

THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
OFFICIAL REPORT
[VOLUME 5]

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

16th Sitting

2.00 p.m.

Monday, 12th July, 1971

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Speaker

His Honour the Speaker, Mr. Sase Narain, J.P.

Members of the Government

People's National Congress

Elected Ministers

The Hon. L.F.S. Burnham, S.C.,
Prime Minister

(Absent)

Dr. the Hon. P.A. Reid,
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture

The Hon. M. Kasim, A.A.,
Minister of Communications

The Hon. H.D. Hoyte, S.C.,
Minister of Finance

The Hon. W.G. Carrington,
Minister of Labour and Social Security (Absent)

The Hon. Miss S.M. Field-Ridley,
Minister of Education

The Hon. B. Ramsaroop,
Minister of Housing and Reconstruction (Leader of the House)

The Hon. D.A. Singh,
Minister of Housing and Reconstruction

The Hon. O.E. Clarke,
Minister of Home Affairs

The Hon. C.V. Mingo,
Minister of Local Government

Appointed Ministers

The Hon. S.S. Ramphal, S.C.,
Attorney-General and Minister of State (Absent)

The Hon. H Green,
Minister of Works, Hydraulics and Supply (Absent)

The Hon. H.O. Jack,
Minister of Mines and Forests (Absent)

Parliamentary Secretaries

Mr. J.G. Joaquin, J.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Finance (Absent)

Mr. P. Duncan, J.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture

Mr. W. Haynes,
Parliamentary Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister (Absent)

Mr. A. Salim,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture (Absent)

Mr. J.R. Thomas,
Parliamentary Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister

Mr. C.E. Wrights, J.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary, Minister of Works, Hydraulics and Supply

Other Members

Mr. J.N. Aaron

Miss M.M. Ackman, Government Whip

Mr. K. Bancroft

(Absent)

Mr. N.J. Bissember

Mr. J. Budhoo, J.P.

Mr. L.I. Chan-A-Sue

Mr. E.F. Correia

Mr. M. Corrica

Mr. E.H.A. Fowler

Mr. R.J. Jordon

Mr. S.M. Saffee

Mr. R.C. Van Sluytman

Mr. M. Zaheeruddeen, J.P.

(Absent – on leave)

Mrs. L.E. Willems

Members of the Opposition

People's Progressive Party

Dr. C.B. Jagan,

Leader of the Opposition

Mr. Ram Karran

Mr. R. Chandisingh

Dr. F.H.W. Ramsahoye, S.C.

Mr. D.C. Jagan, J.P., Deputy Speaker

Mr. E.M.G. Wilson

Mr. A.M. Hamid, J.P. Opposition Whip

Mr. G.H. Lall, J.P.

Mr. M.Y. Ally

Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud, J.P.

Mr. E.M. Stoby, J.P.

(Absent)

Mr. R. Ally

Mr. E.L. Ambrose

Mrs. L.M. Branco

Mr. Balchand Persaud

Mr. Bholu Persaud

Mr. I.R. Remington, J.P.

Mrs. R.P. Sahoye

(Absent – on leave)

Mr. V. Teekah

United Force

Mrs. E. DaSilva

Mr. M.F. Singh

Mr. J.A. Sutton

Independent

Mr. R.E. Cheeks

OFFICERS

Clerk of the National Assembly – Mr. F.A. Narain

Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly – Mr. M.B. Henry

The National Assembly met at 2 p.m.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair.]

Prayers

INTRODUCTION OF BILL – FIRST READING

The following Bill was introduced and read the First time.

Private Hospitals Bill. [**The Minister of Health.**]

PUBLIC BUSINESS**MOTION****CUSTOMS DUTIES (AMENDMENT) ORDER**

“Be it resolved that this National Assembly, in terms of section 9 of the Customs Ordinance, Chapter 309, confirm the Customs Duties (Amendment) Order, 1971 (No. 35), which was made on the 23rd of June, 1971, and published in the Gazette on the 26th of June, 1971.” [**The Minister of Finance.**]

The Minister of Finance (Mr. Hoyte): Your Honour, on 9th June, Customs (Amendment) Order (No. 35), 1971, was laid in this House. The purpose of that Order was to reduce the import duty on certain categories of imports, namely, motor cars, motor cycles, and their component parts where those goods are used exclusively for racing purposes. Prior to the promulgation of this Order, the Guyana Motor Racing Club used to make application to the Minister for remission of duty on racing cars, racing cycles and component parts which came into the country. In order to encourage the sport, those remissions were granted to the extent that the items came into the country at the same rate of duty as sporting goods.

Undoubtedly, motor racing has become a major sporting event in this country and is probably one of the greatest spectator attractions in the country today. The Government wishes to help the stimulates the sport and, to that end, it has been considered expedient to grant a request made by the Guyana Motor Racing Club to have motor cars, motor cycles and component parts which are to be used specifically for racing purposes admitted into the country

at a reduced tariff. The old rates vary between 70 per cent and 30 per cent preferential and 90 per cent and 50 per cent general. It is proposed in this Order that the duties should be reduced to 20 per cent preferential tariff and 40 per cent general tariff.

