minister of Finance, Dr. Ashni Singh, on the Government side, and all Ministers and geographic MPs who have spoken, and the few who still have to speak. I have been extremely proud to hear the presentations by all of our representations on this side. They have come with facts, analysis and knowledge of their constituencies and sectors. I believe they have done us proud. They showed that they offered a level of leadership for this country which we can all be proud of as Guyanese.

During this budget debate, the public has been presented with, basically, two views of Guyana: one that is of forward-looking, one that is of hope and cautious optimism for the future, and the other is backwards looking - reactionary, separatist and lacking any ultimate vision for Guyana's future. It is one thing to be reactionary and to be reactive; it is another thing to be coming up with your own notions of how we solve our nation's problems.

The PNC has been predictable, as always, and the AFC has tried to be new and innovative by producing now, what I call, a *far-seer* approach so that the far-seeing of the PNCR-1G, or what we call "*far-see*"... [**Mrs. Backer:** It is not Varshnie.] No. It is far-seeing. Mrs. Holder predicted that this year, the Year for the People of African Descent, there will be new depth of maladministration, creating a discrimination against all races. The Hon. Member Mr. Patterson came with a list of 50 projects which he is predicting to be cork balls in-waiting. We have not even put a stone down but they have already predicting that it is not going to work. So the AFC

has gone into a new swing and I look with anticipation to see whether Mr. Trotman will try to correct this very negative and reckless approach to the presentations in this House.

The vision which looks at hope... No one has said here, on this side of the House, that it is perfect; no one has said that we have confronted all of our problems; no one has said that there are not areas that we have to keep working on. What we have said is that the macroeconomic vision of this country, and stability of this country, is something which has now put Guyana into a position that it has never been in before- a position to take off and to move forward in a rapid way. That has come about by being pro-growth and **pro-borne**. And if we are trying, as some people are saying... I heard all sort of contradictory comments on the other side of the House. Why are you taking money from donors? The other, why are you concentrating on physical infrastructure? Another one saying, give more in the safety programmes. But the money does not come by magic. It has to come by prudent financial management, improving the economic base so that more can be produced, so that more revenue can be made, so that the debts can be paid and money can be put into the social sectors and the economic base - basic economic principles.

The **pro-poor aspect** of all the interventions for people who are poor and vulnerable: we are talking about vulnerable and poor in our society. Women, whether they are poor or not, are vulnerable; whether they are children of a higher economic basis or not, they are all vulnerable; whether we are talking Amerindians, we are talking about persons who are poor and who are vulnerable. The elderly are vulnerable, and the disabled. Ms. Bavehgems pointed out the problems and challenges which confront persons who are disabled. This is the two-prong approach of this Government which is based on the LCDS, on the poverty reduction strategy and on the competitive strategy as well, because we must look at the economic well-being of the country in order to improve the level of the quality of life of our people.

Regrettably, I would have loved to see a debate in this House where the Opposition would say, what were the real things that were promised in the Low Carbon Development Strategy which would not help us to overcome any of our challenges? What were the problems in the competitive strategy? What were the flaws, the weaknesses, and how were you able, with your thinkers and your analysis, to do it better for our people sake?

The other view, however, as I pointed that there are two views which have come up in this House, is the reactive, reactionary, separatist, looking backwards and were none of their own solutions to the challenges and risks that Guyana faces. They find fault in everything without posing serious and fundamental alternatives. Sloganeering is the name of the game, discrimination, corruption, race, and all of this is based on a level of expediency and convenience, and playing to the gallery.

11.09 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, what I find extremely interesting, in this budget, because I have sat through quite a number of them, not only in our Government's time, but I used to come here, from 1977, and sit in this House, on the other side... [**Mr. Corbin:** ...and you used to have on some lovely outfits.] No. I wore blue jeans most of the time. You were thinking of another girl, Mr. Corbin. It was not me. I was a blue jeans girl. The issues that we looked at in terms of what our performance has shown... Usually, Members from the other side come with all those different reports to show that we are not doing well. This time they have come with their own attempts to show that we are not doing well. Some have pointed out..., like the Hon. Member, Mr. Norton, who feels that the economic data is not credible; he is questioning it. The housing data is questionable, but he offered no way in which he found it to be questionable.

The statement by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) mission to Guyana, on 19th November 2010, makes some very interesting comments about Guyana, and some of the things it has to face as it goes forward. It is a very interesting one. It can be found on the IMF website, *Mission to Guyana*, 19th November, 2010". It states the following, and this was a public press release:

“An IMF Mission visited...November 8 - 18 to conduct the funds yearly review of the Guyanese economy. Despite external and domestic shocks in 2010, Guyana's economy has exhibited resilience, registering a fifth consecutive year of robust growth. Real Growth Domestic Product is expected to grow by just under 4% this year above the outrun in 2009, supported by increasing activities in sugar, gold and the services sector. Notwithstanding downsizing, including the global environment and concerns in the sugar sector, the team expects growth to continue on a steady path supported by expansion in the mining and construction

sectors. Despite this small increase reflecting movement in food prices, inflation remains relatively low.”

It goes on to point out that:

“The staff welcomed the continued improvements in public financial management and tax administration, especially with respect to compliance and risk management. It welcomed the increase gross foreign reserve’s position to about five months of that time...”

I think it is about seven months, if Dr. Singh would tell me if I am wrong.

“...of the imports of the present.”

It goes on to talk about the enhancement, in some of the areas, the Government has to work on.

As far as I know, this is one of the best reports the Government has had in terms of its performance, since independence. I am not talking about the 28 years of the Opposition and the 18 years of the Government. I am talking about the history of this country and, therefore, that is something we all should be proud of.

I also want to point to another piece of work that has been done by the Millennium Challenged Corporation, on which the *Stabroek News* carried an article on 28th January, 2011, but it goes back to a release of November, 2010 of the Millennium Challenged Corporation Account, and, again, that can be found on its website, www.mcc.gov/documents/scorecards/scorefy11-guyana. It points out that of the indicators which have to do with ruling justly, such as political rights, civil liberties, control of corruption, government effectiveness, rule of law, voicing accountability, Guyana was above all the medium rates of all the countries that were assessed.

Investing in people: Immunisation rate, health expenditures, primary education expenditures, goals primary education completion, natural resources management, again Guyana was above all the mediums that were set.

Economic freedom: It can be shown that land rights, regulatory controls, business start ups, trade policy and inflation were above the medium or at medium levels. Therefore the score card for Guyana at the Millennium Challenged Corporation was one that was found to be very good and very hopeful for the future. I find it, therefore, rather interesting that the Ram and Mc Rae

Reports, of which some Members have responded to, and have spoken of, and of which external writers to this Parliament, whom, by the way, have never gone to an election, do not have to be accountable to an electorate, and never have to face an electorate; those who have written articles that point out to a level of negativity that does not bear fruit in terms of the evidence that is available, not only by Guyana and the Government of Guyana, but by the international financial institutions and those bodies which monitor Guyana...

What I find most disturbing is that persons have talked about rights, and the rights of those..., it is usually thought that Governments are the ones who can take away persons rights or erode them. But it is an irony in this country, and I think in a number of other countries, where the media plays a role in terms of denigrating people's rights and eroding them. I will give you an example of this. A number of organisations, such as the Private Sector Commission and other business bodies including companies, have come out with statements in favour of the budget or in favour of some policy of the Government over recent times. What is found particularly interesting is an attempt in the media, not by Mr. Corbin, not by Mr. Trotman, but by the media - the writers and editors of the media, and certain media houses - to belittle those legitimate elected leaders of those civil society bodies, and belittle them in the press.

I will give some examples. My friend over on the other side of the House, Mrs. Backer, likes to bring her cartoons and articles to the House. But here is one that belittles the Private Sector Commission; shows the private sector members and belittles them. It shows that the Minister of Finance has got them in an orchestra and has them all singing praises. I think this is an insult. **[Mrs. Backer:** That is free press.] I have a right to also give my opinion on the media. The media is not above criticism. I have a right to speak too! I did not know we, as politicians and as elected officials, handed over our rights to the fourth estate. I have a right. as a citizen of Guyana, to defend people's rights and that includes whether the persons are in this House, or whether they are not in this House, especially when Members of this House have used some of these same articles to support their arguments on the other side.

What I find so distasteful is that... *[Interruption]*...Mr. Speaker, I am going to seek your protection soon.

The editorial in the *Stabroek News*, on 21st January, 2011, is a very sarcastic editorial. It states the following, I think it is in the fifth paragraph. I would not read all of it.

“It is not, of course, that the PSC does not have a right to speak highly of the 2011 budget if it is happy with its offerings. What is noteworthy of this statement, however, is its lack of even the initial scoping to which it lays claim in what appears to be a deliberate...”

And I want to emphasise this point or these phrases.

“... be a deliberate and embarrassingly overdone swooning at the feet of the Government exemplified by such patronising statements as the Government of Guyana has in fact moved the engine growth into top gear.”

We are used to, as politicians, being criticised and attacked, as part of the job description. But when legitimate organisations are talked about, which have elected members... because, as a Government, we believe and uphold the issues of democracy. This is not only to do with this budget time, but cartoons have appeared with the new Chairman of the Public Service Commission with a scotch tape over his mouth and in which he is being ordered by the President and the Minister of Finance. The Member across the other side of the House, who is babbling all the time, has a memory problem, because she has brought, here, cartoons which were supportive of her thoughts to this House. I am exercising my rights. But what I want to say is that when other chairmen of the Private Sector Commission were elected they did not seem to go through this. I am wondering, and I hope I am wrong, that it has nothing to do with the fact that it is an ethnicity issue, because I remember when persons from other ethnicity were chairmen of the Private Sector Commission no one had anything to say. So let us think about this. Put it in your pipe and smoke it.

But I would say this bully poop pulpit that is going on in the press, and the bully poop pulpit of those who do not have to, in fact, face the electorate, will wake up one day, after the 2011 elections, and discover that all their talk, all their negativism, has come to nought, because the people of Guyana will vote the PPP/C back in office with greater support.

“...a total of 946 new companies were registered...”

This is page 2 of the budget presentation.

"...and taxes paid on business profits increased by 65.5 percent over the past four years."

