

T H E
P A R L I A M E N T A R Y D E B A T E S
O F F I C I A L R E P O R T

[VOLUME 7]

**PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE FOURTH SESSIONS OF THE NATIONAL
ASSEMBLY OF THE SECOND PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE
CONSTITUTION OF GUYANA**

16th Sitting

2 p.m.

Tuesday, 19th December, 1972

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Speaker

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

People's National Congress

Elected Ministers

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

Dr. The Hon. P.A. Reid,
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of
National Development and Agriculture

The Hon. M. Kasim, A.A.,
Minister of State for Agriculture

The Hon. H.D. Hoyte, S.C.,
Minister of Works and Communications

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

The Hon. Miss S.M. Field-Ridley,
Minister of Information, Culture and Youth

The Hon. B. Ramsaroop,
Minister with Portfolio and Leader of the House

The Hon. D.A. Singh,
Minister of Health **(Absent)**

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

The Hon. C.V. Mingo,
Minister of State for the Public Service

The Hon. W. Haynes,
Minister of Co-operatives and
Community Development

The Hon. A. Salim,
Minister of Local Government

Appointed Ministers

The Hon. S.S. Ramphal, S.C.,
Minister of Foreign Affairs and Attorney-General

The Hon. H. Green,
Minister of Public Affairs

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

The Hon. Miss C.L. Baird,
Minister of Education **(Absent)**

The Hon. F.E. Hope,
Minister of Finance and Trade

Dr. the Hon. K.F.S. King,
Minister of Economic Development

The Hon. S.S. Naraine, A.A.,
Minister of housing and Reconstruction

Parliamentary Secretaries

Mr. J.G. Joaquin, J.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Finance and Trade

Mr. P. Duncan, J.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of National
Development and Agriculture

Mr. J.R. Thomas,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Information,
Culture and youth

Mr. C.E. Wrights, J.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of Works and Communication.

Other Members

Mr. J.N. Aaron
Miss. M.M. Ackman, Chief Whip
Mr. K. Bancroft
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. Jordan
Mr. S.M. Saffee
Cde. R.C. Van Sluytman
Cde. M. Zaheeruddeen, J.P.
Cde. L.E. Willems

Members of the Opposition

People's Progressive Party

Dr. C. 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.H. 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.
Mr. R. Ally
Mr. Balchand Persaud
Mr. Bholā Persaud
Mr. I.R. Remington, J.P.
Mr. L.A. Durant
Mr. V. Teekah

(Absent)

United Force

Mr. M.F. Singh J.P.
Mrs. E. DaSilva
Mr. J.A. Sutton

Independent

Mr. R.E. Cheeks
Mr. E.L. Ambrose
Mrs. L.M. Branco

OFFICERS

Clerk of the National Assembly – F.A. Narain, A.A.
Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly – M.B. Henry

The National Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Prayers

**ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER
LEAVE TO MEMBERS**

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been granted to the hon. member Mr. Chandisingh for the Estimates for Expenditure for the financial year, 1973 totalling \$277,712,944.

**HEAD 20 – MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS
POLICE**

The Chairman: When the Adjournment was taken the hon. member Mr. Ram Karran was speaking.

Mr. Ram Karran: At the Adjournment, I remember the three Heads dealt with were subhead 20, 36 and 37. The hon. Minister seemed to have travelled all around and failed, in my opinion, to give satisfactory answers. For instance, on subhead 20 we sought to get from the hon. Minister some explanation, some reason why there seems to be such a huge increase in crime and at the same time to solicit from him what the Government is doing with respect to this sad state of affairs. Has the Government recruited more personnel? Does the Government need new tactics? What is being done to help in this field?

I would suggest having regard to the hon. Minister's perambulation that we should deal with these subheads separately. Perhaps on this suggestion, Your Honour might wish to direct after my colleagues and other members have spoken that we concentrate on subhead 20 and then move to the other subheads. This is only a suggestion.

The Chairman: Does any other hon. Member wish to speak further clarification? Hon. Minister do you wish to say anything?

The Minister of Home Affairs (Mr. Clarke): Mr. Chairman, I think last evening when the Adjournment was taken I had replied adequately to the questions.

The Chairman: And you do not wish to add anything further?

Mr. Clarke: I do not think that there is any new point that I can add.

Mr. Ram Karran *rose—*

The Chairmen: The hon. Minister said he has nothing further to say.

Head 20, Ministry of Home Affairs, Police, \$8,926,256, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

HEAD 21 – MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS PRISONS

Question proposed that the sum of \$1,228,650 for Ministry of Home Affairs, Prisons, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Sutton: page 71, subhead 15 and 24.

Dr. Ramsahoye: Subhead 16.

Mr. Jagan: On page 71, subheads 7, 15, 19 and 23.

Mr. Wilson: page 70, subhead 1, item 1, subhead 11.

The Chairman: Hon. Member Dr. Ramsahoye.

Dr. Ramsahoye: Sir, one of the besetting sins of Government in this region is the fact that the law tends to lag so much behind social change. Time and again, the question has been raised in this House about the desirability of otherwise of retaining capital punishment. Once again, this House is asked to vote the executioner's fees. It is a small sum to vote but behind it all there is a ... and to reach a decision as to whether capital punishment must be continued in this country. So far as the Opposition is concerned it has been the stated policy of the People's Progressive Party to support the abolition of the death penalty. There needs to be some definite pronouncement coming from all of the Members of this House.

2.25 p.m.

Last year, when this matter was raised, the hon. Minister, I think, promised to give this matter consideration and, indeed, it was suggested that the subject ought to become a matter for a free vote. Many disquieting things have happened. I have learnt and, indeed, from one of the judges themselves, that in a recent appeal to the Court of Appeal involving men convicted for a bank robbery and a killing, the man who engineered the plot and the conspiracy, and who actually killed the fellow, escaped the penalty, while the other two men, who were conspirators but whose crime was not as grave, were convicted and stand condemned to be hanged.

This thing ought really to press upon our social consciences. Do we always have the right man? Must society necessarily take this risk of determining the life of an individual for a capital offence? These are matters which have been resolved for us during the last century and, indeed, one can assume that since there was a legal system applying in this county, the punishment did lie, but we live in the age of the twentieth century and the time has come when we ought to make a re-assessment of this position.

This case has shown that it is now a matter of grave urgency that we should determine whether it is right and proper that capital punishment should continue. If by a free vote of our conscience we decide, having taken everything into account, that capital punishment ought to continue, well so be it. But this House ought to be given the very early opportunity of debating this matter, and reasonable notice ought to be given. If it is a free vote, I suppose most of the Members will be anxious to make a personal contribution before he casts his lot on this issue.

This is not the place to go over the arguments for and against capital punishment. The fault is, and it really comes from the Government Benches, that we are not taking any proper steps to reach a decision on what is obviously a matter of burning necessity. I would therefore urge upon the hon. Minister of Home Affairs, as he passes this tiny sum here for executioner's fees, to try to honour the undertakings which have in the past been given to this House, that he House will be provided with an early opportunity to debate this question of capital punishment. There is always the possibility that some men may be let off on legal quibbles. There is always the possibility that where in our system of trial, the trial takes place far remove from the scene of the crime, untrue and perjured evidence may creep in, and an innocent man may very well be convicted.

I once prosecuted a man for robbery with violence. I was Counsel for the Crown. The hon. Prime Minister was defending. I had on the files, statements tending to show the guilt of the fellow. The Prime Minister argued his case, the jury convicted the fellow, and up to today I feel in my own mind that that man might not have been guilty of that offence. He was sent to prison for three years. If it happens in robbery, it happens in wounding, it could happen in murder, and where we come to capital offences where we are going to say that society will take life, we need to give the most serious and anxious consideration to this matter. So, I hope, Your Honour, that we would not have in the estimates for any following year, a reinsertion of this item unless this House is given a chance to discuss the matter of capital punishment and its abolition or not.

Mr. Jagan: Mr. Chairman, of late, there have been many complaints by prisoners to judges trying criminal matters, as to the conditions in the prisons under which they have to stay. I remember during last year, about the time when the Budget was being debated, the Movement Against Oppression had issued a leaflet setting out the conditions, the type of food, and so on, that prisoners receive and are subjected to in prison.

Apparently, since then, nothing has been done to investigate the complaints of prisoners, because on a number of occasions during this last Session in the Courts, the trials had to be adjourned because of complaints made by prisoners, who stated that they were not given food, or proper food. *[Interruption.]* I am only talking from what has been reported in the newspapers. A complaint against food and also against conditions in the prisons.

Earlier in this debate, under the Head, Magistrates, I raised the question about the lock-up at the Magistrates' Courts. That lock-up was intended for about three or four prisoners, when there were only Court I and Court II in Brickdam, but today, on some days when we have so many magistrates' courts, there are no less than twenty remand prisoners who are taken into this very small room that is below the magistrates' courts. I think everyone will admit, if they should only go and examine the place, that the space provided for prisoners there is wholly inadequate. It is not only the prisoners who suffer. As a result of the accommodation, no doubt, the prisoners are justified in shouting and protesting, and on many occasions they do so in a loud manner. One can sympathize with them, and as a result of their behaviour, the working of the court is also affected.

I was informed that this section would come also under the jurisdiction of this Ministry, Prisons, because prisoners are in fact taken there to await their trial.

I hope that he hon. Minister can look into this matter to see whether part of the section that is provided, which is at present occupied by the police, could not be vacated and the whole space be provided for the prisoners. I am sure that accommodation for the police could be found in some other portion of the building under the Magistrates' Courts.

On previous occasions we had to refer to the question of the training of prisoners whilst they are in prison and the amount that is paid to them for jobs they do while in prison. It would seem that the amount that is sought here for training, \$5,000, is wholly inadequate for what the Government should in fact undertake to help the prisoners when they come out of prison.

On many occasion prisoners find themselves in difficulty as soon as they are released. As a result they commit crimes again and have to be taken back to prison. In any view this is in a large measure due to inadequate training while they are in prison. Opportunities are not given to them when they are released.

One wonder, therefore, whether the Government thinks the sum of \$5,000, which is being sought for here, is really adequate to provide proper training for prisoners while they are in prisons. I am sure that if they received proper training they would be able to get together when released and they would be able to start a small industry and try to raise money. It would also be easier for them to find employment if they were trained.

The reason why many of them find it difficult to find employment when they are released is that they did not receive any training whatsoever in prison. Many of them are employed in farming. When they are released they do not have enough money to start a farm either individually or by getting together in a group. This may be due to the fact that the amount that the prisoners receive when released is very inadequate for them to do anything.

I therefore wonder whether an incentive could not be given to the prisoners. If they are

told that when released they will be given larger sum of money, if they are more beneficially employed when in prison, would because not be incentives to them to produce more while in prison? They would realize that after their release they would have a tidy sum with which they would be able, as I said, to help themselves individually or by getting together to open up industries.

There is an amount sought here for farms. In the past the prisoners, I understand, supplied the hospitals with vegetables and so on. One wonders if a greater opportunity is given to them whether they could not produce farm or than is being produced at present. One thinks that this would be to the benefit of the prisoners when they are released.

If this is so, I am sure that many of the prisoners who are released would not find themselves in difficulties whereby they are forced to commit crimes again and, as a result, have to be sent to prison once again. I would wish that the Government would rethink the position of the prisoners and see whether greater training cannot be given to them while they are in prison.

The Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Sutton.

Mr. Sutton: Mr. Chairman, as they are on the same page, I wonder whether you will allow me to cover subhead 15, Farms, subhead 19, Prison Industries, and subhead 24, Pig Development Scheme, together.

One notices that the cost of operating the Farm, the Prison Industries and the Pig Development Scheme, is really a little bit alarming in the light of the returns that are being obtained from these operations. We find that in 1970 the Farms cost \$15,496. This is the actual figure. In 1971 the operation of Farms cost \$16,623; the Revised Estimates for 1972 show \$20,500 and the present Estimate for 1973 is \$23,500, which is total of \$76,119 on Farms alone.

It is not enough to stop there. Let us examine the situation with the Pig Development Scheme. In 1970 the actual amount spent was \$19,809 and in 1971 it was \$28,323. The Revised Estimate in 1972 was \$25,000 and the Estimate for 1973 is not \$31,000. There is a grand total of \$104,132.

If we glance at page 6 on which revenue from these departments is shown, one finds that the figures are not analysed and one must come to the conclusion that the revenue shown there is the total from Farms and Pig Development. In 1971 the actual amount spent was \$41666; the Revised Estimate in 1972 was \$30,000 and in 1973 the estimates is \$30,000.

At the bottom of page 71 the amount made in the Bakery is taken off so we know as a fact what the Bakery made. In view of the fact that money is asked for the Farm, prison Industries and the Pig Development Scheme, we can come to no other conclusion but that the figures shown as income on page 6 under Prisons would be the total earnings from the Farm, the Prison Industries and the Pig Development Scheme.

2.45 p.m.