For the reasons given I will commend this Order for ratification by this honorable House.

Question proposed.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran.

Mr. Ram Karran: Sir, no one except a spoil sport would wish to oppose this measure especially at this time when our country lacks so many amenities one is more or less gratified to see that the Government is doing something for sport even though this category, this type of sport attracts only a very limited number of people. [*Interruption.*] As I said no one would wish to oppose it but certainly one would wish to examine the whole picture especially when it comes to the lack of other amenities. Timehri, bomb disposal area, had been converted a long time ago into a sport of makeshift racing track, but certainly with the interest that has been created over the years and the hon. Minister seems to support this view, the attendance is much greater, certainly there is a need for permanent facilities for this.

But I do not wish to continue on that but to point to the lack of amenities and to the dangers that prevail particularly on the East Bank road on the days when sporting events or practising goes on at Timehri. The hon. Minister or his colleague responsible for traffic cannot deny that a very large number of near accidents occur on the East Bank road. In proposing this Amendment to the Customs Ordinance the hon. Minister or his Government must pay attention to what is happening as a result of the increasing attraction at Timehri on these days.

That is why I ask the Government, even though the hon. Minister does not seem to understand, that something ought to be done to make sure that facilities are increased and the hazards that take place on the road are reduced.

While on that, the newspapers over the last couple of weeks have been highlighting the number of people killed on the roads and this is ancillary to the idea of speed, racing, and all that goes on at Timehri. Even the little boys who have not yet learned to drive are thinking of going at past the speed of sound. The appropriate Ministry ought to do something to reduce these hazards that are created because of a lack of amenities and opportunities in the country generally. Healthy sports are not encouraged generally by the Government, and that is where the attention of the young people should be directed, so that more of them will come off the roads when they do not need to be on the roads, thus saving the precious assets, the young people, who day after day are killing themselves as a result of the negative policy of the Guyana Government.

Mr. R.D. Persaud: I wish to make a very brief contribution in relation to this Order which the hon. Minister of Finance has brought before the House for approval. We, on this side of the House, are sometimes wondering what yardsticks the Government normally uses to decide its list of priorities. We are not opposed to the sporting community, but we have to take into account that the Minister of Finance has within his power the right to extend similar facilities to areas that would bring greater benefit to the country economically and otherwise.

I would suggest very strongly to the Minister that the time is more than ripe when it must given consideration to a reduction in duty, or allow the entry of agricultural machinery, into the country duty free, because agricultural machinery, if imported duty free or imported on less taxation, would act as an impetus and inspire the farmers to till harder than they have been doing. Even the Bank of Guyana Report spoke of the decline in agriculture, and not only the Bank of Guyana but also other sources.

The time has come when the Government must stop being arrogant, whether the Government as a whole or any Minister, and it must stop doing acts, or willfully refusing to show consideration for a large section of our community that is involved in agricultural production. The time has come for the Government to grant duty-free concessions, as a start, for gasoline, and to move further to extend greater concessions to the agricultural community by giving them concessions so far as agricultural machinery is concerned.

I make bold to say that this point, too, that the time has come when agricultural machinery parts should be allowed to enter the country free of duty because they are pretty expensive and the hon. Minister knows this. If he is in contact with the various firms or the farmers who have to go and purchase parts for agricultural machinery, he would hear them crying out about the exorbitant prices. At Mahaica and Mahaicony, two areas which we have visited, we saw people's agricultural machinery under the flood water. One can assume from now, that within another few months, before those farmers put that machinery into action, they will have to purchase new parts. And so, here again, farmers without their crops, without any help from the Government, will have to find money not only to clear their debts but also to buy parts for their machinery and in some cases to purchase new machinery.

There was an announcement by the Government that it will call upon people to give old clothing. The question so far as the agricultural community is concerned is not a question of the Red Cross collecting a few old shirts and dresses and taking them down to Mahaica and Mahiacony or Cane Grove. What they need is financial help so that they can do something positive to improve their crops.

Mr. Speaker: This is not a matter under discussion.

Mr. R.D. Persaud: I bow to your ruling, Mr. Speaker. I merely made that point to show what type of help the agricultural community needs. I urge the hon. Minister, in the same way as he has bowed to the wishes of the sporting community, to bow to the months and months of appeals from the agricultural community for a reduction in the duty, for duty-free concessions for gasoline, machinery and parts, so that agricultural production can rise. It is in a bad state, it is scandalous, and the Government is helping by all its actions, to depress the agricultural community even further.

The Leader of the Opposition (Dr. Jagan): I should like to support this measure but in doing so, like my colleague, the last speaker, to draw to the attention of the Government another category of people who need the sympathetic consideration of the Government. I refer to the many people who live in the interior and who have to travel by outboard motors. As you know, sir, many cannot afford outboard motors. They have to paddle long distances, not only for the

purposes of agriculture, to transport their crops, and to go to and fro to their work, but also for school children to move from their places of residence to the school, which sometimes may be quite a few miles away.