One, is that not a sign of confidence, when persons are being more compliant with the laws and contributing, in terms of taxation, to the development of the society? Is it not fact that there are a total of 946 new companies that were registered? Even if each of those companies hired only ten persons there would be over 9000 jobs in this country. But this is of no significance to the Opposition - none whatsoever. The issues in terms of development are clear, despite what certain media houses say, as Ms. Baveghems said, "You cannot fool the people". The ordinary people know, and the people who voted for the various parties know, that these efforts by certain media houses and certain opinion makers are really based on intimidating and eroding the freedom of expression of speech of anyone who dares to be positive about something the Government of Guyana is doing, such as leaders of the business community, the Buxton community, those who are involved in the International Year for People of African Descent. They are all subject to ridicule and derogatory comments. This is the new age of discrimination and intimidation by certain media houses, Opposition parties and the blog sites and Facebook jabs.

I just want to say a couple things; there are some major issues I want to take on. The elections of 1992, 1997 and 2001 were followed by violence which lasted up to two years each. We experienced the 2002-2008 violent crime waves, in which yesterday was another anniversary of those who died, and were massacred, at Lusignan. Despite all of those things, this country has shown ability and resilience to move forward, tentatively, haltingly, one step forward, two steps back. But this country has a spirit and an energy which does not let itself to be daunted and it will go better. **[Mr. Corbin:** It will go better. Hear, hear, hear!]

Well, you would be glad if you took it over after us, because the country is in a good position. But we had to take it over after you left it *bruk up*. We had to build it back my dear Hon. Leader of the Opposition. It had to be rebuilt. As you know, when you get a house and you *bruk it down*, it does not take long to do that, but when you have to rebuild, it takes longer. To reconstruct this country took a lot, and the Opposition parties did not decide to be as, Her Majesty said, "A loyal Opposition". They were a difficult and a harsh Opposition that made it very difficult. Many times they were an obstructionist Opposition.

But we have come a long way. We have had Constitutional Reform and Parliamentary Reform. This Parliament has brought...I think all of us should be proud of this Parliament, the Ninth Parliament, because, to me, it has shown that it has stood the litmus test of coming out of the Constitutional Reform phrase, of now implementing those Constitutional Reforms tentatively, in a difficult way, in many ways, sometimes not agreeing. But this country has set a framework of governance that we, as a people, should be proud of.

We have been able to pass 140 Bills. There are Committees functioning, and so forth. I am sure, Mr. Speaker, you are the one who is very proud of the work which has gone on in this House and it could not have been done without the cooperation of the parties on both sides of the House.

There are Members in here who have short memories and maybe it is best to do a little memory. Ms. Baveghems talked about her long historical involvement in politics, and I am proud as a Guyanese that the image... *[Interruption]* As a Guyanese what were we known for? We were known for the Jonestown Massacre with the highest civilian deaths in the world, in a peaceful environment, until September 2001. Guyana was known for Jonestown Massacre. What else were we known for? We were known for rigged elections, of ballot boxes being stolen, of ballot boxes being found with rubber bands. We have moved from the time when our people, and women, were traders sleeping on cardboards at Piarco International Airport in the 1980s. What were they bringing home - fancy things? No. They were bringing home soap, toilet paper, flour, rice, and so forth. In case our memories are short – people talk about rights on that side - we had to get rights to move in our own country. Every time you wanted to travel to the Interior you had to get permission from the Ministry of Regional Development, which was just at the back here, in Cornhill Street. Many of us were denied - denied the freedom of movement in our own country. **[Mr. Corbin:** Everyone had to get permission.] It was everybody, yes. That is what I am saying. Why we, as Guyanese, had to get permission to move in our own country? It is because you wanted to keep us out of the areas.

On 30th October, 1992 the first case of cholera was found in the Morawhanna area, and, I, as a new Minister, had to go into that area- I was familiar with Region- when the source had to be investigated. Mr. Speaker, the poverty was appalling. Can you imagine going to a house where there was no bedding, no furniture, two bowls and two plastic cups? It was unbelievable and that

was in the off branch of Morawhanna. Because of the unbelievable poverty, it was abysmal, and we forget that there were children with Kwashiorkor in this country. But, as you know, some people do not want to remember that. That is why when Minister Ramsammy gets up and talks about some of the things this country has overcome, I am proud as a Guyanese.

My dear friend, Mr. Basil Williams, talked about labour issues, and so on. But, as you know, you must forgive me, Mr. Corbin, because I cannot forget when Mr. Daniels, as the head of the Trade Union Congress, was taken up in a plane and threatened to be thrown out if he did not follow the line of ruling party, and Mr. Gordon Todd too. I cannot forget that.

This country has undergone great duress and we have rebuilt this country - the physical infrastructure, the economy and the social services - with a lot of energy, time, vision, guts, gumption and money. We have succeeded in restoring this country and, as I said, repositioning it for the future with a stable economy that is comparable and better than our Caribbean Community (CARICOM) partners. Guyana is on the move, as Dave Martin said, several years ago, "Guyana coming back". We have come back. We have come back from the depths, from 1992, and this country is now moving and having overcome the major hurdles. Now is the time for this country to now climb to greater heights.

In all of this we forget or we have minimalised the fact that the world has been going through a global recession, 2008 - 2011. This global recession is not over as yet. Ask all the economists. Look at the Bank of England statements; look at the World Bank statements, this recession is not over as yet. Yet this little developing country of seven hundred -odd thousand people was able to keep, not only its head above water, but its whole body, inflation at the level it was.

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

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Hon. Member has fifteen minutes to continue her presentation.

Question put, and agreed to.

Ms. Teixeira: At times we lose perspective and forget..., because if the Ram and Mc Rae Report is looked at, if the transparency international is looked at, if the AFC's findings are looked at, the indicator of 50 projects, or whatever that Mr. Patterson was talking about... [**Mrs. Backer:** He

was saying cork ball.] Yes. I will come back to your cork ball just now. I warned you that I was going to do it. But I want to say this that we do not appreciate, sometimes, the fact that this country held itself and was able to cushion the impact on the population of Guyana in contrast to what is going on in other countries. This global financial crisis has caused a whole rethinking of certain basic economic principles. Because out of it has come emerging markets and emerging countries, that when the crisis hit in 2008 everyone said all those countries were going to fall apart. Which are the countries which are falling apart and having tremendous difficulties? They are the European countries and the United States of America. Canada is not affected so badly. So when the *Washington Post* is looked at, 16th September, 2010, it talks about United States of America poverty rates. One in every seven persons is poor in the United States of America. That is, forty-four million persons now in the United States of America are living below the poverty line. This is the lowest figure for poverty in the fifty-odd years in which poverty statistics have been collected.

The fact is 51 million persons in the United States have access to no health care. Yet in Guyana immunisation is free; basic drugs are given free; sophisticated services are offered free, and persons can choose to go to the private sector if the Government sector does not offer it. But the basic health services are free and available to every single person in this country.

Can you imagine being a pregnant woman in the United States of America, particularly, where the poverty level among African Americans and indigenous people is higher than among the White population? Yet if they do not have access to health services they cannot have proper care. I feel sorry for President Obama. After all that work on health care, that is why he was struggling for that from a progressive point of view, yet, now, the Opposition, the Republican party, will turn over, upside down, the health plan, making more persons impoverished.

The latest study coming out of the Bank of England shows that the UK inflation rate of 3.7 % affects mostly children and persons between the age of 55 and 74 years. The Bank of England has stated that the Government must ensure that the obstacles that hampers businessmen in their efforts to create jobs, invest and exports must be removed. This is the only way to try to get England to climb out of the downturn that it is going through all the time. In fact, the IMF in its recent projections does not have much hope that the UK will be able to make much of a progress this year.

So let us take perspective on what we were able to do versus the challenges which other countries face. We are proud that Brazil our neighbouring country, a friend and allied of Guyana, has been doing well, because this boasts well for the future of Latin America, South America and, of course, for our country.

The Government has overcome the worst test of this country - the violent crime waves and many many issues. But one of the areas we are proud of is, Member of Parliament Mr. Ramotar spoke of it, the restoration of democracy and the involvement of persons and building trust and confidence, and that is probably the biggest challenge we face, in that, how to build trust and confidence at various levels of this society, including within the Government and the Opposition. We have started to turn that around - started to build trust and rebuild it, and reconstruct it, and to bring more people into the fold. But it will require more work, consistent work and dedicated work.

Article 13 of the Constitution is always raised by many persons, but it is alive and a model that is still evolving over the last seven years. There is the National Stakeholders Forum which involves the business communities, all the religious and umbrella organisations, the labour bodies, the Amerindian Toshias and the National Toshias Council, women's representatives, and together, those bodies represent approximately three hundred thousand people in this country. Were we to add the parliamentary political parties, we are talking about two-thirds of the people of this country are represented in a National Stakeholder's Forum. The Human Rights Commissions which have taken us a long and agonising process to accomplish, nevertheless, we have been able to set them up and they are working and having their own learning curve. They have come through a process of civil society consultation. We are the only body, that I am aware of, in this part of the world where civil society answers to a parliamentary body in submitting names of their nominees. I am not aware of that in any other part of CARICOM or Latin America, as a model. I think it is a model that works and one that we should be proud of.

11.39 p.m.

Guyana is the only country in this region, and, I believe, further afield in the hemisphere, that has distributed more than fourteen % of the land to its indigenous people. More than that, in terms of democratic governance, the fact that the villagers elect their Toshias democratically,

not like the old days – in the old days there used to be rigging even at that election - ... My friend Mr. Corbin and I go back a while and we know what used to happen in villages like Shea, Sand Creek and Aishalton. We know well that if the wrong Toshao was voted for, the village was not getting any money. So I find what Mr. William said very interesting. The National Toshias Council represents the village elected legitimate democratic leaders and they come to the fore representing themselves. In fact, at the last Toshias Council they made it very clear that they are the spokesmen, and the legitimate spokesmen, for the Amerindians villages of Guyana.