One can safely conclude that the prison industries whether they pay or do not pay is a means of assisting in the rehabilitation of the prisoners and therefore if that makes the loss understandable, but on the other hand there seems to be no valid reason why the pig farms and the development schemes can carry a loss. One would come to the conclusion if for the sake of argument, the Hospitals, the Social Assistance Department and the other Government departments which can no doubt absorb whatever is produced as a result of the operation of the farms and the pig development scheme pressure that they could not absorb all that was produced in the words of my worthy hon. Friend Mr. Jagan it is desirable that the production of this place be increased to the maximum because if the other departments of the Government cannot absorb

the produce certainly they can be sold to the Guyana Marketing Corporation. Therefore it is not a question of having a market to distribute these goods or to sell them.

Could the Minister tell us if there is any hope in these farms and pig development scheme to operate as a paying concern so that there will be no difficulty? The returns shown on the Summary of the Estimates of Revenue, page 6: in 1971, \$41,666, in 1972, \$30,000, and \$30,000 is estimated for 1973 which shows a total return of \$121,540. Could the hon. Minister tell us if there is anything that will be done to avoid this loss? We see no reason why the three schemes could not be run on a profit. The money involved is nearly half a million dollars.

The Chairman: Hon. Minister.

Mr. Clarke: Mr. Chairman, hon. Member Mr. Wilson has a question.

The Chairman: I am sorry hon. Member Mr. Wilson.

Mr. Wilson: Mr. Chairman, subhead 1, item 1, Director of Prisons. I seek to speak on this item not because I want to ask for a reduction of the officer's salary, perhaps we should ask that it be increased. I should like to make reference to frequent reports in the Press and otherwise about the treatment that is meted out to the prisoners.

The Chairman: Was that point not raised by your colleague the hon. Member Mr. Jagan?

Mr. Wilson: Yes. I think we all agree that the objective of penalty is not to dehumanise those unfortunate victims of our society who happens to find themselves within prison walls. I am sure that the hon. Minister will agree with this. It is a fact that the treatment to the prisoners

is often less than human; the prisoners are not angels and they do not always speak the truth, but there is an element of truth in the cases.

I urge the Minister to carry out thorough investigations and perhaps some kind of training for the Prison Officers. Let them know that it is not their business to dehumanize the unfortunate victims of our society who become prisoners. They should try to see that they are reformed. I think the violence which is being committed by prisoners in the Prison can be traced to the treatment which they get, they take one back from the society which represents the prison.

Another point on this is, I was asked by a prisoner on one occasion to pay him a visit in order to discuss with him the question of getting legal aid and I do not know it was under those circumstances one visits a prisoner. You wait outside Camp Street, they push you around, when you go in they have the prisoners in little cubicles and everybody talk at the same time; you cannot hear, you cannot have any proper discussion. Let us say there are about fifteen visitors and fifteen prisoners we all talk at the same time; it is like a real babble.

Under subhead 11, Welfare Fund Expenses. I know my colleague spoke on this. The prison population is nearly in the thousand. The sum of \$600 for 1,000 people? What can that do? Can that give any purposeful assistance to the prisoners when they come out? It is time the Government look into this question of providing some substantial aid in order to assist these prisoners to find their footing until they can get a job.

2.55 p.m.

Mr. Clarke: Mr. Chairman, with respect to the general remarks made on the item about the conditions under which prisoners live within the prison walls, I should like to say that the reports which have come out are greatly exaggerated and anyone who visits the prisons, New Amsterdam, Georgetown, or Mazaruni, would find that the prisoners who make these reports do

not mirror the true situation in what they say. In fact, I have found from my own personal knowledge and from my visits to the prisons, that the conditions compare favourable with conditions in other institutions.

The Chairman: Maybe you go like the prodigal, they knoweth when you come.

Mr. Clarke: They compare favourable with conditions that exist in similar institutions in other parts of the world.

On the question of dietary, the hon. Member Mr. Jagan chose that item on which to speak about conditions. I have already spoken about conditions which I find in the prisons and I am sure that if the hon. Member pays a visit to any of the prisons, he will find that the conditions which exist in these prisons do not make for the sort of criticism which has been appearing in the press. The people of the press, I think, ought to take the opportunity to visit the prisons and to pronounce on the conditions as they see them.

On the question of subhead 7, Training Facilities, the hon. Member Mr. Jagan mentioned that the amount of money provided under this Head cannot really compensate for the training which is desirable for prisoners in our prison. But the hon. member is wrong in assuming that \$5,000 which is provided under this Head is provided for the training of prisoners. It is really provided for training of prison officers, both formally and informally, at various institutions, at Mon Repos and at other vocational schools, and also for in-service training in prison administration and management, and so on. This money which is put down here, we consider appropriate for the training programme for prison officers in 1973.

In fact, training for prisoners is accounted for under several heads because in all the activities in which the prisoners are involved, they are undergoing the training which is provided: on the farms, in the prison industries, and in the other training activities, like tailoring, which go

on in the prisons. The prisoners are being trained and there is no expressed figure put down in the estimates for the training of prisoners.

Subhead 11, Welfare Fund Expenses, again I think the hon. member Mr. Wilson made a complete wrong assessment of the position. The welfare fund is again not related to the total number of prisoners but related to the number of prisoners who would leave the prison in any one year. It is not a question of a thousand prisoners benefiting from the welfare allocation. There is a small number of prisoners who leave prison each year and this money, we anticipate, will be adequate to take care of those who have to leave the prison.

Subhead 15, Farms, it was suggested that the work of the prisoners on the farms is not an economical undertaking, that the farms and prison industries do not pay for themselves. I think the hon. Member Mr. Sutton went to a great length to point out that the money provided does not compensate; when one looks at the revenue which accrues from the activities of the prisoners. The hon. members failed to take into account the fact that money, which is represented in the estimates as revenue, does not take into account the fact that the prisoners are fed with produce provided by the prison farms, does not take into account the fact that the farms provide an area of training for prisoners, and therefore, there are social costs involved here. Also, the fact is not taken into account that there is always a certain stock in the piggery there is a stock which is always there which is not identified as part of a revenue. The revenue merely refers to that item of expenditure which results from the sale of prison produce, that is, farm produce both crops and livestock, as well s chain link fencing and so on and so forth.

Then we come to the question of Executioner's Fees. The Member Dr. Ramsahoye pointed to the need to end capital punishment. It has been mentioned before in this House during my own period in the Chair, where the hon. Member Dr. Ramsahoye raised this question of capital punishment and the need for its abolition.

I recall that on those occasions hon. members from this side of the House who had the pleasure, or displeasure, of replying to those strictures from the hon. Member made it clear that this is a question of conscience and it really is a question which needs to be debated in much greater detail than has so far been possible.

I am of the opinion that capital punishment ought to be abolished. This is my personal view and I have in other places discussed this question with people whose business it is to administer justice. I feel that this is a question which sooner or later will have to be tackled. It will have to be pronounced upon by the Government. I believe that it will be sooner rather than later when Government must take a responsible position in relation to the matter of capital punishment.

So far as I am concerned I would like to say further that I have asked for advice from those who are more competent than I am on this question and I am looking forward to receiving their proposals in the new year. I believe that when this matter comes to the House it will receive the support of the hon. member on that side of the House and that we will be able to dispose of, as I feel that we ought to dispose of, capital punishment in the not too distant future.

On the question of the earning scheme I would just like to say this. The earning scheme is not designed to make the prisoner a rich man before he leaves prison. It is designed to provide an incentive to the prisoner so that he could produce in greater measure than he would produce ordinarily without this provision. I do believe that a larger provision would make the prisoner produce more. I believe that it is the principle which is important rather than the sum, and therefore, I do not agree with the argument of the hon. Member Mr. Jagan that if you provide more money then the prisoner will have to respond in a greater way to the jobs which he has in hand.

I believe that this answers most questions which have been posed. On the pig development scheme I think I have answered the question posed by the hon. Member Mr. Sutton.

Mr. Feilden Singh: In the absence of my colleague, Mr. Sutton, can I say that I am looking at this figure which Mr. Sutton quoted. I am indeed alarmed that the Minister is telling us that the reason why the pig development scheme is not showing a profit is because the prisoners are fed from this; therefore, as I understand him, no profit is shown. These schemes do not show returns in revenue because the prisoners are using them for feeding themselves. Why then are we providing nearly \$210,000 under Dietary, if they have the bakery for bread, the farm to supply the farm produce and the pig development scheme to provide the meat? How is it that we have allocated and we intend to spend \$210,000? Where is this money going? What is happening? Why is it that we have to spend this amount of money? I think the Minister will have to tell us and let us have a breakdown as to exactly what these farms are doing, what they are producing, what proportion is being sold to produce revenue and what proportion –
[Interruption]

The Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Singh, please continue.

Mr. M.F. Singh: I would like the Minister to be listening so that he could answer my question. Instead of glossing over this to the extent that we do not have any particular facts, I think it is time that the Minister supply us with hard facts and figures: What percentage of the produce from the farm is being used to supplement dietary? What is being sold? Similarly with the pig development scheme let us have the facts and figures. What amount are you using to feed the prisoners, what amount are you using to sell to produce revenue. We will then see whether this thing is paying or not. We will see how it is working. The sum of \$210,000 is a lot of money; it is nearly a quarter of a million dollars. We must know how this operates.

Mr. Clarke: The simple answer is that the prison farms cannot produce a lot of the staples which are used in the prison diet. Obviously rice, sugar, flour, oil are not produced at the prison farm. These are substantial items in the prison diet which have to be brought. The hon. member knows this.

19.12.72

National Assembly

3.05 – 3.15 p.m.

Head 21, Ministry of Home Affairs, Prisons - \$1,228,650, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

**HEAD 22 – MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS
FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES**

Question proposed that the sum of \$1,027,684 for Head 22, Ministry of Home Affairs, Fire Protection Services, stand part of the Estimates

Mr. Ram Karran: I wish to ask a general question on this Head, Fire Protection Services.

Mr. Jagan: Subhead 2, 7 and 11.

Dr. Ramsahoye: Subhead 5.

Mrs. DaSilva: I would like to ask a general question under this Head.

Mr. R.D. Persaud: I would like to make an inquiry.

The Chairman: Hon. Members, we have again started to lost time on these subjects.

Mr. Balchand Persaud: Subhead 5.

Mr. Roshan Ally: Subhead 4 and 5.

3.15 p.m.

The Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran.

Mr. Ram Karran: Having regards to the fact that there is considerable expansion of housing on the eastern side of the city proper, and in the southern side I think that it must appear to anyone who has some interest in these matters to enquire of the Government as I do now, what plans the Government has for the expansion of fire protection service. Only recently we have had two devastating fire in Georgetown putting a number of poor people out of their homes, loss of property, and the Government must be giving some thought to these services. I do not think it would be adequate for the hon. Minister to tell us of the little speak-easy that the Government has put up in Campbellville; we have all seen that and recognised it as a hopeless waste of the taxpayers money. You have a little Land Rover there, I do not know what equipment is on it but I have known that in case of a fire it would hardly be able to do anything at all.

I am thinking in terms not only of rehabilitation of the existing stations perhaps re-sited somewhere else I know that it is something being given thought to a long time ago. I note the previous Chief Fire Officers have repeatedly complained about the inadequacy of this station. Inadequacy in the sense of the situation where it is sited and related matters. I would ask the hon. Minister to give us the Government's thinking on the rehabilitation of the fire services and its expansion with a view to making better provision for the inhabitants not only of Georgetown, one gets the impression that the fire services are only for Georgetown, but I am sure the hon. Minister would tell us we all know it supposed to be country-wide. I should like to know what are the provisions for this area and what provisions are being made for fighting equipment in built-up areas in the country.

Dr. Ramsahoye: Mr. Chairman, may I enquire from the hon. Minister what is the nature of the training programme for this year and in particular would he say who decided which officers will trained?

Mr. Jagan: Mr. Chairman, Could the hon. Minister say whether the following equipment

which were in use in 1970 are still being used today? Georgetown Unit: 1 Major pump 900 gallons per minute, 2 Land Rover Fire Pumps 350 gallons per minutes, 1 Land Rover Utility Transport and a Land Rover Utility. Pick-up and also the switchboards which was at the fire Services Headquarters. At the Timerhi Unit: 2 Bedford foam and 2 tenders, 600 and 500 gallons per minute and 1 Austin Champ with 150 lbs. Dry Chemical. Could the hon. Minister say if these are still in use? If they are not in use the replacements for these equipment?

Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud: I wish to make a very short point, sir. I should like the hon. Minister to tell us whether any step is question has been raised urging the Minister to give consideration to it. Prashad Nagar has many wooden buildings and if a fire was to occur there that whole area will be wiped off. I am living not very far from the Fire Station, I could see it from my house. But the fact is if a fire occurs- I have a wooden building too – while the station is there and the men may come there with some water the fact is the fire expands because nearly every house in my street is made of wood. Whatever may have been the history of the scheme the facts is that the Government has a social obligation there and I want to urge the Government strongly and sincerely that something be done.

