

THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

[VOLUME 1]

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE FIRST SESSION OF THE
FIRST LEGISLATURE CONSTITUTED UNDER THE
BRITISH GUIANA (CONSTITUTION)
ORDER IN COUNCIL, 1961

13th Sitting

Wednesday, 7th February, 1962

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

[Visit of H.R.H. the Duke of Edinburgh]

The Assembly met at 3.52 p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

Present:

His Honour the Speaker, Mr. R. B. Gajraj.

Members of the Government
People's Progressive Party
Ministers

Dr. the Honourable C. B. Jagan	—Premier and Minister of Development and Planning (Member for Corentyne — East)
The Honourable B. H. Benn	—Minister of Natural Resources (Member for Demerara Coast—West)
The Honourable Ram Karran	—Minister of Works and Hydraulics (Member for Mahaica)
The Honourable B. S. Rai	—Minister of Home Affairs (Member for Demerara Coast—East)
The Honourable R. Chandisingh	—Minister of Labour, Health and Housing (Member for Lower Demerara River)

Dr. the Honourable Charles Jacob, Jr. —*Minister of Finance (Member for Vreed-en-Hoop)*

Dr. the Honourable F. H. W. Ramsahoye—*Attorney-General (Member for Canals Polder)*

The Honourable E. M. G. Wilson —*Minister of Communications (Member for Boerasirie)*

Parliamentary Secretaries

Mr. G. Bowman —*Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Natural Resources (Member for Corentyne Central)*

Mr. L. E. M. Mann —*Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Works and Hydraulics (Member for Mahaicony)*

Other Members

Mr. S. M. Saffee —*(Member for Berbice—West)*

Mr. G. L. Robertson —*(Member for Leonora)*

Mr. J. B. Caldeira —*(Member for Pomeroun)*

Mr. V. Downer —*(Member for Berbice—East)*

Mr. M. Hamid —*(Member for Demerara—Central)*

Mr. D. C. Jagan —*(Member for Suddie)*

Mr. H. Lall —*(Member for Corentyne—West)*

Mr. M. Shakoor —*(Member for Corentyne River)*

Members Constituting the Minority

(i) People's National Congress

Mr. W. O. R. Kendall, Deputy Speaker—*(Member for New Amsterdam)*

Mr. J. Carter —*(Member for Werk-en-Rusi)*

Mr. E. F. Correia —*(Member for Mazaruni-Potaro)*

Mr. N. J. Bissember —*(Member for Campbellville)*

Mr. W. A. Blair —*(Member for Berbice River)*

Mr. J. G. Joaquim —*(Member for Kitty)*

Mr. R. J. Jordan —*(Member for Upper Demerara River)*

Mr. H. M. S. Wharton —*(Member for Abary)*

(ii) United Force

Mr. P. d'Aguiar —*(Member for Georgetown—Central)*

Mr. S. Campbell —*(Member for North West)*

Mr. R. E. Cheeks —*(Member for Georgetown—North)*

Mr. E. E. Melville —*(Member for Rupununi).*

Mr. I. Crum Ewing—Clerk of the Legislature

Mr. E. V. Viapree—Assistant Clerk of the Legislature.

ABSENT:

Mr. L. F. S. Burnham, Q.C.—(Member for Ruimveldt)—on leave

Mr. R. S. S. Hugh—(Member for Georgetown—South)—on leave

Mr. C. A. Merriman—(Member for La Penitence-Lodge)—on leave

Mr. M. Bhagwan—(Member for Essequibo Islands)—on leave.

SENATORS INVITED TO ASSEMBLY CHAMBER

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Clerk, it is my understanding that, pursuant to the invitation of the Legislative Assembly, there are assembled, without, His Honour the Vice-President of the Senate attended by his Senators. Please be so good as to convey our compliments to His Honour and arrange for him and the Senators to cross the bar of the House, enter in procession and take their respective seats of honour.

His Honour the Vice-President then entered the Chamber, bowed to His Honour the Speaker and took his seat on the left of the Throne; while the following Senators took their respective seats at the Table, after bowing to the Chair:

Senator the Honourable H. J. M. Hubbard—Minister of Trade and Industry.

Senator C. V. Christian

Senator M. Khan

Senator C. S. Persaud

Senator Christina Ramjattan

Senator H. Thomas

Senator Anne Jardim

Senator A. G. Tasker, O.B.E.

ABSENT

His Honour the President, Senator Ashton Chase—on leave.

Senator the Honourable C. V. Nunes — Minister of Education and Social Development—on leave.

SPEAKER WELCOMES SENATORS

Mr. Speaker: Your Honour, Mr. Vice-President of the Senate, it is my pleasure, on behalf of the Members of the Legislative Assembly, to accord to yourself and your Senators a very warm welcome on this important and royal occasion.

The Vice-President: (Senator C. V. Too-Chung): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

BRIEF SUSPENSION

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, as in the course of this ceremony it will be necessary for me to leave the Chamber on two occasions, it is necessary that you should be acquainted with the reason for this procedure.

In a short while I will suspend the sitting of the House for the first time in order to enable me and welcome party to go to the entrance of the building in order to receive His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh and his party. Upon our return to the House, the Assembly will automatically resume, and after His Royal Highness shall have replied to the Royal Address and will have indicated his desire to leave the House, the Assembly will again be automatically suspended; and when I return, it will be for the purpose of adjourning the House to a date which I will announce later.

Sitting suspended at 4.00 p.m.