This Government has Cabinet outreaches and bilateral agreements between the President and the Leader of the Opposition. I have been fortunate and honoured to have been invited to sit in those meetings from time to time so I know the two gentlemen talk and we try. I think this is a forum where there can be that kind of discussion. It does not mean that we have to agree all the time. We do not have to agree most of the time. We have been able to find...When Mr. Corbin and Minister Lall went to Linden to try to deal with the Interim Management Committee (IMC) matter, that was good. It is good for the country. Let us find answers that way. Every Minister of this Government has his or her public day. Every Minister has community meetings and Cabinet outreaches. There is no other model of that kind of involvement that exists in this region. Therefore... [**Mrs. Backer:** That is not true.] I can count up and prove it, and we can debate it.

The problem is that in the mantra that is repeated over and over again, our friends on the other side talked about freedom from corruption, and Mr. Patterson and Mr. Ramjattan making their comments. Mr. Patterson proudly called it the AFC corruption index – top fifty capital work programmes. Mr. Patterson is so bold and, I believe, so reckless, to say that the Marriott Hotel is a cork ball in the making. He went on to point out that... [**Mrs. Backer:** ...off of his head. Resign.] It is a good thing that you are not the President. You will be more pugnacious than anyone else on this side. They are so negative. I am basically saying, if Mr. Patterson and others have not understood me, it is that when they reach a point that even something that is going to be good for the country they put a *bad eye* on it, their evil eye on it, because they would rather see it fail to justify their position that it was going to fail than to see it succeed when it would benefit thousands of Guyanese people...I do not understand this anti-nationalist, unpatriotic view that I hear from the other side.

They talk about Hope Canal. Hope Canal is an attempt to try to find a solution to some of the flooding in the back lands of that area. It is an attempt. Consultants, architects, engineers, and hydrologists have all looked at it and, yet, Mr. Patterson, for the AFC, underlined, made it clear that the Hope Canal is another cork ball in the waiting. Does he rather those villages continue to be flooded, to continue have their crops gone and their houses washed away? Is that his answer? Is that his AFC answer to the problems of people? [**Mr. Patterson:** Do not waste money. That is my answer.] Well, you have to come up with something else. This is where the whole issue of justifying your own reckless thoughts and positions. Because he thinks that Hope Canal is a waste of \$3 billion, he cannot come to this House and say Hope Canal should have gone in a different direction or maybe it needs to be built in a different way. His concern is not about relieving the people from flooding. It is about the cost. They are different issues and he is mixing up the issues all the time for convenience and expediency.

Guyana signed and ratified the United Nations (UN) Convention Against Corruption and the Inter-American Convention Against Corruption. Guyana has been reviewed by the Inter-American Convention Against Corruption two times and will go before the Convention a third time this year. Guyana is a member, as a ratified country, of the Experts Committee. Not all the CARICOM countries signed and ratified these conventions. Guyana is one of the few countries in the region which has signed both. The reason I am raising it is because the Ram and Mc Rae study which some Members have pointed to refer to the Heritage Foundation Wall Street Index in relation to Guyana. The irony of those studies which are basically, in many cases, opinion polls, particularly Transparency International (TI)...I am happy that a Transparency International Chapter will be formed in Guyana. It is a good thing. I have no problem with that. I want to say, from a statistical point of view, that when there are organisations comparing chalk and cheese, one of the international comparative instruments to deal with compliance with treaty reporting is whether a country has signed or not and whether it has ratified or not. Therefore it is subject to scrutiny by its peers at the United Nations level or the Inter-American commission level, the Organization of American States (OAS). But when countries have not signed, they do not have to go before those bodies. The Americans have not signed a number of international instruments, nor have a number of countries in CARICOM.

It is very funny that on freedom from corruption, Barbados which has not signed either of the Conventions to do with corruption comes out with a higher rate than those countries like Jamaica and Guyana which have signed the Conventions and were reviewed by their peers in the United Nations level. It is just something that one has to be very interested in if one is looking at fairness and transparency. Transparency International (TI) is a subjective, non-empirical methodology. I have read, in this House, the statements by the person who heads TI, saying that its study is based on non-empirical data; it is opinion polls, perception polls. It is completely different than what is in empirical data.

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

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Hon. Member be given fifteen minutes to conclude her presentation.

Question put, and agreed to.

Ms. Teixeira: A number of Ministers have talked about the ICT programmes. One of the important things is that I can challenge any person to go on the websites of the Audit Office of Guyana, the National Procurement and Tender Administration, the Guyana Revenue Authority, the Bank of Guyana, for example. For this country and in this region, Guyana is the only country that posts the Minutes of the tender body on the website. If that person does not believe me, that person can go to the website of the National Procurement and Tender Administration (NPTA) and will see the Minutes posted for 18th January, 2011. When we talk about access to information, there is information out there that a person can just have to go into his or her websites. I want to bring it to Members attention, because the Audit Office of Guyana has posted all its Reports that it has tabled in this House, and the earliest it has posted was 1992 and that was tabled in this House in December, 1993. Therefore, persons have quoted from Mr. Anand Goolsarran, former Auditor General and this is what he had to say in the second paragraph of his opening statement. It was signed by him and posted on the website. He said:

“The last set of financial statements which were submitted for audit examination and certification was in respect of the fiscal year 1981 and the Auditor General’s Report thereon was laid in the National Assembly on 18th December, 1987. As a result, a gap in financial reporting covering the period from 1982 – 1991 existed.”

He goes on to point out all his efforts to get it back. If we go on to paragraph 24 in the Auditor General's Report of September, 1993 for the year December, 1992, we will find that he pointed out some serious problems he had in trying to bring the Audit Office Report ready for 1993 in terms of the years before. He does point out in it that there was a problem in terms of accountability to do with what was probably \$35 billion which was expended and not accounted for in the administration which led before. They do not like to hear these kinds of things, but when one cannot account for \$25 billion one should be worried. Where did the \$25 million go? Maybe Mr. Patterson, in his quest, can go look for that and, maybe, bring it back to the Guyanese people because we certainly always need money. I can tell you to look at paragraphs 24, 25, 27, 30 and 31, in relation to the Audit, where he pointed out the discrepancies in trying to close the accounts where billions – not millions - of Guyana dollars could not be accounted for that were moved from the budget and never accounted for. No records were being kept. Why we have to be very proud of the fact that we have had an Auditor General's Report tabled in this House every year...The Opposition can have its doubts. There is no problem with that. It has a right to scrutinise. It has a right to call for account. The Hon. Member cannot say that Hope Canal which is not built yet is a waste of \$4 billion when that Hon. Member has not scrutinised anything in relation to it.

We have been able..., as the IMF pointed out, to the levels of standards we have set in terms of accountability - fiscal accountability and fiscal management. There are standard bidding documents now. There are documents on the website which can be downloaded. There are Sectoral Committees here that if they do their work they can bring information here and analyse, as the Economic Services Committee did under Mr. Vieira and under my stewardship, including the issues of the other Parliamentary Committees and, most important of all, the Public Accounts Committee.

There is the e-procure website, so that there are forms in which... We cannot talk about certain issues unless one has access to certain information. Much of the information now is being posted more and more on the website as we become more computerised, more modern, based on the information age - as Mr. Ramotar pointed out in his presentation; as we are able to connect with other countries; as we are able to lift the skills of the Guyanese people with the one lap top per

family; as we are able to get the Government agencies to be more computer friendly, digitalised with records and so on, we will be able to be scrutinised as the Opposition is asking for.

The issues of corruption are there and there is no country in the world which can say that there is no corruption. What we say and what all countries say... I do not know about any country. I am not aware of any Member on this side of the House ever saying that there is no corruption. We have said that where there is corruption we must find it, investigate it and deal with it by bringing it to the Courts. Those of you on the other side know full well that many issues go to the Courts of this country and fall flat on the face. In the examination of corruption, it has to be: Are the mechanisms and processes there to be able to reduce corruption and to help expose it if it does exist? And what is the legal framework, the procedural and systemic framework, that will help to uncover, expose and reduce it? Those are the basic principles in relation to when we talk about corruption. It is not about persons here who are using the word loosely and throwing it around.

This budget, as I said, positions this country, for the first time since independence, in a way in which we can now make rapid steps forward. That is why I said this is the budget of hope and cautious optimism. I will say why cautious optimism. That is because I know when we get to election time there will be concerns about what will happen. I hope that as we had done in the 2006 election, we will be able to have peaceful election and move on. I believe that in 2011 - we have reached a level of maturation by the political leadership of our country and by our people - that we would be able to have a peaceful process and that we will be able to continue the building of this country so it becomes the model democratic modern country of the Caribbean, and the whole of the CARICOM.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

[Applause]

Mr. Danny: I rise to address the Budget 2011 under the theme, *Together Building Tomorrow's Guyana Today*, but before I do so, I will like to acknowledge the United Nations declaration of 2011, the International Year for the People of African Descent, and wish that it all goes well for my fellow brothers and sisters. I will also like to give my sentiments and wish the Hon. Member

Ms. Joan Baveghems a good stay in this Hon. House. I hope she enjoys herself. I enjoyed her maiden speech and look forward to listening to more of her contributions in this House.

After listening to the budget presentation by the Hon. Dr. Ashni Singh, Minister of Finance, it was like looking at another Diary programme of the Guyana Information Agency (GINA) or a New Year's message by the President under the theme, *Together Building Tomorrow's Guyana Today*. I believe it would have been better labelled, "All you need to do in an election year" or "How to win an election – all the secrets". The only reason I am here is because a large section of the population does not agree or does not like how the PPP/C Government does business. The programmes, projects and skimpy handouts do not meet the needs of the poor and needy who are struggling daily for survival.

After reading an article in *Sunday Stabroek News*, dated 16th January, 2011, I was moved by the appeal made by a number of ladies. The headline reads, "Parliamentarians should listen to the budget with the ears of pensioners, mothers of public assistance, security guards, domestic workers and shop assistants." Those are people who are finding it difficult to survive on the wages, salaries and assistance they get. Those ladies ask a question, "Why should we be forced to live like this?" They said that they find it impossible to live on the income they receive and how many loaves of bread their share could buy.

The Hon. Minister of Finance reminded us on page 1, paragraph 1.2 that the PPP/C Manifesto promised to deliver a bright future for all Guyanese. I would like to bring to the attention of the Hon. Minister that the people who complain dearly and write letters in the newspapers are all Guyanese. The Holy Bible states clearly in Proverbs 14:31:

"He that oppressteth the poor reproacheth his Maker, but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor."