Mrs. DaSilva: Mr. Chairman, just a few questions by way of seeking information from the hon. Minister. It has been commented upon and I think in this House too about the narrowness of the streets in South Ruimveldt Gardens area, even the sort of main entrance street, the Aubrey Barker Street which is about the widest one and it has a good bit of grass parapet but the other side streets like Pennylane and Wookpecker Street, and all those side streets that run north to south, they are all very narrow. Would the Minister tell us what proposals the Government has? How would the Fire Services be able to cope if there was a serious fire like the one we had in Middle Street area down in South Ruimveldt area? How would they be able to get the equipment in? Are they making any plans in the future when extending these new housing areas to see that the streets are wide enough?

I hope it never happens, but it could be very disastrous if there is a fire because the streets are narrow. Could the Minister give us information about the plans for dealing with the area?

Mr. Balchand Persaud: Mr. Chairman, subhead 10, Maintenance of Pipelines in Commercial Area. The sum of \$1,000 is being sought. One can recall the fire in Middle and Thomas Streets, Georgetown. The Fire Brigade had a very tough time trying to get adequate supply of water to control the fire, as a result they had to run a very long line from the scene of the fire to the Church Street Canal. I should like to know what plans the Government has to bring relief to this situation in the event of a fire. Because on most occasions while they have the hydrants, there is not adequate supply of water and no doubt this has posed serious problems. In fact, it took the Fire Brigade more than twenty minutes before they could have been able to stretch the long line and to get the pump working too. As a result nine to ten buildings went down in flames because the facility is not there, while the men did a very good job.

3.25 p.m.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran asked a very important question in relation to the provision of fire fighting services in the rural areas of the country. I should like to say that the Fire Protection Services are very conscious of the responsibility which they have to provide services or to see that services are provided in the rural areas to cope with the ever-increasing danger of fires in those areas, as those areas are being built up.

They have worked out in conjunction with the Ministry a plan of action in relation to the provision of fire fighting services in the rural areas. The basic ingredients of this plan are that the local authorities will be responsible for organizing the manpower, both for the production of the fire station on a self-help basis and the provision of the manpower for manning the fire station. The personnel will be trained by the fire department and it is expected that only a very small number of such personnel will be employed on a permanent basis, perhaps only one or two members of the staff of such stations as are put up in the rural areas will be on the permanent

payroll of the particular council. The rest of the personnel who would provide the staff for such services would operate on an on-call basis, that is, they would have regular employment in other fields but it will be understood that once there is an emergency, they can be called upon to provide the service which is required.

This has been worked out in conjunction with the local authorities and with the Guyana Association of Local Authorities on a regional basis, and during 1973, it is estimated that work will begin in some of the rural areas on the construction of such facilities. It is expected that these stations will also provide an adequate ambulance service in the areas where such stations are provided, that is, not only would the fire services be provided but ambulance service will be provided in those areas.

It is not true to say that the fire department has not been keeping abreast of the housing explosion which the hon. member admits is taking place in Greater Georgetown. As a matter of fact, there is a fire station established in West Ruimveldt and this was established during 1971 on the basis of self-help and if the hon. Member takes the trouble to drive along the front road of West Ruimveldt, he will see the fire station there. That fire station as well as the fire station provided in the Campbellville area are well equipped to take efficient action in the event of any serious outbreak of fire in the areas which constitute Greater Georgetown.

The hon. Member Mr. Jagan asked whether equipment which was listed in the Annual Report of the Guyana Fire Services, 1970 as being old and unserviceable, whether that equipment has since been replaced. That is what he asked. The answer to that question in part is, yes. The fire brigade is still in the process of replacing such equipment. When we get to the Capital Estimates, the hon. Member will find that there is provision in those Estimates for additional equipment to replace some of the equipment which was described as out of date and no good in the 1970 Report. For instance, he will find in the Capital Estimates, provision has been made for certain pumps to be provided and also he will find that in those Estimates, there is a provision for equipment for Timehri for the aerodrome fire service.

The hon. Member Mr. Balchand Persaud referred to a recent fire which destroyed a number of buildings in North Georgetown and he said that because of an inadequacy of water, a number of buildings were destroyed. This is only partly true. In fact, we all know that some of the buildings in that area were so old that it did not take a fire of the magnitude of that which destroyed those buildings to destroy them. It was because the water pressure at the time in that area was at a very low level, and because it was a peak period of water use, that the fire department found it necessary to use water from the canal.

Perhaps this is a good reason why the town planners ought to keep in mind all the time, as they seek to get rid of canals in the city, the need to augment the water supply which is available at all times by that which is always provided by the canals, so we should not get rid of all the canals in the city because of the fact that we are a wooden city and because there might be need to call on the resources of these canals in the event of a very serious outbreak of fire.

3.35 p.m.

The hon. Member Dr. Ramsahoye referred to the question of training. He wanted to know where were the people who were going to be trained and who selected them. In the first place I would like to let the hon. Member know that the amount referred to in the Estimates is to provide local training and the people who are trained are selected by the administration of the fire services. Money provided for training of fire personnel overseas is provided in the Estimates under the Public Service Ministry training vote.

Mr. Jagan: It seems from the answer given that Government is really callous when one takes into account the type of buildings we have in this country. The hon. Minister has referred to the Annual Report of the Guyana Fire and Ambulance Services for the year 1970. If I may quote from pages 4 and 5 of that Report:

- “(b) The 900 g.p.m. major pump is now 23 years old, and by no stretch of imagination could it be relied upon.
- (c) The Land Rover Utility Pick Up should be taken off the road in the interest of all road users.
- (d) The Land Rover fire pumps are very unreliable and owing to the system of construction, very difficult to maintain.
- (k) At Timehri the situation is similar to that of Georgetown. The foam and CO2 Tenders are all old and have outlived their usefulness. One hundred and fifty pounds (150 lbs.) of Dry Chemical is totally inadequate, and the Austin Champ Appliance itself is quite unreliable, hence the Fire Protection available is far below what is acceptable for an Airport of the category under which Timehri falls.”

The hon. Minister referred to the switchboard at the Fire Service Headquarters. I do not know whether it is still in use but this is what is stated about that in the Report at page 18:

“The efficiency of any Fire Service depends to a large extent on quick and reliable means of communication.”

I think no one would deny that.

“Unfortunately, the switchboard at Fire Service Headquarters leaves much to be desired. This instrument has long outlived its usefulness, ...”

It is no wonder that people complain at times that when reports are made it is difficult sometimes to communicate with the Fire Station. This is borne out by what is stated in the Report.

Report is no doubt that the Government is at fault because if this Report was made since 1970 it seems that the situation must have been existing long before that. In the 1970 Report the officer brought it to the notice of the Minister and the Government, and one would have expected that something positive would have been done since then. It is no use the hon. Minister telling us now that provision is being made under the 1973 Estimates.

Mr. Clarke: Mr. Chairman, it is a pity that the hon. Member decided to waste the time of the House in reading out what is in the Annual Report of the Fire Services for 1970. I think the hon. Member should wait for the 1971 Report which will be tabled very soon. He will then get another picture because the 1971 Report will give a completely different picture.

In relation to the telephone switchboard, which the hon. member spoke about, that switchboard is already in the country and is to be installed very soon in the new year. The telephone situation in so far as the Fire Services Department is concerned will be remedied earlier in 1973.

The hon Member Mrs. DaSilva asked a question which I failed to answer when I first replied. She asked about the narrow streets in South Ruimveldt Gardens and South Ruimveldt Park and she wondered whether I had any comment to offer. Yes, I do. The streets in South Ruimveldt Gardens and South Ruimveldt Park are narrow but I am advised that the fire department is not disturbed at that fact because not only can the fire brigade gain entry into those streets – they are not so narrow that the fire brigade cannot get into them – but the fire brigade can operate in those narrow streets from the main roads on both sides. It is quite possible for them to operate from the main roads, on both sides without any difficulty. In point of fact, I am told that the streets in New Amsterdam are narrower than the streets in south Ruimveldt Gardens and they do operate in those streets.

There was another question which was asked by the hon. member Mr. R.D. Persaud in relation to Prashad Nagar. He asked about the hydrants. This question has already engaged the attention of the fire department and the Georgetown City Council is now looking into the question of providing the hydrants which the hon. member spoke about.

Mr. Jagan: Will you permit me to ask just one short question? In the 1970 Report the Chief Fire Officer has not made the usual complaint about Georgetown's large buildings which do not have fire escapes. I wonder if this is because the Government has ignored the

recommendation and I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether his a fire escape as recommended by the Chief Fire Officer year after year in his Report?

Mr. Clarke: Last year the hon. member asked the question and I gave the assurance then that the department responsible for providing such fire escapes will be approached with a view to having them installed. I did make representation but it was a low priority and I was told that the department responsible for providing the fire escape will do so in the very near future as soon as funds are available

Head 22, Ministry of Home Affairs, Fire Protection services - \$1,027,684, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Hon. Members, according to the schedule only 45 minutes should have been used up on these two items. Bearing that in mind we will have to cut down on future items.

Mr. Jagan: Yesterday we did that.

The Chairman: Not as much as the rate at which we are going. Please remember that last night we sat 30 minutes over the normal time.

HEAD 23 – MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS REGISTRATION AND ELECTIONS

Question proposed that the sum of \$555,209 for Head 23, Ministry of Home Affairs, Registration and Elections, stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Ram Karran: Subhead 4.

Dr. Ramsahoye: Subhead 4, 5 and 6.

Mr. R.D. Persaud: Subhead 4, 5 and 6.

Mr. Balchand Persaud: Subhead 4, 5 and 6, if the points I wish to make are not taken.

The Chairman: I am saying this at a very early stage. I hope that hon. Members will not get into the same situation as last year. If time is used up on this we will have to re-allocate time. I will do it from tomorrow. Hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran.

Mr. Ram Karran: Subhead 4, National Registration. I have a short question on this. I wish to ask whether the hon. Minister recognises that enough publicity is not given to the exercise of national registration and whether he will give this House some assurance that when next the register is open for national registration the publicity given will be adequate?

3.45 p.m.

Dr. Ramsahoye: Your Honour, once again we are asked to vote money for National Registration, for National Election and for Local Authorities elections. I speak against these appropriations because they are totally unworthy of this country and its people. The present electoral systems which apply in Guyana have sent us far back and beyond the days of Imperial rule and the people of this country are in a far worse position electorally speaking than they were under the British rule. The time has come to call upon the Government seriously to re-assess the position. This Government must re-instate the laws which regulated the electoral process in this country while the British were here. That is the least it could do. Since the British left certain laws have been passed in this country which authorize, first of all, a system of overseas voting which was not known to British rule and which in itself is inherently unfair and which indeed must be a vehicle of fraud. This is so because there is no way in which the persons who are entitled to be considered a part of this country are the ones who get on to such a list.

Secondly, this is a system of proxy voting which has been used so far to enable votes to be included from people who are either non-existent or people who are voting in defiance of all the laws relating to the secret ballot. Proxy voting destroys the secret ballot; overseas voting is unfair to people who live in this country and have to pay its taxes and be responsible to the Government and its administration.

No party system has been developed in this country which will enable any check or any proper check to be made upon the List of so-called overseas voters. Indeed, we know that where independent persons not belonging to this country have carried out a check upon the overseas system of voting, their results have shown that the List of overseas voters was a massive exercise in fraud.

We must ask ourselves whether we cannot do better in this country. There is something about it which tends to debase those of us who have to live here and who are responsible for the administration of the country and its welfare. It is vital to a free people that they should be able to choose a Government under an electoral system which reflects a true result. The present system of Guyana was never intended to reflect a true result. It has not ever reflected a true result and will not in the future reflect a true result.

It has been the work of the electoral engineers who are the creatures of this Government and who ought to be called off from their exercises in order to allow a more just system to prevail. The system is unique in the world. Nowhere in the world is there such a massive overseas vote as there is in relation to Guyana. Nowhere in the world is there such a massive proxy vote as there is in relation to Guyana. Surely, Your Honour, the people of this country are sufficiently sophisticated to be able to claim and to enjoy a system of elections which does not involve public expenditures upon results which must be inaccurate.

The time has come when a re-assessment needs to be made of this position. The laws since 1964 have been changed very skilfully to ensure that a candidate who contests an election

in Guyana is not to see the List of proxy voters. It is made to ensure that registration officers compiling the electoral list do not have to bother with their decisions being reviewed by the courts. The laws were changed to show that the compilation of overseas list of voters would not reflect any true position but would be an instrument for padding the votes at home. Why? No Government which does not hold its people in contempt can continue to subscribe to such a system. It is a shame that during the British rule a candidate could have seen the List of Voters who should vote by proxy. During the British rule a candidate could have seen the votes when counted, during British rule there was no system of proxy voting and overseas voting and indeed in relations to proxies there was only proxy voting for people who actually participated in the work of the elections. Why is it after we have been cut loose from the bond of the imperial rule we must take these retrograde steps in order to falsify the results, character and aspiration of our country and people? None of us here has a proprietary interest in the lives of the people of this country. While we are here we hold their interest in trust but we do not own them. We have no right to devise any electoral system which would cause them to be voting when the totality of the system will produce an unjust and unfair result. Who are we and how long do we think that the ordinary people of this country will stay political execution of those political miscreants who are responsible for these deeds?

3.55 p.m.