On resumption at 4.16 p.m. —

LOYAL ADDRESS

His Royal Highness, preceded by His Honour the Vice-President of the Senate, His Honour the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, the Governor's Private Secretary, Major C. J. Bettencourt-Gomes (the Extra Equerry) and His Excellency the Governor, entered the Chamber.

His Royal Highness and His Excellency the Governor then bowed to Members of the Legislature and their guests, who returned the bow, after which all took their seats.

The Clerk then advanced to the dais with the Loyal Address which the Speaker read as follows:—

“May It Please Your Royal Highness:

On behalf of the Legislature and the people of British Guiana, it is my privilege and honour to welcome Your Royal Highness most warmly and affectionately in our midst, and to express our great happiness at Your Royal Highness's visit to us at this time.

The people of our country have always maintained a warm and devoted attachment to the Throne, and in particular we cherish an enduring loyalty to Her Gracious Majesty the Queen. Your Royal Highness's acceptance of our invitation to visit us before beginning your tour of other South American countries is yet another manifestation of the strong and abiding interest which The Royal Family have shown, and we recall with pride the visits paid this country within recent years by Her Royal Highness The Princess Margaret, Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal and Her Royal Highness The Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone.

We would have wished, and indeed it would have given us considerable joy and happiness, if it had been possible for Her Majesty to come on this Royal Visit; but we are not dismayed for, with the shrinking of distances by the development of speedier means of travel, we look forward to the pleasure and honour of welcoming Her Majesty in this English-speaking South American country in the not too distant future.

We are pleased to welcome Your Royal Highness so shortly after your visit to Africa in connection with the Independence celebrations in Tanganyika. We trust that by Her Majesty's Gracious Command it may be possible for British Guiana to be similarly honoured when we too celebrate our own Independence.

The Guianese people respect the fine traditions of many British Institutions and admire the fine qualities of the British people which have been handed down in the course of many struggles to obtain and maintain their freedoms. We cherish these same freedoms and are similarly determined to protect and preserve them.

We are conscious of the exacting nature of the duties of the tour which lie ahead, and would sincerely wish that

health and strength remain with you in abundant measure, not only for your immediate tasks, but throughout your life, which we trust will be long, fruitful and happy.

And finally Your Royal Highness, we express the hope that, short though your stay with us perforce will be, you will enjoy every moment of it, and carry back to Her Majesty The Queen good tidings of our country and our people. We are confident that your visit will strengthen the ties of friendship between our peoples." [*Applause.*]

4.16 p.m.

The Speaker next advanced to the front of the dais and presented the Loyal Address to His Royal Highness.

H.R.H.'s REPLY

His Royal Highness: Mr. Speaker, your welcome to me today on behalf of the Members of the Legislative Assembly, coupled with the very generous welcome of so many citizens, has touched me deeply. I know that your expressions of loyalty will give The Queen much pleasure. Before leaving London yesterday, The Queen asked me particularly to convey her best wishes to you and to all the people of British Guiana, and to bring you this personal message:—

"It gives me great pleasure that my husband is today among my peoples in British Guiana, of whom I have heard so much from other members of my family who have visited you.

I am well aware of the new and heavy responsibilities which have fallen to the Government and Legislature of British Guiana under its new constitution.

Now your representatives are looking forward to participating in a further conference to consider the arrangements for attaining the ultimate goal of independence, and I send my sincere good wishes to you all for the future."

No one with any knowledge of this country can doubt that you have rather more than a fair share of problems and difficulties. This can only be overcome

by a patient and continuing struggle. I can assure you that in this struggle you have the support and encouragement of the Government and people of Britain. We are just as anxious as you are that British Guiana should be independent; after all, Britain has helped most of her former possessions to prosperous independence, and I see no reason why this should stop at British Guiana.

But we are also anxious that you should start off with a worthy and indigenous civil and legal administration as well as a reasonably prosperous economy [*Applause.*] Most of these things are about to be achieved, and you have our sincere best wishes for an independent future.

Mr. Speaker, I am looking forward eagerly to my few days in British Guiana. With the generous help of the United States Air Force, engaged here on peaceful scientific work, I hope to see something of the country and a bit of its industry and agriculture. In particular I am looking forward to meeting many of your people from the powerful and important—that means all of you here—to the young and less powerful but equally important.

I know that we live in the age of materialism, but even so it is the people who make a country, whatever other natural resources it may or may not possess. It is the people who control their environment, not the other way about; that is if any progress is to take place.

As you know, this is the start of a two months' journey to most of your neighbouring South American countries.

I cannot stay anywhere as long as I would like, but it is a particular pleasure for me to begin this journey here in the only British country among them. [*Applause.*]

Therefore to all the people of British Guiana I send my best wishes and encouragement for the years ahead. Some may think that you must expect a tough future, but it's certainly no worse than for millions of your fellowmen. With enlightened leadership, co-operation and the inevitable hard work you can look forward to a continued development of a happy, prosperous and civilized country. [*Applause.*]

4.20 p.m.

On resumption —

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Speaker : Your Honour, Mr. Vice-President, it is my pleasure, on behalf of the Legislative Assembly, to thank you and your fellow-Senators for having come to this function on our invitation to enrich these proceedings with your presence and to give added lustre to the programme. I thank you very much.

[The Senators bowed to the Chair and withdrew from the Chamber.]

Honourable Members, the business of this sitting having been concluded, I now declare this Legislative Assembly duly adjourned until Friday, 9th February, 1962, at 2 p.m.

The Assembly adjourned accordingly at 4.30 p.m.