On page 1, paragraph 1.3, the Hon. Minister declared: "Promises have been delivered." I repeat, "Promises have been delivered."

Turning your attention to the budget debate on 25th February, 2010, the Hon. Minister Lall said:

"This year, we will be constructing two new markets, one at Mahaica and one at Soesdyke, and a tarmac at Golden Grove."

To date, not even the site at Soesdyke is identified. The market is just an empty promise. This will be an added expense, an inconvenience, for the minimum wage workers to travel to the city to do their marketing. As for Mahaica, the Minister is the best person to answer. To the best of my knowledge, the market at Mahaica was not done. The tarmac at Golden Grove is a no-show. While the Government here is establishing malls, clearly, it is not modernising Guyana. It is taking our country backwards.

Sanitation: In last year's budget, Minister Lall promised to set up a Solid Waste Management Division within the Ministry of Local Government. He further said:

“The Haags Bosch landfill waste management project will come on stream in six months time. That will, of course, take care of waste in the city and fifteen NDCs within Region 4.”

It is almost a year since this promise has been made and, needless to say, the Mandela landfill continues to pose great health concerns to the residents in the area, whilst creating a vast inconvenience to those going into Le Repentir cemetery and those who live in the South Georgetown.

More importantly, as the Government distributes house lots, it has made no provision for solid waste disposal in those communities. The Ministry of Housing in collaboration with the Ministry of Local Government needs to develop policies as it relates to solid waste disposal in all schemes but, clearly, there is a lack of vision and planning.

Is the Hon. Minister of Finance aware of the promise made by the President to fix a road in Unity? To date, it remains a challenge to the residents to have easy access in and out.

Mr. Speaker, I will like to bring to your attention that babies, Sir, are born on the same road in Unity. Thanks to a midwife who lives in the same area and comes to the rescue of pregnant mothers. I recommend that this courageous mid-wife be given an award for her commitment to the pregnant mothers in Unity.

Let us look at tomorrow's Guyana today. Let us journey to page 60, under “Measures”:

“...Budget 2011 makes provision for the implementation of certain other specific measures designed to benefit the vulnerable in our society, the elderly, the working people of our country, and our rapidly growing private sector.”

Let us look at the benefits – public assistance. This is currently paid at a rate of \$4,900 per month. Budget 2011 provides for public assistance to be paid, from 1st February, 2011, at a rate of \$5,500 per month. That is an increase of GUY \$600. The question is: What can \$600 do? The price of a loaf of bread...Remember the ladies asked how much bread their moneys could buy. This is what it could buy. The price of a loaf of bread is \$280. So an average of two loaves can be bought, given in the current budget. Each loaf has twenty-three slices. Therefore a month's supply can buy 1.5 slices per day or 0.5 slice in each meal. What an awesome feast for our elderly and vulnerable brothers and sisters. The increases offered are ridiculous. There is need for much more to be done for our workers and pensioners. The increase offered will make little or no impact on their impoverished lives.

Old Age Pensions: Old-age pension is currently paid at \$6,600 per month. Budget 2011 provides for old-age pension to be paid, as for 1st February, 2011, at a rate of \$7,500 per month, an increase of \$900 per month. Put this under the microscope and what do we find? The \$900 may be enough to buy a chicken fried rice or chowmein. However, do not ask for a special. I repeat: A treat at a Chinese restaurant once a month for an old aged citizen.

Personal Income Tax: The current level is \$420,000 per year. It increased to \$480,000 per annum. A taxpayer at the wage of \$40,000 per month will now pay \$20,000 less in income tax a year. That is, \$1,667 a month or \$55.57 a day. This is an insult to the working people of Guyana.

A bottle of water is \$160 to about \$200 on the pavements. A coconut water is about \$100 - \$140, depending on where one is shopping. The increases offered cannot even purchase a bottle of water on the road. There are two options: one can drink water before leaving home, or one can hold his or her thirst until he or she reaches home.

12.09 a.m.

Do you know what is humiliating about this excuse for an increase? We have Ministers of this Government boasting on television about these miserable increases which are given to our old-

age pensioners, those in need of public assistance and to the workers while they enjoy life on their salaries and the perks of office while the ordinary man punishes.

A letter written by (inaudible) and others in the *Stabroek Newspaper* on 16th January, 2010, gave their interpretation of the Budget. ... puts it best:

“This is one example of the continued economic violence against impoverished men, women and children.”

One cannot put it better than that. This Budget offers no hope and can only result in problems in the family and the wider society.

In the 2011 Budget, page 45, paragraph 4.96, under the heading “Elderly” the Minister said:-

“Rehabilitation works to the physical infrastructure of the Palms Geriatric Institution is ongoing while the newly constructed recreation facility is operational...”

Mr. Speaker, I repeat, “operational”,

“...with a reading room, exercise room, canteen service are intended to improve the quality of life of the residents. In addition financial support in the form of old-age pension and water payment subsidies...”

Old age pension here is equal to 1.5 slices of bread a day or 0.0 slice per meal. While those facilities are welcomed, the real issue is to give them adequate old-age pension so that they could live a comfortable life having made a contribution to Guyana. I visited this site and lo and behold, what did I find? I found a canteen which has one fridge donated by UNICEF which is not operational, meaning not in use; it is not even hooked up as yet. The reading room: not operational; exercise room: not operational. The meaning of “operational” here is “it is a storeroom for UNICEF”.

Having spoken to those at the facility, they are in need of a brail facility and volunteers to read to the residents. This, they believe, will enhance their lives. I wish to recommend that in dealing with this institution, we seek to find out from them what their needs are. It would be a good thing for the Members of Parliament to volunteer to read to the residents at the Palms. Would you

read? Well listen to this. Mr. Speaker, we could have a “Hon. Minister Manzoor Brail Reading Facility”.

The missing dimension in an “election budget”: credibility and integrity; low prices at the shops, reduction in cost of living for the poor and elderly, affordable transportation cost, great take-home pay, that is more money to spend on their families, higher pay for teachers and nurses, extended retirement age for teachers, nurses and all public servants.

Services provided to members of the public, for example; shorter waiting time for new passports and birth certificates, application for passport and birth certificates in their own region, fix the problem at the NIS – that is the National Insurance Scheme.

The sugar industry has problems and received bailout money from the Government but what about the workers. They depend on their NIS benefits. This problem should be fixed “like yesterday”. When I asked why this problem persists at NIS the answer was, “Most of the persons have the same name”. I find this answer to be very ridiculous. Let us say that everybody’s name in the sugar industry is Harry Singh; they would have a different NIS number, ID number, address, mother and father’s names and date of birth. Why is it that this crisis cannot be fixed by this so-called “caring working class government” fix this crisis so that these workers at GuySuCo will be able to receive their benefits?

Region

This Budget fails to address the harsh realities facing the ordinary people and fails to make their lives comfortable. It is clearly an avenue for lucrative contractors, for the big contracts and friends of the Government. This reminds me of a statement made by the Hon. Mr. De Santos. He said, “Don’t hang your hat where your hand can’t reach.” One does not even have the money to buy bread, how is one going to buy a hat so that you can hang it anywhere?!

This Budget fails to serve the fundamental objective of an economic system; that is the formulation of appropriate and relevant policies and plans aimed at improving the livelihood of all citizens. To achieve all of this the Government had to build trust, introduce good governance at all levels, stamp out corruption, adapt a national procurement and tender administration board, the need for freedom of press and independent judiciary and adhere to the many

recommendations put forward by the Acting Auditor General on the Public Accounts of Guyana. If these measures are put in places only then the theme of this year's budget would be meaningful and contribute to the return of confidence to the people of this country.

Regional Development

[Mr. Rohee: Again?] That was "Region". I am renewing the call for a comprehensive regional development plan in which local people are involved in decision making in their respective communities with the aim of improving the quality of life of all of the people in those communities as to allow the regional officials the scope to fully discharge their responsibilities. Such an approach will further enhance and sustain real development in a positive way. The creation of a regional development plan is meant for the shifting of power from the center to the local people. Surely this Government is not interested in such a plan, but is comfortable with ministerial control and interference. This ministerial interference must end now if the regional system is to work. It is worse in regions run by the PNC where the Ministry of Local Government mislead regional executive officers who are unanswerable to the council by using its power to ensure all control by the Minister. What this in essence does is to remove from the lawful elected council the right to repeat those who elect them and to implement policies and programmes in their interest. In addition, the Minister takes credit when things are done in the region but blames the Regional Democratic Council when they are not done. This is cheap politics and it must end now.

The Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development has instituted a gradual but constant process of recentralisation of Local Government, albeit unofficial. This is against the spirit of local democracy and must end. Between 1983 and 1986 the Government had delegated, under the Laws of Guyana, Local Government Act 28.02, Sections 42, 43, 54, 55, 100, 103, 106, 140 and Section 46 to the 10 Regional Democratic Councils. In 2008 the Minister recalled the delegated power of the section 54RE-2, approved annual estimate and rate of the Neighbourhood Democratic Council, whereas the other nine areas of delegated power are retained to the Regional Democratic Council. The Minister and his officers of the Local Government Ministry have made a determined march on exhausting the power delegated to the Regional Democratic Council. As a consequence, the Minister has been interfering with the business of every Neighbourhood Democratic Council. In Region 4 all expenditure of \$100,000 and above, which

is subject to the Regional Democratic Council's approval, is now subject to the attention of the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development.

Claims of ministerial suppression of expenditure are now pervasive. Employment and disciplinary action of the Neighbourhood Democratic Council staff is now the arbitrary preserve of the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development. Complaints now of unwarranted dismissal and/or suspension of Neighbourhood Democratic Council Staff, inclusive of overseers and others. Neighbourhood Democratic Council Leaders – that is chairmen and overseers – no longer find reason to attend the Regional Local Democratic Committee meetings. With the recentralisation of almost all matters of Local Government officers and elected appointed officials of the Neighbourhood Democratic Council are reluctant to interface with the Regional Democratic Council since their effort and time are almost meaningless. Moreover, the advice or directive of the Regional Democratic Council is no longer considered an effect given the pervading influence and reasserted power of the Minister. The recentralisation of Local Government is a contravention of the intention of Regional, Municipal and Local Government in Guyana and a deviation of the Constitution, Act 2 of 1980.