Your Honour, this is the last time I will be speaking in this House about this electoral system, and as I leave, I wish to urge upon this House and upon the people of this country a return to normality. I wish to urge upon my brethren in this House not to feel that they have any proprietary interest in reaching the corridors of political power, so that whatever means are there must be used to justify the end.

After many years of struggle against imperial rule, the crunch has come. There problem that confronts Guyana is a problem of having all of her people live together and work together. We have turned this into a problem of one section retaining political power and maintaining

office no matter what systems are used. We are above that. We ought to be above that and the time has come when we should anxiously consider what are going to be the results of this position if it were allowed to continue.

As I see it, if the coercive apparatus of the State is to be used to maintain the Government in power, irrespective of the real feelings of the people, then constitutional avenues having been closed to them, they must turn only to violence. Is this what we want? Is it the hope that this county will plunge into conflict and that out of it there will be some sort of honourable peace, or is it that as people of reason we can honestly and honourably face our problems, negotiate with each other and reach a conclusion which will be just to all sides? None of us has any right to be a politician at this stage of our history if we cannot make that approach to the problems which confront this little nation.

And beyond that, the perennial problem still indicts us. This one does not confront, it indicts, that three-quarters of a million people on 83,000 square miles of soil, with resources, and their people willing to work, a people capable and earnest in their endeavour, cannot devise institutions through which they can live in peace and prosperity. We need the services of the people of this country. How are we to rule them, in insisting on an electoral process that could not possibly be considered fair?

The hon. Prime Minister, when we went to the Constitutional Conference in 1962, refused to agree that first past the post should be the system of representation in this country. It has been that until then. He had insisted that the results were unfair and he would not countenance and would not agree to any electoral system that was unfair and which might be enforced. As we have seen, elections were conducted under a system of proportional representation and we have seen massive proxy voting, we have seen overseas voting. How can he feel injustice at the one while acclaiming to his breast the other?

There is clearly the need to re-examine the situation. There are no short cuts to problems. We have to face up to the problem and try honestly and with a measure of intellectual integrity to solve them. And we do not solve them by trying to hit each other below the belt. All men are supposed to have an inner conscience and reason, and if people have differences and they have claims against each other, if they are insisting on duties, they are insisting on the fulfilment of obligations, and if there is any dispute about these matters, well, then, the surest and safest way is to appeal to reason. Indeed, it is upon that that our whole rule of law and our whole system of life are built. Why then should these principles be applied in other areas and not in a most important field. I speak about this because I think we can do better.

I know that there are students and scholars in universities all over the world and particularly in the universities of this region who have been paying attention to this matter and it really is not a matter which put Guyana in a very good light. The degrading nature of this thing, the block towards the free aspirations of a free people, the construction of twisted avenues to the corridors of political power, must evidence and symbolize a banality, which couldn't possibly be characteristic of this nation. I know that in this process, in these changes of the laws, many members of my profession must have had a hand. To this nation, to the public, I apologise for them. Our profession has for centuries been an honourable profession and it is wrong of us to try to use the processes of the law to reach any result which is unjust or which is unfair.

Nobody minds whatever you devise, but there must not be in the system you devise, features of it which are likely to lead to unjust results and in this it is not only that the result must be just. It is that everybody must see it as appearing to be just. Because, if you have one quality and not the other, then you may still find people with lingering doubts and that is not healthy for the political situation.

The money is being voted. It is a waste of time to vote this money for the reasons for which it is going to be needed. The statistics show that there must be considerable inaccuracies between 1961 and now in the figures for national registration. We do not in this country have

computers to go into it with the closeness of which some people are capable but there is need to review all of these matters and to make sure that Guyana is not left in the background. At the moment, this is no question that adult suffrage which was fought for and wrested from the British with such great difficulty by those politicians, who preceded us, and indeed, some of them are still alive in this House, has been destroyed in Guyana.

Guyana has not faced her problems in the way she should face her problems. Guyana is capable of facing her problems. Guyana is not without the capacities or abilities of honest and honourable men and the time has come when all politicians, and particularly those on the Government side, should try to disabuse their minds and to disgorge from their souls a feeling that they have proprietary interest or ownership in the Guyanese people. Once they can achieve that, once they can consider themselves as trustees of the people, they surely will be able to put an end to this chicanery which, whatever might have been said of the political exigencies of the past, should no longer be with us.

For myself, I promise this House, I promise this country, and I promise this nation, that I will voluntarily give of my best and whatever service I can in the development of any system which will ensure that the people whom we are supposed to love and to fondle are able to choose their Government at periodic elections, which are fair and free. *[Applause]*

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Speaker: The Sitting is suspended until 4.30 p.m.

Sitting suspended at 4.05 p.m.

On resumption -

Mr. M.F. Singh: First of all, I should like to say how heartily I endorse the remarks made so feelingly by my hon. Friend and colleague, Dr. Fenton Ramsahoye.

Mr. Chairman, every year for some time now we have seen that this is all the money that has been spent on National Registration. I shall not attempt to complement the remarks of my hon. and Learned Friend, but I would like to ask one question.

Bearing in mind what happened at the last General Election, I should like to know what is the position now. At the last election we were told that under no circumstance would the National Registration Lists become the Electoral Lists. We were reminded and I think the members of the Elections Commission were reminded very forcibly of the provision of the Constitution. Article 69 of the Constitution states very clearly:

“The Elections Commission ...

(a) shall exercise general direction and supervision over the registration of electors and the administrative conduct of elections ...”

The position then turned out to be very different in that suddenly, after assurances were given, the National Registration Lists were deemed Electoral Lists without the requirement of the Constitution having been fulfilled.

I want to ask the hon. Minister what will be the position in respect of the next General Election. Will we repeat the same performance? Will we repeat the same farce? Will we again ignore this specific provision of the Constitution as regards the Elections Commission? The words are very clear and unambiguous – “Shall exercise general direction and supervision over the registration of electors and the administrative conduct of elections. “

Can the hon. Minister give us the assurance that the Elections Commission will be allowed to exercise direction and supervision over the registration of electors or will it again be a

repetition of 1968 where the National Registration office goes through an operation, produces a list and suddenly we are told that that same National Registration List, without any reference to the Elections Commission, is suddenly baptized the Electoral List? What will be the position for the next election? Will we go through the same fraud?

I see subhead 5 – National Elections for \$5,000. What is this sum of \$5,000 to be spent on? It is not enough for General Elections next year. Perhaps the Minister would like to expand on this.

I think I have spoken at length on the next subhead, Local Authorities Elections, but I would like to make an ancillary point on the three columns, Actual, Approved and Revised Estimates, 1972. In the Approved Estimates for 1972 the sum of \$5,000 was provided, yet we know that under the law Local Government Elections should have been held before the end of 1972. The members of the Government in retrospect were trying to tell us that they really did not intend to postpone local government elections when all they provided for 1972 was \$5,000. This minority P.N.C. Government comes and tells us that Guyana Association of Local Authorities asked for the postponement of elections and that it is graciously acceding to this organisation which has a vested interest in perpetuating the fraud and remaining in office. These same people with a vested interest, the members of Government, are saying “You are such nice people we will allow you to remain in office. You have made a request to us and we will allow you to remain in office. “That is the reason for the postponement”, they say.

How can they say that is the reason when at the beginning of the year they provided only \$5,000 and, under the law, elections were to be held before the end of the year? Let them stop fooling this House! Let them stop this fraud! We know the facts of life; we know the realities of the situation. What we want from the other side is a bit of honesty – honesty in elections, honesty in their general behaviour and in the general pattern of government in this country.

The Chairman: The hon. Member, Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud.

Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud: Like my hon. Friend, I wish to congratulate the hon. Member Dr. Ramsahoye for his brilliant and profound contribution on the question of elections, the main area of controversy and dispute in this county.

It is not my intention to make a speech, but to make a few points concerning General Elections and some of the demands of the People's Progressive Party.

Subhead 4, National Registration: If the Government has accepted maturity at the age of 18 years, one can assume that the Government will have to prepare a new list of voters. This being so, will the hon. Minister of Home Affairs tell us if the necessary steps are being taken to bring the list of voters up to date with respect to the recent declaration of the Government on the age of maturity.

The second point is that since there have been consistent complaints and since, indeed, evidence has been produced from time to time to show that on the voters list there are names of non-existing persons, names of persons who are under the and names of person who are dead, does the Minister not consider it in the interest of fair elections to open the list of registration so that the Guyanese population can get an opportunity to take the necessary steps under the provision of the National Registration Ordinance to have all those names that ought not to be on the list removed?

I recall proposing to the hon. Minister last year that he should devise a system of registration all year round. The hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran made the point that very little publicity was given to the last period of registration that was ordered. The result has been that many people who have reached voting age have not registered and, indeed, many persons who were entitled under the National Registration Ordinance did not register because they were not aware of the period available for them to put their names on the list.

Apart from elections, the identity card is an important document. Indeed, when person have to take examinations they are called upon to produce their I.D. cards; when they go to the banks, post offices and so on they are called upon to produce this document so that they can be properly identified.

If the Government is satisfied that this is so, then what is the argument to prevent it? The list was opened for identification for a maximum of seven days and the Minister cannot produce evidence of adequate publicity for that. We hear so many things on the radio and particularly on the Government station. Something like that should have been announced regularly so that people would be aware of it.

4.40 p.m.

Will the hon. Minister state during which part of next year the List will be open for people to go and register and for what period?

The other point I wish to make on this question of registration is this: National Registration is a normal thing and since the Minister is conceding that it is not only registration for election, because people are being permitted from 14 years old, why is there so much secrecy in that office?

The Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Persaud you did not hear the statement at the independence park which said “You knoweth not when the bridegroom cometh.”?

Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud: Probably, sir, you are right. The Minister has visited in the role of a bridegroom and has not gone there like a normal subject like myself. The Registration Commissioner, Mr. Butler will recall that I went one day to collect the I.D. card for my wife. I was not permitted although I explained to the officer that I was told to come for it now. I was kept there for nearly 20 minutes. I had to persuade him to allow me to use the telephone so that I

could have got on to Mr. Butler. If there is nothing to hide, if everything is fair and honest and there is no dishonesty, then why a Registration Office is not an open place where people can go and perform their normal business? *[Interruption by Mr. Clarke.]*

Sir, the hon. Minister apparently does not even understand how the Office works. Outside the normal registration period, it does appear to me as an hon. Member of this House that you have to go to the central Office. As a matter of fact, for the information of the hon. Minister that is where I was able to obtain the I.D. card. So it is clear to me that that is where I had to go; it is no question of favour. Even if someone comes from the West Coast that person goes there. This is the practice.

Now, sir, according to the Constitution – *[Interruption]* the hon. Minister said next time he will give instructions that the I.D. card should not be issued. It shows the callousness and ruthlessness of the Minister. And where will this take him? It shows the type of Government we have. *[Interruption]*

The Chairman: I think that remarks or statement made by Members sitting and not addressed to this Chair ought not to be noticed. If you waste your time arguing when they are made it will not get us anywhere.

Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud: It is very vital to people that the necessary steps be taken to allow all-year registration so that people can be registered. The next point I make is that the Constitution provides for elections to be held not later than March 1974. One can reasonably assume that elections would be held by now and 1974. If this is so, we want to propose from this side of the House, first of all, that the Government amend the laws in keeping with the provisions for elections for the year 1968, to the laws that were operating in 1964 for elections. This is one proposal that we want to make that whatever amendments took place with respect to elections particularly on the question of proxy that we revert to the 1964 position in so far as proxy voting is concerned.

The second proposal I make is this: from experience, the Government has shifted from the position of allowing impartial person to be in command of the elections machinery. The Minister is asking me to name the impartial persons; I will name them. In 1964 and prior to 1964 Magistrates were the persons who were presiding officers and returning officers throughout this country; District Commissioners in general were person who were involved in the elections machinery. But the point I make here is that in 1968 only District Commissioners who are known to be supporters of the Government were allowed to be returning officers.

I move on from that point and I go to the other point. The other proposal we make is, when the vote is counted, in view of our own experience when the poll is closed the votes must be counted at each polling station. If the Government says that it has gained tremendous support, let it go fairly into elections and win but if it can nobody will complain. But if the Government conducts elections then surely it is only our right as Members of the House who want to sit here to point those things that we consider to be unfair; this is our purpose. I am sure if the hon. Members who are sitting over there now if they were on this side they would have been doing probably more than we are doing in so far as elections are concerned. It has been brought to our attention that there are persons who are collecting proxies at the moment although the date for elections has not been fixed. I wish the hon. Minister to tell this House what is the position. Is the Government involved in the collection of proxies? If the Government is not involved in the collection of proxies, will the hon. Minister undertake to issue a statement to the Press that anyone found collecting proxies and soliciting proxy forms to would-be voters would be prosecuted and people should desist from soliciting or affixing there signatures to proxy forms? *[Interruption by Mr. Clarke.]* The hon. Minister knows and I want to remind him that in 1964 the record is that under a fair system the People's Progressive Party won more seats than any other political party contesting the 1964 election and this is evidence of the fact that the P.P.P. commands the majority support in this country, and if elections are held under that same system like 1964 then I have no doubt in my mind that once again the People's Progressive Party will be victorious at the Polls.