Recently, in the Waini, I was talking to a Captain who told me he had to paddle over 20 miles, I think it is much further than that, from the Waini all the way to Morawhanna to see the District Commissioner, and paddle back.

2.30 p.m.

I recall so far as school children are concerned, one person concerned with education was saying in a Report that it is a wonder children go to school at all in view of the difficulties which they have to undergo in order to reach the school place. In view of this I suggest that the Government should give sympathetic consideration to the removal of duty on outboard engines and on parts.

I was told by my colleague who is not here today, the hon. Member Mr. Stoby, that a 6 horsepower outboard engine has been increased in price by nearly 100 per cent in the last four or five years from \$300 to \$600. We know that on the Coast we have roads; these are passable. But in the interior, in many cases there are no roads at all, water transportation becomes the road of the people in the Interior. Therefore this category of people who have to earn their livelihood and whose children have to go long distances to school must be given the same kind of sympathetic consideration which is now being given to those who are now considered for the purposes of sport.

As I said, we have no objection to this category being given a lower rate of duty for the purpose of encouraging motor racing. But surely the Government cannot say that if those who are in the category of sport are to be given duty concessions, those who have to earn a livelihood, who have to send their children to school in the Interior, do not deserve the same kind of consideration. I therefore ask the hon. Minister to keep this in mind and come forward to this House before too long with a similar proposal for the remission of duties altogether and if the

Government feels that it would be making too much of a concession, for a reduction in duties for those who use outboard engines and parts for those outboard engines.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member Mr. Singh.

Mr. M.F. Singh: Mr. Speaker, I should like to heartily congratulate the Government on making this Order which is the subject of the Motion before the at the present time. No one can gainsay the fact that motor racing in this country has made tremendous rapid progress within recent times. I think the Guyana Motor Racing Club should be complimented on having done a tremendous job, a really laudable job, in promoting this sport along international lines. That they have succeeded in urging the Government to bring this measure before the House is commendable. Of course, we are aware of the fact that the hon. Prime Minister is the patron of the Guyana Motor Racing Club. Nevertheless they are deserving of this consideration. They have done a wonderful job with a little help albeit in completely resurfacing the circuit so that those of us who are young with the blood running hot in our veins will have somewhere to go and let out some of that steam instead of along the roads of the country to the detriment of our children and other people.

Mr. Speaker, motor racing in Guyana is certainly putting Guyana on the map and perhaps directly or indirectly contributing to tourism and the valuable outside money being brought into the country. Again, I should like to commend the Government on what it has done today.

But I should like to endorse the suggestion put forward by the hon. Leader of the Opposition that outboard motors and parts for use in the Interior should be given the same kind of consideration. In fact, I will go further and say that they should be allowed into the country free of any duty whatsoever. It may be that these people do not have the Prime Minister as their patron but certainly they are inhabitants of this country. They are the forgotten people of the country and they deserve some consideration. Since the Government is putting so much accent on Interior Development surely it is not unreasonable to make a request; it has been suffering and forgotten in the past. I would certainly urge the Government again, I repeat, to remove entirely the duty of outboard motors and parts for the Interior areas of this country.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member Mr. Cheeks.

Mr. Cheeks: Mr. Speaker, I have three brief points to make on this Order. The first is that it is not unusual that when concessions of this sort are granted abuse is made of them and fictitious arrangements are made so that people whom they are not intended to benefit, benefit from them. Not too long ago we had a case which was decided in our courts; and although this measure may be laudable, I think it can open the floodgates of corruption.

I should like to know what provision the Customs Department has for checking on these transactions. Although those of us who are in favour of the development of sport are not against the introduction of such a measure, every provision must be made that there should be no corruption and that no fictitious deals will be allowed to pass through.

The second point is we all know the value of sport in developing the youth of our nation. The Government is interested in sport. I think that the Government in the interest of the small man and of the children of the smaller man should consider allowing all sports gears used in the various schools and the various sports organisations to come into the country duty free. The health of the nation is at stake. It is already being eroded by the high cost of living, and if our young boys and girls can go out into these fields referred to as the lungs of the city, those in the environs of the city, those in the country side, and the Interior, and if the sports gears are allowed in free of duty, that Government would be doing something very good and making a tremendous contribution to the development of the health of the youth.

2.40 p.m.

There is one other point I would make and it strikes a bit of a discordant note because it is apparent to me that the people whom Government has in mind to benefit from the measure – even though motor racing would improve the potential for tourism and then to put Guyana on the map – can afford to do without it. It is quite evident that motor racing is progressing. A great deal has been done, and will be done in the future with or without this concession. I wonder whether it is really fair to give people who can afford to pay this concession when others who cannot afford have not got it.

12.7.71

National Assembly

2.40 p.m. – 2.44 p.m.

Mr. Hoyte (replying): Your Honour, there is really nothing to reply to. There has been support for this measure and that has come out of the relevant parts of the contributions. I would ask that the Motion be put to the House.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, “That this Assembly do now adjourn to a date to be fixed.” [**Mr. Ramsaroop**]

Adjourned accordingly at 2.44 p.m.