The Performance of the Neighbourhood Democratic Council, with regards to executing statutory duties is on the decline and leaves much to be desired since the return of recentralisation.

Finance

Slow and/or late release of financial allocations during 2010 adversely affected the timeline execution of the work programme. Clearly the aim is to embarrass PNC Councils. It is a cruel Government that withholds approval finance from an elected council to achieve narrow political ends. That is the nature of the uncaring Government.

Between January and July 2010 Region 4 was starved of disbursements to meet work programmes. It was only until some time in October 2010 financial inflows were sufficiently available to the Regional Sub-Treasury to service claims for payment by service providers and contractors.

Potable Water

Guyana Water Incorporated (G.W.I) has not done enough to provide potable water to communities at Bareroot, Dazzel Housing Scheme and a section of South Vigilance and Victoria on East Coast Demerara.

Laptop In An Election Year

There is a lot of talk about laptop in every family and progress by this Government. We are aware that this is an election year campaign exercise, however, I believe that a Government that cannot provide the basic necessities, a Government that cannot build a proper road, a Government that cannot sort out something as simple as issuing a birth certificate and a Government that discriminates, will not be able to develop an efficient and fair system to distribute one laptop to a family. No they will not! I fail to see how this Government can effectively run a “laptop in every family programme”. This is lopsided situation.

What is needed at this time is a real change in the way things are done in the Government bureaucracy. The Government needs to improve the lives of the people so that they could buy their own laptops. It is time that the Government stop making excuses for failed efforts like the one pointed out by my colleague, Hon. Member Mervyn Williams, as it relates to the sugar industry, and have the decency to dismiss those who are incompetent.

The PPP/C Members of Parliament play their own drums and dance to their own out of beat music. Who will benefit from the billion – “billion” with a “B” – to be spent on infrastructure in 2011? [**Mr. Ramotar:** The people.] The contractor, Sir, friends of the Government; surely not the poor...

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

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to move that the Hon. Member be given 10 minutes to conclude his presentation.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. Danny: One can have the best school buildings but one also needs sufficient quality teachers. If parents cannot afford extra private lessons then their children will suffer. This is the reality in Guyana today. Hospitals and medical centers are built but one still has to wait for

hours, going into days, to get medical attention. A large sum is spent on police vehicles but police arrive only when someone is dead.

People cannot even pay their light bills. A job without dignity or one that does not build up one's self-esteem or just poor self-esteem is no job. When people start to have jobs that can provide for the basic needs of the family, for example, food, shelter, clothing, transportation, electricity, water and education, this will signal the beginning of a life of respect, dignity and self worth. For now, people live in poverty today with no hope of a better life tomorrow unless there is a new Government later this year. That is what you get from this Government. The real problem with this Budget is that it has nothing in it for those who need and plenty for the Government cabal that has already taken too much for itself.

Before I take my seat let me say this, these are boneless people. How can they do this to their own people?

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Member.

Mr. Nandlall: Good morning, Sir. I rise this Saturday morning to speak on the 2011 Budget which has been presented before this National Assembly and, like the speakers before me, I wish to recognise and congratulate the Hon. Minister of Finance for, once again, presenting a Budget that puts the development of this country to another level and a budget that puts the welfare of the people of this country as a priority.

I would also like to welcome and congratulate my friend Ms. Joan Baveghems on her elevation to this high House and also to congratulate her, especially, for the senior position to which she has been elevated as she is next to come to the front benches. I do not think that issue was recognised by most people who extended congratulations to her. Ms. Baveghems, my friend, congratulations to you and welcome. Also, congratulations on your maiden performance. Ms. Baveghems and I have come along way. [**Mrs. Backer:** She will still picket your office.] That is a constitutional right that this Government will always protect. We have given it to her.

We have heard a lot being said about this Budget from the Opposition. Unfortunately, again I have to lament, and I do so with the greatest of respect to my friends on the other side, that the

presentations emanating from the Opposition benches – I do not want to say “are shallow” – certainly do not bring to this debate issues that are relevant and that are important to advance this country. We have heard, on one hand, that the Budget is an “election budget” – “election budget” meaning that it is a budget that presents a bag full of goodies to lure our people to vote – and then on the other hand we have heard a series of presentations that criticise the Budget on the grounds that it does not provide enough for the people of this country. As such, there is a major inconsistency and flaw in the contributions made from the other side.

Then we heard a series of very irresponsible statements being made and two readily come to mind: the statement by the Hon. Member, Mrs. Sheila Holder, alleging that 17,000 of the pensioners do not exist and she based that on a survey and study that she arrogated unto herself the qualities and qualifications to do, but what is more important she lead us to believe that she was quoting from a study done by some recognised institution or person and had the query not been made by Minister Manickchand and the Hon. Mdm. Teixeira we would have been left with the view that this is a very high and respected study. Then we have my friend, Mr. Aubrey Norton, who, in his presentation made certain statements, several of them inaccurate, for example he said that \$150 million cannot be accounted for because it is being spent on an entity that does not exist and the entity he is referring to is the State Planning Commission. State Planning Commission forms part of the Ministry of Finance. Mr. Tarachand Balgobin, Mr. Clyde Roopchand, a young lady was here whose name I cannot remember and Mr. Zulfikar Ali are all employees of the State Planning Commission. These are the very wild and reckless statements that are made in this Budget Debate.

Mr. Norton also said that there is a high ranking Government official who has sold a property which he bought from the Government of Guyana within a 10-year period, and that he cannot sell the property. We all know that the Government’s policy is, when it distributes the house lots, one cannot sell a house before the expiration of 10 years and the Hon. Member made several statements which would lead everyone to believe that he was referring to His Excellency, the President. That, again, is an irresponsible and reckless misrepresentation because the President’s transport, a copy of which I have here, was issued to him in 1998. The transport is here and it is numbered 1222 of 1998 and the President sold his property in 2010 so 10 years had already passed, so he did not require the permission of any Minister. What is worse is that when this sale

took place, I was not only the attorney-at-law for the President for the sale but I was also his duly constituted attorney and I issued a press statement in which I said that all of the documents relevant to that transaction are public documents and that they can be obtained from the Deeds Registry. The Hon. Member had access to those documents to verify that what he was saying was not accurate and he chose not to do so. That is the type of recklessness that we must avoid when we hold high positions as Members of Parliament.

Unfortunately, with a few exceptions of course, that is the type of discourse which permeate this debate, emanating from the oppositions benches. I had great difficulty in coming up with a theme on how to analyse the Minister's Budget because of all the irrelevancies that have been abounding in this debate. The best theme that I came up with is "How to put this Budget in a proper context" because a budget at the end of the day, we must remember, is only an estimate. It is an estimate as to how Government spending will take place in an ensuing year and it contains a review of what transpired in the year immediately preceding or years immediately preceding. The budget is not a holistic and a comprehensive and a universal plan of every single thing that a Government can do. That is an impossible task for a Minister of Finance to undertake. A budget must be viewed in a particular context and it is in that context that this budget must be viewed.

To situate this Budget in a proper perspective, one must look at the external environment in which this Budget is presented because Guyana is not a country in isolation; we are part of a global village. The Minister accurately outlines for us in this Budget the volatile international situation. The world is still reeling from the effects of the recession. Growth rate is still very low in most countries and minus in others. With the exception of India, China and Brazil, the world growth rate is in the negative so the international economic environment is a very volatile and almost an unpredictable one. One looks at the Caribbean and sees a similar position. With the exception of Trinidad and Tobago, almost every country in the Caribbean had to seek external help and help from the international financial institutions for deficit financing of their budgets and even to pay their salaries. It is against that background that one must look at the Guyana situation.

What is the Guyana situation? The Guyana Situation is a position where there is macroeconomic stability. That is the first observation that we must make. In a very volatile international and

regional environment we are enjoying a stable economy. This Government must be congratulated for that – for managing the economy in such a way.

12.39 a.m.

Mr. Nandlall: This Government has shown that it has been able to reduce the interest rate of lending at the banks. Remember at one time under the People’s National Congress (PNC) Regime, lending rates were as high as 40%. It is now reduced to below 11%. Guyana has shown surpluses in its balance of payment to the extent that it is now US\$90.1 million in surplus. Guyana has increased its exports. The Guyana dollar continues to remain stable. Inflation rate continues to be kept in single digit figures. In the face of all of this, Government has paid an increase in salary. It has increased the income tax threshold, giving another indirect increase in salary. It has decreased corporation taxes. All of these concessions it has given in a very volatile, external economic environment. Guyana is leading the way as an economy in this part of the world and Government must be congratulated for that. We have no difficulty with the Opposition criticising us. I regard that as their fundamental functions, but they have a responsibility to do so sensibly and constructively and they have abysmally failed in that regard.

Government has been accused of presenting an “election budget”, but this budget is no different from other budgets presented by the People’s Progressive Party Civic (PPP/C) Administration since 1993. It is the same model that we have used where the largest budgetary allocation goes towards the social sector. That has not changed. Over 1/3 of all of our budgetary allocation, since 1993, have been directed to improving the lives and welfare of our people, especially the vulnerable, the poor and our children.

In 2006, Government went to the people of this country with its Manifesto. We outlined a five year plan in the document. If one has been following the budgets presented in this National Assembly, presented by Dr. Ashni Singh since 2006, one would have seen that it forms segments of the manifesto and it is presenting the final installment of that document. How can Members accuse us of presenting an “election budget”?

Look at the developments that have taken place in the housing sector. Government has transformed this country in the area of housing. In every nook and cranny that ones turns to in this country, Government has established housing schemes. Over 100,000 house lots have been

distributed since Government assumed power. Government does not only give house lots but it prepares the housing area. It builds roads, infrastructure and drains. Supplies potable water, provide electricity and give titles. In addition to that, it makes arrangements with the financial institutions to allow its people to access loans at low interest rates. We have a comprehensive policy when it comes to government. That is our legacy and that is what the Budget is about.

Move to the health sector and see the transformation that has taken place there and will continue to take place. We have constructed health facilities in every region. We have repaired health facilities in every region. We have redone the Georgetown Public Hospital. Yes, I agree with my Comrade from Region No. 1 that there are going to be times when these health facilities are going to run out of drugs. We appreciate that, we are still a third world country but we are endeavouring, as far as possible, to minimise those eventualities.