Mr. Chairman, in my view the whole future of this country, the success of this country lies in fair elections as was so ably put forward by the hon. Member Dr. Ramsahoye. So long as we have unfair elections so long we will be compelled to complain on this side of the House. I wish to urge the hon. Minister to be dispassionate and to examine the proposals I have made and I would suggest a view to implementing them so that we could have a Government of the people's wish and will.

4.50 p.m.

Now the last item I want to speak on is subhead 6, Local Authorities Elections. There is a provision for \$5,000. Seeing that the Government has passed an Amendment to the Local Authorities Elections Act, would the hon. Minister tell us whether there will be local government elections during 1973, because there is a number of areas in this country which have not yet been brought under the Marshall Plan and it would be reasonable to assume that while elections might not be held in the areas in which elections were held in June and September, 1970, the Government can have elections in the areas which are not now under the Marshall Plan. If so, could the hon. Minister tell us if he is in a position now to say that in those areas, elections are going to be held in the year 1973?

My argument for national elections would be the same with respect to local government elections. They must be fair. We must change this corrupt elections system so that we can all feel proud of this country and not feel ashamed when we go abroad.

Mr. Balchand Persaud: the points I wish to make were made by the hon. Members who spoke before me, except that I wish to state that the P.P.P. had circulated a petition throughout the length and breadth of Guyana and, fortunately for our party, the petition was able to find over 66 percent support among the voting population of our country. The petition calls for free and fair elections in enumerating the six points of our party's demands, and I wish to seek your permission to read this petition to this House.

The Chairman: There is provision on the Order Paper for Petitions to be presented at a particular and proper time.

Mr. Balchand: It is a petition which the P.P.P. circulated.

The Chairman: I thought I was addressing you in respect of the question of the petition. You said you are not presenting a petition. What are you seeking to do?

Mr. Balchand Persaud: I only want to read excerpts from what 66 per cent of the voting population supported. They affixed their signatures to this petition.

The Chairman: Sixty-six per cent of the population of Guyana has affixed its signature to that petition?

Mr. Balchand Persaud: I am not presenting a petition. I only want to quote from the petition which was circulated by the People's Progressive Party and I wanted to show that 66 per cent of the people supported it.

“We who affix our signatures to this petition do so in the full knowledge and belief that unless the fundamental right of the people to elect the government of their choice is regained, Guyana will continue to be a land of sharp divisions, a land of unhappiness and despair and a land from which people will continue to flee in fear that more human rights will be outrageously denied.

The last General Election in 1968 was particularly distinguished by extensive and unprecedented electoral fraud – padded voters lists, proxy and overseas voting in which fraudulent votes were cast, and ballot box manipulation. Also, the Elections Commission was subverted and prevented from exercising its constitutional function supervising the registration of electors and the administrative conduct of that election.”

The Chairman: You say this was prepared by the P.P.P.?

Mr. Balchand Persaud: Yes, sir.

“So glaring were the numerous instances of electoral fraud that the United Kingdom Granada Television Company, which investigated the electoral fraud, in two films, namely, “The Trail of the Vanishing Voters” and “The Making of a Prime Minister” reported that, “A hanged man voted in the Guyana General Elections. So did children.” The Research Editor of the Company, Mr. Gush Macdonald commented: ‘It is my firm conclusion that the election inside Guyana was neither free nor fair.’ Mr. Humphrey Taylor, Director of Opinion Research Centre in the United Kingdom, which conducted an independent survey, said: ‘Obviously I don’t know what happened in Guyana but so far as Britain is concerned, the compilation of the register was a totally dishonest and corrupt operation. And, as we have clearly established, the great majority of people listed do not exist.’

And in Guyana we all know that there are thousands of names of person on the voters’ lists who did not exist, and for whom proxy voting was used. We all know of the ballot box in Essequibo which when opened for counting contained ballots tied together. These are only a few of the shocking and disgraceful acts of fraud which the PNC conducted and which were possible because PNC members were placed in all key positions of the electoral machinery.

To correct these grave injustices which have allowed an undemocratic minority regime to come to power, we, citizens of Guyana, demand the following:

1. The establishment of a genuine Elections Commission, outside Government control and with complete powers to supervise fully the registration of electors and the total administrative conduct of all future general elections.
2. Compilation of a new list of electors.
3. Vote at the age of eighteen.
4. Counting of ballots at the place of poll.
5. Abolition of overseas voting.
6. Abolition of proxy voting.

Until these basic demands are achieved, there can be no genuine unity, peace or progress in Guyana. The voice of the people must be heard. The will of the people shall overcome!”

Sir, over 66 per cent of the voting population of Guyana supported the petition circulated by the P.P.P.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Member Mr. Feilden Singh made a few remarks in relation to Elections Commission. I do not see any subhead or item dealing with Elections Commission so I will not deal with those remarks. The hon. Member also asked how would the \$5,000, provided under subhead 5, National Elections, be spent. He should wait and see how that money will be spent when National Elections take place. As a matter of fact, the hon. Member knows once there are national elections, money will have to be spent in their conduct, therefore, he should wait and see what the money will be spent on.

The hon. Member Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud asked about steps the department is taking to bring up to date the list of the national register, in pursuance of the objective of making the vote at eighteen possible. I do not know that this House has enacted any legislation to bring that provision into effect and until such time as this House gives effect to the decision of Government to make the age of majority eighteen, the hon. Member cannot ask me what the department is doing. The department cannot take steps to do something which is not authorized by law.

5 p.m.

The next question the hon. Member asked was what steps the Government is taking to remove from the existing national register people who are dead and non-existent. There is provision in the law for any organisation to challenge the list of electors whenever that list is open. The Opposition in this House is aware of those provisions and has never exercised the right which they have under the law. The hon. member must not come here and ask me what steps the Government is taking or what the Minister is doing. The Opposition has a right to

question and to move for the deletion of any names which it feels ought not to be on the list. It must use its right and must not come to this House and make those remarks.

The hon. member further asked when local government elections would be held. That was, in effect, what they asked. I do not know. The decision has not yet been taken and until that decision is taken I am not in a position to give the hon. member an answer.

The hon. Member Dr. Ramsahoye made his farewell contribution in this House. He said so. If it is his farewell contribution, I would like to feel that the hon. and learned Member is justified in making what he termed his farewell contribution. It is not for me in those circumstances to wish that the hon. Member were in this House or were indeed in this country to exercise his right to vote for the next government of this country. Indeed, such an opportunity will provide itself to the hon. Member even though he is not going to be resident in this country. I think that in the same way as the hon. Member will have such a right and such a responsibility it is incumbent upon him to recognise that others in his position overseas, who call themselves loyal Guyanese citizens, have a right to exercise the responsibility which is given to them under the Constitution.

I believe that the hon. Member understands and appreciates the need for this right to be given to those who, for one reason or another, find it impossible to be present in this country and to vote as a result of their being present here. But the constitution provides for persons who are resident abroad but who are domiciled in this country to exercise the franchise in our national elections. That provision is important not only to the individual but to this country in that it makes him feel that he has a place in the development of this country.

As a matter of fact, many of the Guyanese who live abroad make tangible contributions to the development of this country by the way of the savings which they remit and the interest which they take in several aspects of the country's development.

I feel that the hon. Member, if he is serious, will accept in this House that as a Guyanese he and all others who live abroad have a right to exercise their vote in national elections of this country.

The hon. Member Dr. Ramsahoye must not forget when he talks about unfair practices that there was a certain gasoline case. Not only people in this country but people abroad realized and were firmly of the view – the court observed upon it – that there were several unfair practices perpetuated in that constituency in which he ran as a candidate. He must remember that when he comes in this House to talk about unfair practices.

The hon. and learned Member went on, in the closing stages of his very eloquent speech, to say that whatever might have been the political exigencies in the past – I do not know what he meant by this remark, but I believe that he refers to the political exigencies of his own party – whatever might have been the political exigencies of the past he said we ought to forget them and we ought to strive in this country for better understanding and working towards a consensus. I agree with the hon. Member and that is why the People's National Congress will continue to strive for the unity of the people of this country and will through the election processes, have periodic elections so that the people of this country can express their wishes.

It would appear that the members of the main Opposition in this House cannot make up their minds about elections. At one time they talk about the glories of Cuba; at another time, when, it suits them, they forget that in Cuba there is no such thing as free and fair elections. There are no elections. And the Opposition comes to this House to tell us about free and fair elections, an Opposition which admires Fidel Castro. We must be consistent. We on this side of the House admire Castro; we admire Cuba but we realise that Guyana is not Cuba and that in Guyana there must be free and fair elections at periodic intervals and those elections will be held in this Country.

The hon. Member went further and he spoke about the proxy vote. The proxy vote, as the hon. Member admits, always existed. The only thing that has happened in the case of the proxy vote that whereas hitherto it was confined in terms of the limited categories of person who could exercise the vote by proxy, it now gives the opportunity to persons who for one reason or another may not find it possible to go to the polls on election day. There are several such persons and nothing prevents the Opposition from advising its supporters to exercise the use of the proxy vote. The trouble is we will always hear the noise from the other side. They have the opportunity to advise their supporters up and down this country to vote by proxy if they find it necessary, but they blame us because the People's National Congress has exercised a right laid down in the legislation which provides for elections in this country. The hon. Member Mr. R.D. Persaud goes to the extent of asking me whether I am aware that people are collecting proxies at this time; if I am aware would I make a statement. I am not aware of any such exercise.

The *Mirror* which is the mouthpiece of the People's Progressive Party has said over and over again in its publications – I think the whole world knows by this that people are collecting proxies. They have been carrying out a campaign of intimidation against people who are known to be their supporters in this country, people who have complained to the government. The agencies of the government which are responsible for the safety of people in this country have received complains also about harassment at the hands of the thugs of the Opposition.

Several cases come to my attention and I do not want to enter into the useless dialogue of trying to convince hon. Members on that side of the House about my not knowing and my complete absence of knowledge of the situation in so far as these incidents are concerned. It is reported in the *Mirror*. I do not know of the exercise. I also know that the *Mirror* has been carrying out a campaign and that a number of decent citizens in this country have been harassed by the P.P.P. thugs.

I say that proxy voting is legitimate. Proxy voting is something which is provided for by law. It is the right of the Opposition to get people to vote by proxy if it so wished and it is the right of the Government to get people to vote by proxy if it is found necessary to do so. I am not in any way worried by the statements the members of the Opposition continue to make. Because the Opposition has found it necessary to play the old record of rigged elections, of the need for free and fair elections in a country where there are periodic elections which the whole world knows are free and fair elections. They have found it necessary to say this because they have nothing else to talk about. What are they going to say to their erstwhile supporters who have found that contrary to the noise which they make up and down the country, if they look through their windows there is development which steers them in the face. That is the position. There must be an end to the Opposition getting up in this House and screaming: "Free and fair elections", "No proxies", "No overseas vote." There must be an end to this because people in this country are going to judge them. The time is not far when the people of this country are going to judge them. At the next general elections I am sure that the people of this country will overwhelmingly prove to them that they have not been able to lead this country and will never again be given an opportunity to do so.

Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud: Sir, the hon. Minister of Home Affairs points to provisions in the laws that give people the right to object to voters to take the necessary steps to have names that ought not to be on the List to be removed. The hon. Minister is not unaware of the fact efforts along this line were proven futile. Because the agencies in whose hands the authority of the laws lie are all hacks of the People's National Congress and are not impartial people.

I make the other point for the education of the hon. Minister when he speaks about the laws. If he reads the 1968 Elections Report he will see a confession of a breach of the Peoples Representation Act, because the person preparing that Report said that there was such massive use of proxies that the staff available could not state exactly when that Report was being written how many proxies were used for the 1968 elections. It is an admission of rigging, of

vagabondage, of ruthless fraud of the elections by this minority Government. The hon. Minister fails to recognise the fact that by this process of rigging the Government is denying more than half of the population of this country the right to participation positively in the decision-making body of this country, and this is the root of the complaint of this country. No development will come about in Guyana unless people are satisfied that they are entitled to take part in the highest forum. *[Interruption]*

The Chairman: Hon. Member, will you please continue? *[Interruption]* Order please. Hon. Member, will you please confine your remarks to those made by the Minister, if he has not answered any point you have raised or if he has said something which is not correct?

Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud: I merely want to put the Minister in the true perspective of the situation so that he will be able to appreciate as he sits here. I was saying that the laws provided in the various Acts are ineffective because laws have to be administered by the people and if the people in whose hands the administration of the laws falls are part and parcel of the Government then the laws become ineffective and useless. Do not refer us to the law. I asked the question about voting at 18 and what action is being taken to put that principle accepted by the Government into operation. The Minister said there is no law at the moment. But what I was suggesting to the Minister is that the necessary step has to be taken so that the law can be promulgated and passed for that principle to be then put into effect. Is the hon. Minister telling us this afternoon that although majority age has been accepted at 18 that voting will not be permitted at the next General Elections? Because if the elections must be held not later than March 1974 then it does appear Government does not want to give effect to its own decision.