Look at the improvements that we have made in the education sector. The largest part of our budget goes to the education sector because our vision for the development of our country lies in the intellectual empowerment of our children and young people. That is our vision. We see that education is the only effective vehicle to take our people out of the cycle of poverty and that is why, year after year, we are investing so heavily in the education sector. We have rebuilt every school in this country. Where schools did not exist, we have built schools. We have two university campuses – not one - in Berbice so that our children in Berbice do not have to travel to Georgetown and live in Georgetown to attend university. We are making university education truly accessible to all of our people. Look at the programmes that we are offering at the university campuses. We now have a full fledged medicinal programme which is recognised by a major university in the United States of America. Today, the children of the bauxite worker, the rice farmer and sugar workers can become doctors right here in Guyana. We have brought the law programme to Guyana. That is why Ms. Priya Manickchand, Ms. Bibi Shadick, Mr. Robert Corbin and the late Mr. Winston Murray and I are all products of that programme. We have all graduated from that programme and are lawyers today. That is what Government has done in the education sector to empower our people.

How is it that we are told that this Budget does not have anything for our people? It is a painfully wrong statement. Members of the Opposition will lose credibility among its own constituency when they make those outrages statements because their people are benefitting. Your

constituents are benefitting. Go to Diamond and see the widest cross section of Guyanese living there, comfortably, in a spanking new housing scheme. They are not PPP supporters. Look at the lawyers and doctors who are graduating from the university. They are not PPP supporters; they are Guyanese of all political persuasions. Our programmes are all embracing and universal.

Minister Manickchand spoke at length about what Government is doing for the old people and most vulnerable. Look at the shelters it is establishing throughout this country. Look at the increase it is giving to old age pensioners. Look at how it has expanded the number of people who now qualify for old age pension. Before 1992, one had to qualify one's self by way of a means test. One had to establish that he/she did not have the means of income and then he/she is qualified. Now one qualifies merely by virtue of his/her age because we believe in rewarding persons who have served their country.

Look at our Legal Aid programme. Government recognises that access to justice is a fundamental right. It recognises that it could establish all the courts, but if it does not extend and enable its people in a real way to access that system, then the system cannot effectively serve. What has Government done as a result of that? Prior, there was one legal aid clinic in this country – the Georgetown Legal Aid Clinic. Today we have established legal aid centres in Regions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 10 and we intend to take it to every other region. The poor, working people and the vulnerable of this country are accessing this service. Not the PPP supporters but all the people of this country are accessing this service. That is our vision.

As a result of all of this, we have been able to reduce poverty from 70% in 1992 to somewhere about 26%. These are the intangible achievements that one cannot touch or feel but see in the faces of our people. One sees happy people. One sees progress in every corner of the country. We have, for example, the highest level of foreign reserve ever in the history of this country. We have the collateral to go and negotiate fair loans; not the type of loans that was pushed down the throat of the People's National Congress (PNC) Administration such as the IMF loan. We can now go from a position of financial strength and negotiate fair loans with low interest rate and long terms of repayment. That is what we have done for the people of this country. We have almost completely obliterated a parallel economy which existed when the PNC was in power. There were two economies. Professor Ken Danks wrote a whole thesis on it called the

“underground economy”. As a result of regulatory practices and good and sound prudent financial management, we now can fairly say that we have an accurate economy.

I have heard a lot of commentaries coming from persons pretending to be social economic commentators, criticising the Minister’s figures presented in Budget 2011. I distinctly recall one commentator saying that the Minister is exaggerating the figures of growth and that the country has not grown in that proportion. I recall that this very commentator, a few years ago, accused this Government of deliberately deflating the figures so that the country can qualify for Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Funding. These are the types of allegations and reckless and deceptive statements that are emanating from these so-called “critics”. Fortunately enough, our people are an intelligent people. They see what is going on around them and I know they will not take those critics seriously.

I now come to the achievements that we have made in the legal sector. I wish to begin by recognising that in this National Assembly alone, for the year 2010, 124 pieces of legislation have been passed - a record. The largest number of legislation ever passed in this National Assembly. If we are going to deal with the legal sector, we must recognise first of all, as I said it is necessary to put the Budget 2011 in perspective, we have to look at what the judiciary and the legal sector were when this Government inherited it. This Government inherited a tattered judiciary. A judiciary that was interfered with, a judiciary that was compromised and a judiciary that was undermined by the PNC Administration, so much so that the party flag was being flown in the Guyana Court of Appeal. This is not propaganda; these are facts. Comrade Africo, these are facts! You can ask your Comrade leader. You are studying law now.

Let me give you a quick explanation as to why Guyana does not have the Privy Council as the final Court of Appeal. After the 1968 elections, the first election that was rigged in this country, a voter by the name of Gladys Petrie filed an elections petition against those elections. Mr. Forbes Burnham, a smart lawyer that he was, knew that if that case would have gone to the Privy Council, he would have been booted out of power. What he did was to whip up a lot of nationalistic sentiments, describing the Privy Council as the last vestige of colonialism. He said that we are a sovereign people and that we should emancipate ourselves fully from the barnacles of colonialism. With that type of banter, he went ahead and got the people’s support and he abolished the Privy Council. He took away from the people of this country, their right to go to an

independent court to challenge any decision in this country. Not only did he take away their right to vote in the 1968 elections and every election thereafter, but he also took away their right to challenge him in a court of independence. What has government done since then? It has restored to this country a third Court of Appeal. It has joined the Caribbean Court of Appeal to give our people another tier to question decisions if they are dissatisfied with the decision of our local courts.

During the tenure of this Government, it has repaired the infrastructure of almost every court in this country. Every Magistrate Court starting from Charity to Supenaam, from Georgetown to Rosignol, from New Amsterdam to Crab Wood Creek, Linden and Lethem, since 1993 to now have been repaired. We are doing a second round of repairs now. We just completed repairs to Suddie, Charity and Leonora. This year about four courts are listed for repairs. They are Black Bush Polder, Georgetown Magistrate Court and about two others will be repaired this year. The High Court will also undergo repairs. These are in relation to the physical infrastructure of the courts.

We have established, for the first time in this country, a Commercial Court. Now, commercial matters are dealt with by a specialised court. Whereas these matters had to take 5-7 years to be determined, they are now being determined in less than one year after trial by the commercial court. That is a remarkable development. We have established a mediation centre, bringing mediation into the Guyanese jurisprudence for the first time. We have also passed, as you know, a Mediation Act to put that mechanism on a legislative setting.

In 2006 Mr. Speaker, as you are aware, we launched the justice improvement programme whereby we have already passed, as I said, 124 pieces of legislation but not at all relative to the justice sector. The important ones Mr. Speaker, as you are aware, are the Paper Committals, Time Limit for Judicial Decision, Plea bargaining, Contempt of Court and Legal Practitioner's Judicial Review. The intention of all these legislation is to deliver to our people a better quality of justice.

Mr. Speaker, you are aware, that the Family Court has already been built and it will become functional in a very short while. I spoke with the consultant who was retained to draft the Family Court rules and he told me that he has completed it and it will be formally handed over to the

Chancellor and, perhaps, the Government. Once that is done the Family Court will become operational. I am speaking about a matter of weeks. I also confirmed this with the Chancellor on Friday last. We will have a Family Court for the first time in Guyana, dealing exclusively with divorces, children issues and matrimonial property.

A Bail Act will be promulgated this year. We know about several criticisms that the judiciary has been getting in respect to the granting of bail. This year, under the Justice Improvement Programme, a Bail Act that will put the granting of bail on surer footing and will encapsulate the relevant principles upon which bail should be granted, will be enacted this year in the National Assembly.

New sentencing guidelines for Magistrates and judges have already been completed and they will be brought to this National Assembly as well. As you know, Sir, new High Court rules have already been completed and they will be promulgated this year. Also, I spoke with the Chancellor yesterday morning and he confirmed that within a matter of weeks, for the first time in the history of this country, there will get a new administrative court that will deal exclusively with judicial review matters.

Opposition Members, when you accuse us of bad governance, malfeasance in public office, corruption, we have passed, perhaps, the most advanced piece of legislation to allow you to challenge our decision. I refer to the Judicial Review Act. That Act will come into force with the High Court Act and with the new Administrative Court. Not only is Government passing a new legislation, but it is passing a new court to allow you to come and scrutinise the activities of this Government and that is what democracy is about.

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

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Hon. Member be given 15 minutes to conclude his presentation.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. Nandlall: This year, under the Justice Improvement Programme, a study of the High Court Registry is going to be undertaken. The purpose of the study is very important. It is to view what is going on in the system, identify the weaknesses with a view of establishing a paperless system

so that the entire filing system in the registry will be done electronically. I do not know whether that will happen year, but that is part of the Justice Improvement Programme and the study towards the initiation of that process will begin shortly.

This year in the National Assembly, the three children Bills will be laid. Also, the Freedom of Information Bill will be laid. Let me report that I have personally perused the Bill from beginning to end and it is a very embracing and encompassing legislation. It is a very modern legislation and it will put us at the most advanced stage of the legislative agenda internationally in terms of freedom of information. Those are the advances that the Government has made.

It is getting very late and I recognise that. It is now 1:00 a.m. I wish to conclude by inviting Members of the Opposition to lend us their hands. We want partnership to develop this country. We recognise you as equal partners. We recognise you as representing a constituency and we ask you to do so and do as effectively and partner with us and support us with respect to the 2011 Budget.

Thank you

[Applause]

Dr. Mahadeo: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I would like to extend congratulations to Ms. Joan Baveghens on becoming the newest Member of the House and also on her maiden speech that she made. I want to wish her well. I would also like to extend congratulations to all our brothers and sisters in this the year that is dedicated to the Peoples of African Descent.

I would like to recommend a book – WANAM – written by a very spiritual person, a modern day saint, which shows the many similarities that we have spiritually, culturally and in our traditions. This book is actually one of the recommended texts at the University of the West Indies. The name is “WANAM: Africa and India, A Spiritual Dialogue.”