I say in conclusion and take my seat that the main complaint in this country is elections. **[Mr. Hoyte: "By whom?"]** By everybody! The Government does not want us to say anything about elections. But every other development in this country depends on a fair electoral system, and when it comes to the type of election Guyana has, it is unless the Minister telling us that elections are going to be held periodically and those elections have no meaning. Imagine the

Minister is saying when the elections are held the people will overwhelmingly vote for the P.N.C.

The Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Persaud, please wind up.

5.20 p.m.

Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud: Yes, sir. That is a hint of the extent of rigging we must expect at the next elections.

Mr. M.F. Singh: The hon. Minister went to great lengths to tell us that proxy voting is perfectly okay, it is permitted by the law and it should not be criticized, that every person is entitled to cast his vote by proxy under the law, if he so wishes, if he falls within the category of the people who can cast their votes by proxy. And we know that is very liberal. Indeed, I quoted where people, who never consented to cast other people's votes by proxy, had letters delivered under their doors asking them to cast votes by proxy. I have a record which I used in this House before. This is the kind of thing which happens:

“Dear Comrade,

You have been appointed to stand as proxy for the following voters”,

And they list the names of the voters,

“you have to vote for three person at the same time when you go to the polls to vote for yourself. Please vote as early as possible. Be at the polling place at 5 o'clock in the morning. Avoid the rush. Vote P.N.C. for victory.”

And here is a photostat copy of the appointment of proxy. The man whose name is put here, never knew the person. Never consented to vote for the person, but because of the colour of his skin, he is told to go and vote for the person by proxy. What a fraud!

The hon. Minister says that proxy voting is provided for by law. It is also provided for in the law that four days before elections the list of proxies must be published. I want to ask the hon. Minister: has the list been published? The law requires that four days before, that list of proxies must be made available, the law passed in Parliament by this P.N.C. majority in 1968. It is available now? Let them tell us about this aspect of the law. Will they publish the list of proxies? Do not quote law in one respect and ignore it in another respect. Let us observe the law in its entirety. Let us observe the law in respect of the Elections Commission. Let us observe the law in respect of the list of proxies to be published. It is hypocritical to keep quoting the law in one respect and ignoring it in another. Let the Minister tell us. When will the list of proxies be published?

The Chairman: Hon. Minister, do you wish to reply?

Mr. Clarke: No, Sir.

Head 23, Ministry of Home Affairs, Registration and Elections - \$555,209 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: pages 74 and 75.

**HEAD 24 – MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS
PROBATION AND WELFARE SERVICE**

Question proposed that the sum of \$437,296 for Head 24, Ministry of Home Affairs, Probation and Welfare Service, stand part of the Estimates.

Mrs. DaSilva: Page 75, subheads 13 and 16.

Mr. Sutton: Page 75, subheads 10 and 11.

The Chairman: Hon. member Mrs. DaSilva.

Mrs. DaSilva: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a short comment and to ask for some explanation. Subhead 13 deals with the grant to the Salvation Army for after-care work, and subhead 6 deals with the grant to the Salvation Army for the Belfield Girls' School.

Dealing first with the grant to the Salvation Army for after-care work, would the hon. Minister tell us what prospects are held out for these young people after they have been in remand, or they have been in the boys' school, or they have been in any sort of trouble that make them come into contact with the police, and after they have been looked after and an eye kept on them? We in Guyana are hard on people when they make mistakes. I am sure the hon. Minister knows this, that prisoners find it difficult to get employment. The people who have been in the tuberculosis hospital also find it difficult to get employment. Could the hon. Minister tell us what progress is being made in this after-care work, what hope there is for these young people getting employment?

Subhead 16. I am very pleased to see that the Cabinet has seen fit to up the grant from \$33,000 to \$35,000 for the maintenance and expenses of the Belfield Girls' School. The Salvation Army people are doing an excellent job there. They are providing work and services that the State should provide for its people, and they deserve every help they can get.

5.30 p.m.

Mr. Sutton: Mr. Chairman, this is just a simple question. I should like to know whether the Minister can enlighten us on this matter so that we will be about to follow more closely the general situation.

We notice on subhead 10, Bakery, subhead 101, Issues of Bread, a forecast of what is expected from the bakery which supplies the Probation and Welfare Services. In 1970 the actual

amount utilized was \$10,637 and the return from issues of bread was \$11,234, a small profit. In 1971 the actual expenses were \$12,404. A slight loss was carried as shown by the difference between that and \$10,720 derived from the issues of bread. In 1972 the Approved Estimate calls for \$12,000 and it seems that they will break even because the estimate for the issues of bread is \$12,000. We also notice that the projected expenses for 1973 amount to \$12,000 and the issues of bread will show a profit of \$500.

After mentioning these figures, the question I wish to ask is this: Will the Minister tell us how the profits or losses are arrived at? In other words, will he state very clearly whether the established market prices are used when the profit or loss is calculated?

Mr. Clarke: I should like to thank that hon. Member for congratulating the Government on making the Belfield School a better place for those children who find it necessary to be confined there.

The hon. Member also asked about the provision which is made to assist the Salvation Army in caring for those unfortunate children who fall to be dealt with by that organisation. He went further to ask what does the department do in relation to their welfare after they leave the Salvation Army and what their prospects are.

The Probation and Welfare Department is always providing normal probation and after care services with respect to the children who fall to be dealt with by the approved school and by the institutions of this type. Among other things this department assists young people to find jobs. It also makes arrangements for them to get into trades and so forth so as to bring them closer to rehabilitation than they would otherwise be. This is a continuing process and the result of its efforts have been good.

In the case of the bakery, the hon. Member Mr. Sutton wishes to know if only a small amount is made as a return on the investment. I think that this basically was his question. I am

not in a position to say what price is asked, but the amount stated as revenue here is the amount which accrues from the sale of bread which is baked and which is produced by the institution in Essequibo. The amount of \$12,200 is what is anticipated as revenue from the sale of bread.

I do not know what the price is. What I know is that in addition to this amount the cost of the supply of bread to the school itself is in the vicinity of \$6,000 a year. We feel that the money provided, \$12,000, is sufficient to provide flour and other ingredients which go into the making of bread. Unless I misunderstood the hon. Member's question, this is what he wanted to know.

Mr. Sutton: It is quite a simple exercise. The question has been asked whether bread is supplied at current market prices. Certainly the Minister realizes that if you have a commodity and you show a loss at current market prices all you have to do is to put your book price at a figure which will show a profit. We want the Minister to tell us whether the bread is made available to the institution at current market prices or below market prices.

Mr. Clarke: I have just been advised by my officers that the price at which the bread is sold is below market prices.

Head 24, Ministry of Home Affairs, Probation and Welfare Services - \$437,296, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

HEAD 25 – MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS REGISTRATION, IMMIGRATION, BIRTHS, ETC.

Question proposed that the sum of \$125,203 for Head 25, Ministry of Home Affairs, Registration, Immigration, Births, etc. stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. R.D. Persaud: I just wish to ask a question on subhead 4, Photographic Supplies. The sum of \$760 is small for Photographic Supplies. I wonder if the hon. Minister will explain

what photographic supplies are used for in registration, immigration, births, and so on. If this had been under the subhead National Registration I would appreciate that it was for the I.D. card or the police. As it appears under immigration and births I want to know what the sum is used for.

Mr. R.D. Persaud: I am glad that this department has finally found itself under the proper Ministry, but I wish to draw to the attention of the hon. Minister a few matters which are affecting members of the public.

As a result of a large number of faculty registrations, person found themselves in the position where they have had to go to the courts very regularly to have their birth certificates corrected. For instance, names were registered in the column provided for the name of the child and the surname is also inserted in that column; in the column the father's name is stated.

The question as to whether a child is born under wedlock or outside of wedlock is not material because if the father of the child turns up for identification he can have his name inserted.

The point I make is this; Let us assume that the child's name is Arjune but the surname is also there in the column and it is given as Arjune Persaud. In the father's column you have John Arjune. When the time of marriage arrives the person is married as Arjune Persaud Persaud. Many people object to this.

5.40 p.m.

I want to ask the hon. Minister to examine the legality of declaring a period to allow people to make these corrections on a simple form and to give the Registrar the right without going to the Court to make those corrections on the birth certificate. I do not know if the hon. Minister will be willing to consider this proposal. I think it is a reasonable one.

The second one deals with the type of birth certificate issued. I want to suggest that finally we should change the type of birth certificate and have a smaller one keeping in line with international standards, where just the child's name, date and place of birth should be on the certificate.

The next point is a controversial one not so far as the Government is concerned but in the country. Recently, the Registrar was asked by the Guyana Pandit Council not to allow unauthorized pandits to perform legal marriage. The point I make here is this, the Pandits Council has made this request to the Registrar. On the other hand, the Maha Sabha, through its representative, has opposed the proposal by the Pandits Council, quite correctly. Because the position is that it is not a question of unauthorised pandits, it is a question where the Council feels that they are the only ones who must authorize pandits to perform marriages. We have a number of Hindu Organisations in this country and over 120 Temples. This would be tantamount to denying people religious freedom for the Pandit Council to say who must perform legal marriages. Because when Chapter 104, section 142 is examined, and it is under this section that marriages are performed, Hindu and Muslim marriages, there is no provision in that section or any other section of Chapter 104 that gives the Pandits that right. They seek to convey to the Registrar that this right is given to them under the Pandits Council Act. If the legal experts feel that his is so then this Government through one of its Back Benchers must come back and amend the Pandits Council Act. This must be a question for the Registrar and not for any organisation. This is a matter for Government and not for any organisation.

I want to ask the hon. Minister of Home Affairs to protect the Registrar in so far as this issue is concerned and let him continue to exercise his powers under Chapter 104 of the laws of Guyana.

The last point is very small. For years probably before I was born, the marriage fee was fixed at 40 cent. This is ridiculously low and I think it should be increased. Now let me say for the information of the hon. Prime Minister that I have never collected one cent from marriages

performed under this law. As a matter of fact the Registrar has said year after year I have never taken a cent.

Mr. Clarke: Mr. Chairman, if the hon. member Mrs. DaSilva were to look at subhead 1, item 4, she will see that provision is made for micro photographer; since we have a micro photographer then it is only reasonable that we need micro films for the micro photographer to use. In fact, they photograph records so that they can be preserved.

The hon. Member Mr. Persaud asked a number of questions. It is true that the information I think given by parents from time to time is inadequate and sometimes the parents insist on putting down the surnames. In the Law Revision Act which was passed in this House there is provision for the Minister to make an Order to give the Registrar the authority to make corrections. I have a feeling that as soon as the Order is made the Registrar will examine this particular situation. The next point raised by the hon. Member is in relation to birth certificates. This question was already raised by the Registrar at the Committee dealing with the legitimacy and abortion, and no doubt a report from that committee will take into account the points raised by the hon. Member.

5.50 p.m.

The point which the hon. Member makes about the provision in the law for the Pandits Council to decide who should be marriage officers is an important point, and I can assure the hon. member that I shall have the matter looked into with a view to taking a firm decision during 1973.

The last point the hon. member made concerns the marriage fee. I am in no position to give any undertaking that the marriage fee will be increased or reduced and, therefore, I think the hon. member will have to wait until someone can give him that authority later on.

Head 25, Ministry of Home Affairs, Registration, Immigration, Births, etc. - \$125,203 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: page 77.

DIVISION XII – MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS

Question proposed that the sum of \$1,305,900 for Division XII, Ministry of Home Affairs, stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Ram Karran: Subhead 9.

Mr. Balchand Persaud: Subhead 6.

Mrs. DaSilva: Subheads 2 and 4.

Mr. Sutton: Subheads 11 and 12.

The Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran.

Mr. Ram Karran: The Government must have gone in for the horse breeding, and we notice an item for the purchase of horses. I wonder whether the hon. Minister could tell us, whether sometime in the future, the Government will be in a position to supply itself with horses, how many horses are to be purchased with the \$8,000, what is the strength of the mounted force at the moment, and whether the Government intends to expand the force in relation to horses.

Mr. Balchand Persaud: Subhead 6, Stations. The legend says: To provide for the construction of three new stations and the reconstruction of the lock-ups at the Brickdam. Where are these three new stations to be built?

Mrs. DaSilva: I see some enlightenment from the hon. Minister about the prison improvements. I remember when the hon. Member Mr. Wilson was talking, he commented on the fact that when one visited the prisons, there was a great deal of noise because say fifteen person and fifteen visitors were speaking at the same time. Could the hon. Minister tell us what form these improvements will take, how they hope to achieve them, what they hope to do, and which prisons, would it be Georgetown, New Amsterdam?

Similarly, with the approved schools, subhead 4, the legend says: To provide for training facilities, the construction of 2 buildings and for the purchase of miscellaneous equipment, where will the buildings be constructed, what sort of equipment, and what type of training, will the Minister please tell us?

Mr. Sutton: I hope the hon. Minister would be good enough to clear up one or two dark spots in my mind in relation to subhead 11, Boats, an subhead 12, Equipment, in relation to the Fire Service. Those of us who have been following these things have been told for a long time that the Lady Wolley was due for replacement but owing to financial stringency from which we have been suffering for such a long time, it has never been possible to replace this boat which has been in service for longer than it should have been. Apart from the fact that the Lady Woolley is operating way below normal efficiency level, we also notice that he Lady Wolley is still being used for emergency service across the ferry from Vreed-en-Hoop, when there are accidents and people have to be brought over in a hurry.

We were told that arrangements were made,, and money was voted in this House, far a special boat, which would be linked with the Ambulance Service, to be built and equipped in order to do this job, bringing emergency cases from the West Coast, but there is no evidence of the appearance of that boat. I speak subject to correction, that the money for this boat was voted sometime ago and it should have been built and possibly in service. Can the Minister tell us what is taking place as far as this boat is concerned?

Under subhead 11, Boats, there is no allocation for 1973. We notice on subhead 12, Equipment, there is a capital allocation of \$280,000, and when we look at the legend, we find it is to provide for the purchase of two foam crash tenders, three water fire tenders, and other miscellaneous equipment. Possibly due in my case to lack of knowledge, I wonder whether these water tenders and foam crash tenders can take the place of the Lady Wolley, or they are in addition to the a Lady Wolley, and it is not yet possibly to pull the Lady Wolley out of service although it is so old.

Would the Minister tell us, one, about the money for the ambulance boat which was voted to relieve the Lady Woolley or other fire boat from the service of bringing emergency cases from Vreed-en-Hoop, and two, whether the foam crash tenders, that are mentioned in the legend, and the three water fire tenders are in addition to the Lady Woolley or whether they will take the place of the Lady Woolley and, at least, allow this dear old boat to have a rest from service, which she is inadequately equipped and maintained to do?

6 p.m.

Mr. Clarke: Mr. Chairman, the answer to the question by the hon. Member Mer. Ram Karran is as follows: Provision has been made for horse breeding stations to be established and the votes of the Ministry of National Development and Agriculture will show that provision. The money provided here for the purchase of horses will provide us, we believe, with five or six horses, depending on the price.

The hon. Member Mr. Balchand Persaud asked where were the stations going to be built. They are going to be built at Mibkuri in Black Bush Polder and Aishalton in the Rupununi. The third station is to be built in the Greater Georgetown area. The particular site for the station has not yet been properly identified.

The hon. Member Mrs. DaSilva wanted to know where the prison improved will take place. It will take place at Georgetown and Mazaruni principally. In fact, it will take place at all three of the prisons. In Georgetown we hope to be able to do a lot of rehabilitation of the several parts of the prison which are in a state of disrepair at the moment. At Mazaruni we hope to establish new trade shops and to expand the existing facilities for training.

The amount provided under subhead 4, Approved Schools, is provided for the provision of a workshop at the Essequibo Boys' School and for the equipment for that workshop.

Finally, the hon. Member Mr. Sutton wanted to know about the new fire boats. I can tell him that the new fire boat went on a trial run earlier this week and will be put into service very soon. The fire department already has an ambulance launch which is operating across the Demerara River to bring patients in a comfortable manner.

The next question was in relation to the foam tenders and crash tenders. The foam tenders will be for the aerodrome fire service, as I explained to the hon. Member Mr. Jagan earlier, the crash tenders are the normal water tenders which are used for service wherever the fire services locations are found. What we proposed to do is to distribute these to the existing locations. One is specifically ordered for the Linden Fire Station which is to be completed in new year. The Lady Wolley is old and will have to be put out of service when the new boat is put into service.

Division 12, Ministry of Home Affairs - \$1,305,900 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

HEAD 26 – MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Question proposed that the sum of \$864,046 for Head 26, Ministry of Local Government, stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Hon. Members, I wish to make a slight correction in subhead 1, item (5). The words “Assistant Secretary” should be substituted for the words “Executive Officer and Secretary Local Government Board” with effect from the 23rd September, 1972.

Mrs. DaSilva: On page 79 subhead 1, items (7), (11), (13) and (18). I should like to take these together.

Mr. Hamid: Subhead 1, items (5), (11), (13) and (17). On page 80, at subhead 17 there is an amendment standing in my name, sir.

Mr. Wilson: Subhead 13.

Mrs. DaSilva. May I say sir, that when I was booking the items on which I wanted to speak, I did not turn over the page and tell you the items on page 80. I should like to speak on subhead 4, 13, 14 and 16.

First of all on subhead 1, items (7), (11), (13) and (18). It appears that there are vacancies in these positions. Dealing with item (7), Assistant District Commissioners. In 1972 the Approved Estimate was \$42,152; in the Revised Estimates for 1972 only \$28,683 was expected to be spent. I see we are now being asked to vote \$40,448. It appears that vacancies are existing in this department for Assistant District Commissioners. Could the Minister tell us how many vacancies there are and how soon they will be filled?

The same applies to Valuation Officers, subhead 1, item (11). In 1972 the sum of \$26,064 was approved and in the Revised Estimate only \$13,974 was to be used. Now we are asking for \$23,766. Again it appears that there are vacancies in this department.

Subhead 1, item (13), Field Assistants; in 1972 \$35,513 was approved, the Revised Estimates shows that only \$26,052 was expected to be spent. We come back now and asked for

\$33,447 and in subhead 1, item (18), the clerical Establishment, the sum of \$139,802 was approved in 1972 Estimates, but only \$128,590 appears in the Revised Estimate. We are now asking for \$143,978.

6.10 p.m.

Could the hon. Minister say? There appears to be a lot of vacancies in this section of the Ministry, vacancies involving the important decisions, people doing necessary work, could the hon. Minister say if the complement is now full or it is so inadequate, if vacancies still exist, how soon will the vacancies be filled? Could I turn over the page and continue, sir?

The Chairman: Yes.

Mrs. DaSilva: On page 80, I want to ask questions on subheads 4 and 13. I want to deal with these first together to make a point to the Minister of Local Government. It is often said that we in the Opposition never offer any constructive help to Government, we come here year after year and we never give any help or any suggestions. I have two suggestions to put forward. I hope they will be acceptable to the Government because we feel these are suggestions of interest to the nation; it is not a question of party politics.

Subhead 4, Telephones, it seems a very good place to put what I want to talk about and it applies to the local authorities, because the hardship is felt in the rural areas; I am thinking of those people far away. The vandalism of people breaking up the telephones and more often than not the telephones are not working. The Telephone Company cannot repair them fast enough, as soon as they are repaired, they are broken again. I have a suggestion to put. I do not have a scientific mind, but I believe we have people in Guyana, and it is possible that an electronic device could be installed so that when people tamper and damage the telephone equipment – I believe it is possible those who know this kind of thing could make something like that – it will automatically fly and lock them in the telephone booth; they cannot get to. They will have to

knock and attract attention; in the meantime a person can go and get the police and arrest these people for wilful damage. These telephones which are continually out of order pose a great hardship - particularly to the people in the rural areas; sometimes it is a matter of life and death trying to get a doctor.

Under subhead 13, Grants to Village Authorities towards Administrative Expenses. This is another suggestion and maybe at another time it can be done in the form of a Motion. The local authorities are spread up and down the length and breadth of the country; they are people who are in contact with the nation every day. We have in Guyana, as in many countries of the world, people who are sick, people who are disabled person. These people do not want to live by charitable institutions or whatever the Government hands out by way of pittance. These people have their pride, they would like to be able to contribute and support themselves; and because they are chronically disabled or sick, it does not necessarily mean that they cannot play their part. I should like to suggest to the hon. Minister that the time will come when we will and it should come through local authorities, have a Bill to establish the chronic, sick and disabled persons we have. This can be done in conjunction with the Red Cross, St. John's, Lions to find out how many they are that can contribute. Maybe some little skill might be able to make them independent and give them a means of living instead of depending on charity. It should be our duty in this House to think of this. Those are the two suggestions to the hon. Minister for considerations.

Going back to subheads 13, 14 and 16. Subhead 13 deals with Grants to Village Authorities towards Administrative Expenses. Year after year the same amount is asked for, \$7,120, and Grants to Morawhanna Village District \$800. Could the hon. Minister say why, first of all, is Morawhanna District treated separately? Could the hon. Minister explain in subhead 13 how the \$7,120 is distributed? Who gets how much? What sort of yardstick is used to measure how much each village is given?

Mr. Chairman, under subhead 16, just a small question. The sum of \$30,000 every year for the New Amsterdam roads, 1971, 1972, 1973. Why it is the roads in New Amsterdam are still in such a bad condition?

Mr. Wilson: Subhead 13, Grants to Village Authorities towards Administrative Expenses. The point I wish to make is that there ought to be worked out some guideline, some principle by which grants would be provided to local authorities and they should not be given at the whims and caprices of the Minister. Perhaps I can give some concrete suggestions. We talk regionally about less developed countries. There are also less developed local authority areas, or less depressed areas. There must be some rating for the giving of grants to such areas. A local authority might show great initiative and it should be encouraged in this perhaps, in providing recreational ground, health centres and kindergarten schools.

6.20 p.m.

There should be some way by which people can be given some incentive so that other local authorities will try to emulate, and in that way improve the living conditions and the various social facilities in the district.

The other day I mentioned the very primitive type of planning which was done. Of course, we have to give credit to our forebears who, when they left the estates as slaves, pooled their money co-operatively and purchased their lands. At that time, they lived more or less communally, there were no fences to the lots as the lots were very long, and they are so up to now. The local authorities should concern themselves about these things too.

The Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Wilson, this Head has 45 minutes. Twenty minutes have already gone.

Mr. Wilson: I was not aware, sir. Anyway, there should be some system, some guide lines by which local authorities could know how they could be entitled, and this system must also be an incentive to local authorities to improve conditions in their areas. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Hamid: Dealing with item (5), I was a bit surprised at this particular head that deals with Secretary to the local Government Board. I just said that it was changed to Assistant Secretary and the wording should be deleted.

Mr. Hamid: I was wondering whether it means Assistant Secretary, Local government Board. That is different.

Item (11), Valuation Officers. If we look at the legend, realizing that the hon. Minister said that many local authorities cannot function because of not being able to collect their rates and taxes, put the blame completely on the valuation, and as many of us can recall, in most local authorities if not all, the valuation officer was more or less handpicked. Maybe they were boat builders, carpenters, masons, and so forth, and as such, it seems they never had that knowledge of assessment and so they charged and discriminated.

The hon. Minister said many of the residents in local authorities had to take legal action against the local authorities concerned, so that they would be able to stop this excessive form of valuation. Many of the poor people could not afford to pay. There was discrimination where someone had a particular home and because of ethnic origin or political persuasion he was discriminated against in the charging of exorbitant rates and taxes. I made reference to this in my last speech.

Coupled with this, the emphasis that the hon. Minister made, should really go a little further to show that here you would have had an increase in the number of valuation officers to cope with the volume of work, and at least to change those who are incapable of such a job. The

hon. Minister must realize that local government will not function, and will not do so for quite some time because of this sort of approach in which these so-called members of local authorities are concerned.

The Chairman: What do you mean by “so-called.” [Mr. Balchand Persaud: “Selected.”]

Mr. Hamid: Sir, the opinion was expressed already. I do not want to repeat myself as to how they came into being. I think it is a foregone conclusion. The hon. Minister should tell us what is responsible for not putting under this head more valuation officers to cope with the volume of work, and those that are capable of doing such a job. Here we had it that local government elections were postponed because local authorities could not collect rates and taxes to carry on the developmental work. This was responsible, because officers that were put there, and valuation officers, were not capable of coping with such business.

I should like the hon. Minister to be specific in his answer, to let us know why there is no increase, and if this will indeed solve the problem of valuation in local authorities throughout the country.

Subhead 13, Grants to Village Authorities Towards Administrative Expenses. I view this as money which must have been allocated for training of officers and maybe overseers so that they can administer in a better way.

The Chairman: This head has 45 minutes, and 30 have already gone.

Mr. Hamid: I see there is no improvement here also, from the very last time when elections were held. It is the same amount that was voted and is continuing to be voted. I wonder what will be the hon. Minister’s answer because he said also in his public statement in the newspapers, that the reason for local authorities not functioning was because the officers of

local authorities, instead of finding it possible to administer the local authorities, they found themselves in shops and restaurants, having chicken in the rough and drinking rum.

This seems not to be so because in many local authorities, the P.N.C. group is using local authorities for their group meetings and this sum of money voted could very well go in the direction of assisting P.N.C. groups. This is a bad thing because if people are going to pay their rates and taxes, they must pay back their grants or loans or whatever assistance is given them by the central government. If we must have more autonomy, surely, from the administrative point of view we must be able to have more money voted to train more officers to function in the true sense of the word.

On subhead 17, Allowance to Members of Local Government Board, I see the hon. Member Mr. Remington has put forward a Motion.

The Chairman: You have the hon. Member Mr. Remington, the hon. Member Mr. Lall, and the hon. Minister to reply.

6.30 p.m.

Mr. Hamid: Grants to the Local Government Board: The Local Government Board is a defunct Board; it does not exist.

The Chairman: Are you speaking on the Motion?

Mr. Hamid: I am not speaking on the Motion; I am speaking on what is stated here. When the time comes for the Motion that will be debated again. I ask that some explanation be given for this.