As I stand here to make a contribution to the debate for the National Budget 2011, I would like to add my congratulations to those of all my other colleagues to the Minister of Finance for a well-crafted budget and an excellent presentation – a presentation that was simple but, yet full of information. As many Members, one does not have to be an economist to understand the presentation budget. Actually, I had students call to tell me how easy it was to understand. So it

boggles my mind to hear that some of the Members still do not understand all of the good things that are in the Budget.

The year 2010 was one of major successes in Region 6. This I will elaborate on, but I need to say that the Administration has not paved all of the roads, it has not rebuilt all of the bridges, it has not done all that it wanted to do but, it did the best with what funds and resources it had available.

I would like to say, clearly, that for Region 6 there were consultations across the region for the preparation of this Budget. Consultations were done by the Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDCs) and other departments. The Health Ministry alone conducted 25 consultations. Consultations were also done by the Departments of Education, Drainage and Irrigation among others. The residents of the region are involved in the management of the government institutions and are given the opportunity to hold Government officials accountable. All of the Regional Democratic Councils (RDCs) are functioning and they report to the monthly RDC meetings. We also keep our fingers on the pulse of the region. The regional administration had 376 community meetings, led by the regional chairman, that were held for the year. This does not include those held by the department of education and health authority.

We managed to complete all the planned and budgeted work for 2010. This is a synopsis. With Central Government's help, there was the construction of the Port Mourant Market at a cost of 105 million which has facilitated the vendors who sold on the parapets. Street lights have been put up in Berbice. Street lights were only available in towns but now it is in all of the populated areas. This is another first for the government of Guyana. Works have begun on the Black Bush and Canje Roads and this is ongoing. The new Water Treatment Plant at Skeldon was also commissioned and now provides treated water to approximately 20,000 in that part of Region 6. There is no discrimination as to who gets water. Once persons live in the area, they get it equally.

Last year, RDC 6 spent \$298 million on capital works alone in the Region. The industrial site at Belvedere is taking shape and, at least, 16 plots are already available for construction to take place. In fact, we already have 20 applications at the RDC for these plots and the RDC is working closely with the Ministry of Tourism to allocate these plots to the businesses. This is

expected to happen before June 2011. In Region 6, we have Belvedere fast becoming an economic hub.

By the second half of the year, there will be more jobs for our people, especially for the people of Berbice. It was mentioned that there is massive unemployment in Region 6 and this I dispute. There have been advertisements for vacancies and some of these vacancies still exist. Maybe the Hon. Member can stay in touch with the RDC and those who complain to him, if anyone did, so that they could go and apply for these jobs. With the advent of the much touted Berbice River Bridge – which is another PPP landmark achievement – a lot of persons are coming from other regions to work in Region 6. There was expenditure on the Fryish Branch road of \$10 million. About 10,000 acres of land have been opened and developed for rice cultivation, and this is in addition to what was there to increase our capacity in the region. So far, 93% of the land is under cultivation in the region and we expect that by the time all of the farmers would have sowed their fields, all of the available rice lands would be cultivated. In addition to this, 35,000 acres are open for cash crop farming.

In the town of New Amsterdam, all of the major outfalls were desilted. Sluices have been rebuilt and the major canal, which is also used a reservoir for water, was desilted once again after it was allowed to clog up. By whom? By the PNCR – IG controlled New Amsterdam Town Council.

In the housing sector, there was a major impact with 12 new housing schemes opening up to give housing to thousands. The Hon. Member, Dr. Austin, spoke of Tucbar and Nursing Housing Schemes that were opened up under the PNC. That is true. The Hon. Member was trying to prove the impossible, however, that pre-1992 was better than now. Over the past several years the following housing schemes were opened under the PPP/C Government, providing thousands of house lots: Glasgow Housing scheme: 952 house lots – most of which are already occupied, Fort Ordinance Housing Scheme: 996 house lots – all occupied, Kilcoy/Chesney area: 568 house lots, Bloomfield: 270 house lots, No. 77 Housing Scheme: 577, No. 76 – Block A – Little India and Block BB – Little Africa: 300 house lots. This does not include Albion, Block 14 and Babu John. Ongoing presently in Anchorville or what is known as the Bangladesh Area, there is a housing scheme now being developed. In addition, settlements such as Topu, Chesney and High Reef are three of 13 squatting areas that were regularized. Thousands of persons received titles – all credit to the Ministry of Housing and PPP/C Government.

1.09 p.m.

In the Manchester/Hogstye area \$27million dollars was spent on the Alness sluice giving that village its own independent drainage. Sixteen million was spent on new regulators to monitor water flow in the area and \$10million of drainage pipes were purchased for the area.

In the Leeds/Number 53 area all roads were paved and a new health post is being constructed. In Bara Cara there was rehabilitation of the Health centre and a brand new boat with a new engine was procured for the use of the, now resident, medex in that community.

Orealla and Siparuta, both Amerindian villages, have new wells and now have electricity. Orealla, for the first time in its history, now offers secondary education in its village! For the first time CSEC exams will be written in Orealla! Credit to the Ministry of Education and the Government of Guyana. Massive revetment works are planned for Orealla this year to alleviate the problems which were raised by the resident of Orealla themselves.

In the Number 47/48 area land was reopened to provide more farming opportunities for the residents and a new sluice will be provide the villages with their own drainage. Presently, there are excavators working in the Nnumber 47/48 area and the Manchester area. In fact Sir, because of the early completion of planned works, additional monies were made available to the Region and the additional works were started in the last quarter of 2010 -some are still ongoing- to the tune of \$177 million. These roads in Crabwood CreekWC, Whim, Fyrish, Lancaster, Lochaber, Port Mourant, Bush Lot Farm, Nurney, In Corriverton – Queenstown, Kingston Cross Rd, Line Path, In Rose Hall Town --- Baycock St, Miller St, Sir David St, Wickham St.

The town of New Amsterdam has been allowed to fall way below previous standards by the PNC/R-1G controlled Town Council. As it stands today, even the garbage cannot be removed and evidence of neglect is visible in the streets. The Regional Democratic Council of Region 6 and PPP/C Government has put up their hands and are making great inputs in the modernizing of this once beautiful town. In the town of New Amsterdam, Sir, streets will be redone. These include: Smythfield, Stanleytown 42, 43, 44, 45, 48, 51,and I can go on will be done by March 31st 2011.

In Angoy's Avenue, in spite of problems created by a small group of persons who call themselves a 'Co-op' supported by PNCR-1G elements, we still managed to do desilting of all the major canals. In addition, some roads were rebuilt and old ones rehabilitated. I want to remind this House that when the government tried to assist the Angoy's Avenue residents a year ago, based on requests the residents made to the President of Guyana, it was deemed "Executive Lawlessness" by the PNC controlled Town Council! In spite of the hindrances created by a few individuals, the PPP/C government is interested in the welfare of all including the people of Angoy's Avenue. In fact, this year a Health Centre will be built in Angoy's Avenue to better serve the people of Angoy's Avenue. That is a caring Government for you! Further,

when the hindrance created by that backed Coop in Angoy's Avenue is removed, 4,000 persons can then receive titles to their land! Am I right Minister Ali?

I must mention here that the Works Committee of the Region has been visiting all works that are done. In fact, the works are first identified by the community. Then the Region's engineers will prepare the necessary plans and bills. This is then advertised publicly, and the tenders are reviewed. The contracts are taken to the individual communities, the works are explained and the bill of quantities is made available to the community members. In this way, the beneficiaries assist the Administration to monitor the works. Representatives from the community have to sign the final certificate before payment is made. This has been recognised as a best practice and has been commended to other Regions.

I must again mention, like I did last year, that inspection is done by the Works Committee that is made up of PPP/C, PNCR-1G and AFC councillors. Again, like last year, I would say that the opposition members need to make their objections and do the work they were elected to do at the Regional level also! They make the final assessments after the community makes its contributions. Democracy is alive and well under the PPP/C.

Another fact that needs to be mentioned is that there were a number of contractors to whom works were awarded. These include Somwaru, Memorex, Associated Construction, A. Ramcharitar, N Niamatally, C Dundas, R Kassim, A Parbhudial, Yunas Civil and Building, Lecc Investments, C Jagdeo, L & R Constructions, A&S General Constructions, N Latchman, DIPCON Engineering Services, H Nauth & Sons etc. So it is clear that works are not given to choice persons or companies. The best tender gets the job and they are monitored!

Like my other colleagues, including the Prime Minister, did I, also, extend an invitation to the Hon members on the opposite side, and any other member, to visit with us when we go in the fields. Be there when the community makes its inputs. Raise your issues in front of the people! Join with us as we visit areas that you consider your support areas because we do works there too! I will now read the full quote made in my last budget presentation and not the mutilated version that was quoted by the Hon Member. I said "It is only those who shut their eyes who will not see and those who close their ears who will not hear. Progress is there for everyone to see and tell others!" Sir, bad news for the opposition – their perceived strongholds now recognise the good work of the Government and will support us! [Mr. John Austin]: Mr. Speaker, I refer to Standing Order 38.4. I would like to know what mutilation I made of the Hon. Member's speech.]

Mr. Speaker: What does the Standing Order say? The Standing Order does not support what you are asking Hon. Member. It is a bit late in the morning for...your brain is not functioning too well.

Mr. Austin: Sir, this represents a misrepresentation of what I said. I would like to know what mutilation he is talking about.

Mr. Speaker: Proceed Hon. Member. I cannot deal with your matter, Dr. Austin.

Dr. Mahadeo: Thank you, Sir. In 2011, the sum of \$1.7 billion has been budgeted this year for the completion of 34.5 kilometres of all weather roads in the Black Bush Polder area and, also, 19 kilometres of roads in the East and West Canje areas to promote permanent accessibility, improve road safety and reduce transportation costs in this key agricultural zone.

Together with our eastern neighbour, Government has identified technical teams and completed first round discussions regarding the bridging of the physical divide at the Suriname border which would also see the strengthening of those relations.

Sir in Education, I want to clear another inaccuracy in Hon Member Austin's presentation - Mr. Nashrullah Khan is not a female and he was the Education Officer before the present one. He was promoted to Principal Education Officer, Georgetown and retired with all his benefits.

In 2010, the Region's CSEC results Grades 1 – 3 improved by 12 % since there 2008. The indicators of the recently concluded Literacy Assessment in Grades 1 and 2 reveals 60 -65% performance, eighty six percentage of the pupils who wrote the National Grade Six Assessment were placed in discreet Secondary schools. Fifty percentage of the Primary schools have sustained Child Friendly classrooms while 70% at the Nursery schools have improved their Child Friendly classrooms. Parent Teacher's Association (PTA's) are playing an active role in the newly introduced Grade Level Parent Conference programme. The enrollment indicators at the Secondary level have shown the attainment of Universal Access to Secondary Education due to the Six Year Transition Programme and the Secondary Schools Competency Programme. Sixteen successful truancy campaigns accosted 520 learners. Forty-six of these were dropouts who are now re-integrated in the school system. Twenty parents were placed before the court and their children are now back in school. Heavy emphasis has been placed on training of teachers at all levels in content and methodology. The 18 month Continuous Professional Development in Literacy has resulted in the graduation of the second batch of Literacy Professional Educators in the Region. The School Feeding programme has resulted in positive school-parent relationship and improved attendance in some areas.

The Hon Minister of Culture ,Youth and Sports spoke eloquently of our achievements in that area. But I must mention the over two thousand (2,000) persons would have use the Smythfield Drop In Centre in 2010, in recreational activities, education, health etc. for health outreach clinics, Blood Drive, National Week of Testing and World Aids Day Activities.The Ministry of Home Affairs ran the Citizen Security Programme. The Guyana/Japan Karate Association held karate Classes etc. This year, 9000 persons are targeted for physical activities workshops, for the citizen patriotism programme, 4000 persons are targeted and 1000 persons will be targeted in the Parenting Skills/ Family workshop.

In the area of Health Care, for last year we were all saddened by three maternal deaths in our institutions. I want to state, however, that each case was investigated and analysed. Measures

have been put in place to ensure, as far as possible, that there will be no avoidable deaths – not only for the Maternity Unit but for all cases.

Having said that, I must say that the the Berbice Regional Health Authority (BRHA) have a number of achievements that I can boast about; some of them are actually ground-breaking for Guyana! Some of these have been our own brainchild whilst others have been imported. Here, I must acknowledge the full and unconditional support we received from the Ministry of Health.

The third Services Agreement was in effect and we reported to the Ministry of Health (MoH) against same. We were under the continued guidance of the National Health Sector Strategy 2008-2012 and the BRHA's second 'Three Years Business Plan'.

I will briefly mention some of these areas

Training

We have started the First Ever Psychiatric Patient Care Assistant Programme in Guyana and in the Caribbean! In three months these persons, well trained, will be assisting in management of patients in the wards and chalets of the NPH. The once neglected NPH, under the PNC, has, under the PPP/C ,been getting the kind of attention starting with the then Hon Gail Texiera in 1992 through to the present Ministers Hon Dr Ramsammy and Dr Ramsarran – the attention, that will once again make it a premier institution. Of course, we are not where we want to be as yet but step by step we are getting there.

The Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner Programme has commenced last Monday. It is the first of its kind in Guyana and it is being done in collaboration with Dalhousie University. What is more unique about this training is that it is being done mainly online, Sir.

I, also, hasten to add that the Hon Minister Dr Westford, had authorised the employment of orderlies to assist in the wards and chalets of the NPH Thank you, Hon Minister.

The Pharmacy Assistant Programme in Berbice concluded last month and the students are awaiting results.

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)

On the subject of HIV, I must point out that we have set a target of 12000- to do what? We surpassed it through hard work and dedication. I must point out that we managed to do tests for over 10% of our population in all areas – riverain, hinterland, villages and towns and on the coast during the week of testing! For a true representative picture of the HIV infection rate, we have done the real sample. We started offering HIV as a package of services four years ago in Orealla. It was successful and it is now being used across the country. We started using mobile units and it is another success story!

Blood Collection

A target of 800 units was set for 2010 in our Services Agreement. We actually collected and sent to the National Blood Transfusion Service (NBTS) 862 units! In this collection, the village of Orealla which became the first Amerindian Riverain Community to organize and run a Blood Drive – collected 42 units and it will continue next month! I must mention our partners in these blood drives – Churches, Mandirs and Masjids, Health Centres, NGOs. Due to their efforts and those of the BRHA staff, of the 862 units collected 88% were from voluntary donors. The highest percentage in the country

I must mention here, the successful call in programme we had, sponsored by Little Rock Television Station, where people called in to make pledges to donate blood. A telethon for Blood Donation! Did you hear of that anywhere else? It was also a first for Guyana and I am sure the Caribbean!

Our Extended Home Based Care Programme was mentioned in the Hon. Minister of Finance's speech and it has been a real success story. It is a programme that started out to bridge the gap between the hospitals and bedridden patients and taking care to those persons. We have extended the programme to include all persons over 75 years old who would want to be on our register. This programme offers monthly/quarterly medical service to the various communities. We have patients and clients in all the communities across the Region. The visiting team includes doctor, dentist, CHW (please clarify), clinic Ns(please clarify). Currently medical evaluation, blood pressure testing, glucose testing and even electrocardiogram (ECG) testing can be done at the residences of these persons. Medications are dispensed and referrals are made to the Physiotherapy dept. when necessary. Samples are taken out where necessary for laboratory work. Our Regional database has over 600 persons and treatment and long term plan for more than 351 patients. With regards to physiotherapy, 111 patients are now receiving this service at home.

Mentally ill outpatients have started getting home visits as the programme is expanded! Thanks to our team of doctors – most of whom are the young doctors Hon Members Dr Westford and Dr Ramsarran spoke about. They are Drs Thakoordeen, Khirodhar, LaRose, Karran, Ally, Nourang, Ritch, Barran, Balkarran etc., the staff at the Dental Dept and the Rehab staff. To make visits easier, we now have a mobile dental clinic- on a Bus, so even more dental care can now be provided no only to our Home based Care patients but to others as well.

Sir, in addition to the home Based Care Programme, there were outreaches by medical teams to hinterland and riverain communities. Regular outreaches were held to Orealla which now has a Solar powered refridgerator for vaccines, Siparuta and Bara Cara. Fortnightly outreaches to Yakusari were done by the doctor and team from Mibicuri hospital. Monthly outreaches continued to Mara/Scepmod and Brothers and the EBB and Sandvoort. We had outreach to Topoo. These do not include special outreaches done in cases of flooding and outreaches done in partnership with other organisations.

We had a march for Health from Crab Wood Creek to New Amsterdam, including Canje from Gangaram. This was done over the weekends and it took eight Saturdays, Sir. It was very successful. We held 24 meetings, where health issues were discussed and questions from the population were answered. Over 855 persons participated in the actual march but, more importantly, we did vaccinations during the march. Total number of vaccines administered were 3946 including Yellow Fever, Diphtheria, MMR, H1N1, and Hep B.

The MCH Department did an excellent job. We now have doctors assigned to visit all our Health Centres and Health Posts on a scheduled basis. Our vaccination coverage is in the very high nineties after the complete tallying is done. Example of the coverage MMR at 3 years 9 month was 97%, OPV and Pentavalent was 99%, BCG was 99%. Congratulations to the MCH department.

Sir, I am disappointed that the Hon Member, John Austin, shows disrespect to our hard working staff of the PHD when he disputed the fact that the BRHA MCH department received the prize for the 'Best Maternal and Child health department in the country in 2009' Here is the proof sir. It is in Guyana Chronicle of 11th February 2010- a picture of the SHV and two public health nurses, who the Hon Member might recognise, holding the trophy after it was presented to them at the annual National EPI meeting.

I really do not want to go back to 1992... [**Dr. Austin:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to have a copy of that document.] Sir, the copy would be made available and it is also accessible on our website [www. Rha6.gov.gy](http://www.Rha6.gov.gy)... I really did not want to go back to 1992 since we are now comparing to our own years in Government but I must respond to the Hon Member, Dr John Austin, who I happened to work with in the same New Amsterdam Hospital in the early nineties. I agree that sometimes we do have shortages of specific medications and some of our equipment might not work for a day or two. But, Sir, never like in those days. I am sure the Hon Member can remember reusing gloves for surgery, reusing needles and syringes, a laboratory that did one test Hb, patients having prescriptions of several drugs and most times none were available. That was the norm. Nowadays, if a drug is not available in our pharmacy, the shortage is either temporary or the drug is not on our essential drugs list! Now we have biomedical engineers on contract to as quickly as possible repair equipment and to more importantly do routine maintenance. Comparing pre-1992 to now is like, as one member said before, comparing chalk to cheese.

In our endeavour to be more accountable to the People we serve, we had 16 Face the Community Meetings. At these meetings, held at different Health Institutions including health posts, health centres and hospitals, the staff reported on the work they did for the previous year to the community. They also inform the community of the plans for the next year and specify targets so that this year they will again be held accountable for these set targets. In addition to this, five Patient Satisfaction Surveys were carried out at the different Hospitals and Health Centres.

I, again, invite anyone who is interested to check our website at www.rha6.gov.gy where they will see some of the works the BRHA has been doing. You will find news of the Board of Directors, meetings, Face the community meetings, CEO's Reports, events, programmes, report on our Annual Award Ceremony to recognise workers etc.

2010 was a year in which we had some setbacks which we must acknowledge. Some of these have been mentioned, previously, and they have been given a great deal of publicity, including in Region 6, the issues with the Skeldon Sugar Factory and the maternal deaths.

The Budget that has been presented...**[Interjection]** I have been speaking on it all of the time comparing what we did last year and including what we are going to do this year. You needed to listen and not make noise.

Mr Speaker, in closing, I must say that the impression one gets from the presentations of the Opposition is that the Hon Minister of Finance and by extension the PPP/C government is *damned if they do, damned if they don't!* However, this year the elections results will show the true analysis and results of our budgets over the years of 'largest budget ever' and Dr. Ashni Kumar Singh and the PPP/C government will be vindicated when we return to the house with a larger majority showing that the Guyanese people believe in and want the PPP/C, that is, they want peace, progress and prosperity to continue.

Thank you.

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, I move that the House be adjourned until Monday 31st January at 2 o'clock.

Assembling adjourned accordingly.