Mr. Lall: Sir, under subhead 16, Contributions towards Maintenance of Roads and Streets in Georgetown, provision is made to give a grant of \$30,000 to the New Amsterdam Municipality. Since I have been in this council, I have advocated year after year that more money should be granted by the central government to build roads in New Amsterdam.

Although the New Amsterdam Council received a grant of \$30,000 in 1970, the roads are getting worse every day. When one speaks to the Mayor of New Amsterdam or the councilors they indicate that it is the Government's responsibility to build the main roads. The street leading from the Town Hall, Pit Street, is in the most deplorable condition and it is one of the main cross streets. Do not let me tell you about the other streets.

We had thought that when we got party politics in New Amsterdam there would have been some improvement, but what have we seen? We have seen a backward change. *[Interruption]* I am asking the Government that whenever it has to issue loans, or give grants to any local authority, it must also give technical assistance because I do not think that in New Amsterdam we have technical advisers to give advice. I see the hon. Minister of Finance becoming restless. I want to invite him to the swimming pool that was built there three years ago and he will see what is swimming in it. He will find camouduies, crabs, alligators.

I want to draw to the attention of the House the fact that the taxes that the citizens of New Amsterdam are called upon to pay are every high. I am paying over \$350 a year. There are many property owners. What service are they getting for the taxes paid? This is due to the people put there by the P.N.C. to represent the citizens of New Amsterdam. The hon. Members should go there and see for themselves. See whether you will take credit that these are your councillors. My hon. Friend the Prime Minister took Lady Burnham to New Amsterdam the other day in the large Austin car.

The Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Harry Lall, do you wish the hon. Member Mr. Remington to speak on this Head and the Minister to reply?

Mr. Lall: I want to say that the Prime Minister was going to visit the housing scheme and the exhaust of his car blow out like a bomb. The Prime Minister flew out on one side of the car and Lady Burnham flew out on the other side. It was a hell of a scene in New Amsterdam. I went right away to the scene because the Prime Minister is my friend. It was a bad road that broke the exhaust. I am now calling on the Minister of Local Government to scrutinise the running of the affairs of the municipality of New Amsterdam.

Mr. Remington: Mr. Chairman, the Motion standing in my name under Head 26, Ministry of Local Government, is that the provision be reduced by \$4,500 by leaving out subhead 17, Allowances to Members of Local Government Board.

I want to deal with this properly. On 23rd September, 1972, the Legal Supplement of the *Official Gazette* contained the following at page 67:

“Local Government Ordinance (Cap. 150) Long Title

Substitute the following for the long title –

‘An Ordinance to make provision for local government in village districts, country districts and rural districts and for matters related thereto.’

Throughout this Ordinance, substitute the word ‘Minister’ for the word ‘board’ whenever the word appears except in section 10.”

I am saying that it is clearly stated here in subhead 17 – Allowances to Members of Local Government Board”.

The Chairman: It is stated in the amendment except in section 10.

Mr. Remington: Let me read from Part 1 – Central Administration:

“3. (1) For the purpose of this Ordinance there shall continue to be constituted a Board to be called the Local Government Board (hereinafter referred to as the ‘The board’) vested with powers, duties and functions in this Ordinance mentioned, and with all the property movable and immovable and all the rights, liabilities and obligations of the Local Government Board which is constituted under the Local Government Ordinance.

(2) The Board shall consist of ten members.”

The Ordinance speaks of a “Board” and whenever the word “Board” appears it means

“Local Government Board”. I shall like the Minister to inform this House whether the members serving on this Board were officially notified that they were no longer members of the Board.

Amendment proposed.

The Minister of Local Government (Mr. Salim): Mr. Chairman, when the estimates were submitted the Board was not yet abolished and by an administrative arrangement the amount of \$4,500 will be frozen and the Government cannot accept the Amendment.

The Chairman: Can you please, hon. Member, go on and answer the other points raised?

Mr. Salim: Official notices were sent to the members of the Local Government Board at the end of September thanking them for the services they have offered to the Ministry in that capacity.

The Chairman: Will you please go on to reply to the hon. member Mrs. DaSilva?

Mr. Salim: First, the two posts of Assistant District Commissioner will be filled as soon as accommodation can be found for them. As regards Valuation Officers there are still two vacancies and we have two person being trained abroad. As soon as those persons have completed their training there will be a full complement.

As regards Field Assistants there are still two vacancies. It is difficult to find people to fill these two vacancies. As soon as we can find suitable persons the vacancies will be filled.

The question of welfare services was raised. The Local Authorities are empowered under the law to offer welfare services but because of the limited funds and because of people not paying up their rates and taxes very much of this type of service cannot be offered.

The grant to Morawhanna is to maintain a sea defence near the Police Station. Hon. Members who have travelled to Morawhanna will know the area and the position of the sea defence and this amount is to maintain the sea defence. The other grants are made to village districts where Government properties exist and where rates are not paid. The question about the grants to be given to New Amsterdam is to assist the New Amsterdam Town Council to carry out the maintenance of the Council's roads. At the moment, the Town Council has started a \$1 million road project; bonds were sold and \$1 million was realised and the construction of roads has started.

As regards telephones raised by the hon. member Mrs. DaSilva, these telephones are used by the Ministry and officers throughout the country, the District Administration Offices.

Mrs. DaSilva: Mr. Chairman, may I make a point of correction merely for clarification? I do not criticize the use of the telephones where they are used. I was merely using the item Telephone as appears under Local Authority, as a means of getting across my suggestion which I hope the Minister will accept. Because it is in the interest of the Government to get these telephones in order.

Amendment put, and negative.

Head 26, Ministry of Local Government - \$864,046, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Page 81.

6.40 p.m.

DIVISION XIII – MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Question proposed that the sum of \$561,500 for Division XIII, Ministry of Local Government stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Hamid: I wish to speak generally on this Head.

Mr. Wilson: Subhead 5.

Mr. Ally: Subhead 1.

Mr. Chairman: I do not know how all of you are going to speak. We have already exhausted this head by 20 minutes.

Mrs. DaSilva: I just want to ask a short question on subhead 2.

Mr. Remington: Subhead.

The Chairman: Hon. member Mr. Ram Karran I propose to cut down the Head of Agriculture tomorrow. We have already exceeded this time as allocated by over 20 minutes. Hon. member Mrs. DaSilva.

Mrs. DaSilva: Mr. Chairman, subhead 2, Loans to Local Authorities \$250,000 capital expenditure. I wonder if the hon. Minister would tell us what set of rules they have out of which these loans are paid to the different local authorities? How do they decide who gets what? I

understand that other places were working under the Marshall Plan have a set of rules that are followed and used as guidelines for the allocation. Could the Minister say how it operates in Guyana?

6.50 p.m.

How do you decide what you give Buxton and Belfield as against what you give Black Bush Polder and Bush Lot? Could we please have some information?

The Chairman: The hon. Member Mr. Roshan Ally.

Mr. R. Ally: Under subhead 1, to meet the initial expenses in setting up new Local Authorities and to provide for training of councillors and officers, I wish the hon. Minister would tell us whether these new local authorities, which they intend to set up, will be holding elections, or these councillors will be nominated councillors. I only hope that there will be fair and free elections to have these councillors, because at the moment, this was within the knowledge of the hon. Minister, there are many councillors today who have tendered their resignations as councillors, but the Local Government Board up to today has not accepted the resignations. And there are many councillors who deliberately absent themselves from three consecutive meetings.

According to the Local Government Ordinance, if a councillor is absent from three consecutive meetings, his seat shall be declared vacant and filled. But there are many councillors today, absent not only from three consecutive meetings, but even up to six meetings, deliberately absent themselves.

The Chairman: you have made that point about six times already.

Mr. R. Ally: Mr. Chairman, what I want to say is this, if we intend to give these councillors training, we should give the best brains in the area the necessary training because not

every year we can afford to train new councillors. I think we should make the election of officers according to their ability, people with the necessary qualification. We have experienced these things in other local authorities where people who have been selected to be officers have not the necessary qualification, whereas there are other people who apply for such positions who are not accepted because there is some sort of favour going on.

Subhead 2, Loans to Local Authorities. I would like to ask the hon. Minister, who himself has made several statements about the present administration of these local authorities and the inefficient way they are going about doing their work, if he feels that the present local authorities will be able to spend money. Giving them loans means they will misspend the money and the ratepayers will have to pay the money.

I see here again, Purchase of Equipment, subhead 4. We have past experience where the chairman of the local authority at Crabwood Creek sold a dragline belonging to the proprietors. And at Skeldon, the Corriverton Town Council, the Mayor sold a truck which was donated to the local authority by one Ramjohn. If we are giving loans and grants to these local authorities, we will have to be very careful because we will put the taxpayers in unnecessary expenses.

Mr. Hamid: I wish the hon. Minister to state the number of new local authorities that will be implemented, and to answer why only such a small amount of money will be voted for development of local authorities.

On subhead (4) purchase of a long base land rover, I feel that money should not be spent there. It should be given for other development in the area.

Mr. Ram Karran: On subhead 1, Establishment of New Local Authorities, the money is really to be spent for three purposes, to meet the initial expenses in setting up new local authorities, and to provide training for, one, councillors, and two, officers. I wonder if the hon.

Minister is in a position to tell us how this money is to be provided, what sum is to be used for setting up local authorities, what sum for training officers, and what sum for councillors.

In so far as the councillors are concerned, I take the opportunity to congratulate the hon. Member on his speech the other day, when he said that councillors must stop this rat race. I think he has been able to rise above party politics. I think that Ministers and politicians should be able, once in a while, as often as possible. I do wish to ask the hon. Minister if he can give us some indication as to the sums for each of these items.

The Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Wilson.

Mr. Wilson: I wish to say that co-operation is a two-way street. Sir, when I was speaking about grants in the Recurrent Estimates, you indicated to me that time was short. I readily desisted, and I did not speak. I just want to expand somewhat on my suggestion to the hon. Minister about the principles on which grants should be made to local authorities, and he is going to find these points in the Local Government Act No. 29 of 1969. They will be in keeping with the Government's feed, house, and clothe the nation objectives.

The local authority must be involved in this feeding, housing, and clothing the nation, and I would like to suggest that this grant of \$250,000 be raised to \$5 million, and he will see it is not something fantastic. It is a realistic amount.

We go to section 30(1) of the local Government Act, No. 24 of 1969. One, you must give local authorities grants in order to establish, maintain, and control such industrial enterprises and training services for which no specific provision is made in this section. Let industry be established in areas to provide work in the area, to prevent them coming to Georgetown, everybody is rushing to town.

Two, establish, erect, maintain and carry on communal feeding centres. The people are starving in the country, the children, and you must have feeding centres for them. You say you are going to feed the nation. Let the local authorities work it out here.

Three, generally maintain provision for and promote the education of all and any category of persons resident within the city or town. Of course, this applies to districts.

7 p.m.

I should like to mention nursery schools and kindergarten schools in particular. Let the local authorities be responsible for these. If the members of the Government have socialist orientation they will remember the children competing for the Common Entrance Examination have to compete against the children of the well to do, children coming from homes that are well provided and going to qualified kindergarten schools. Let the local authorities provide kindergarten schools for the masses and give them grants for this.

“to establish, maintain, control and contribute to bands for musical performance in public places and at public functions ...”

The local authorities must encourage and sponsor steel band orchestras and the like. [**Miss Field-Ridley:** “They do.”]

That is why I said the sum should be \$5 million if the number is 69. The children bathe in trenches. The Ministry should work out a memorandum and tell the local authorities to take the initiative or discuss with me the establishment of these various activities. I think grants should be accorded to Local Authorities. You will find this in the Ordinance.

Mr. Remington: I indicated subheads 2 and 5, but I wonder if time permits me to speak. The last occasion when I contributed to the debate on the Estimates I stated that the sum of

\$250,000 under subhead 2, Loans to Local Authorities was inadequate. I am asking for a substantial sum.

The Chairman: I think the hon. Member Mr. Wilson suggested \$5 million.

Mr. Remington: Subhead 5, Capital Grants to Local Authorities. I believe that if local authorities are to keep abreast of central government they need more funds allocated to them. If you go to the East Bank and look at the roads you will see some people selling their produce by the roadside. I am asking whether the Government cannot erect some centre to which the farmers can go to sell their produce. You will find that this will help reduce the cost of living because these people travel from the country to the city and instead of persons coming to the city to purchase, they should be a centre to which they can go. I think we have reached a stage where we should not have people selling by the roadside. It is dangerous. I am asking the Minister to look into this.

In respect of playing fields, I do not know why the youths are now coming to the city. No provision is made for them. I am asking that –

The Chairman: They are doing what you have done. You left the country and came to Georgetown.

Mr. Remington: It is not the same thing. I am living in the country.

The Chairman: Campbellville is part of Greater Georgetown.

Mr. Remington: I am privileged to go any place. I do not know why you mention a particular place. *[Laughter]* Generally local government should make some progress. I am asking that the central government look into this. This sum of money is nothing at all. The Government should give a substantial amount of money.

There is an important point I should like to make on the housing scheme. I have made this contribution but let me repeat it. The Government should now extend some of these schemes. The village councils are collecting rates and taxes from these people and there are welfare fund committees. In other words, they are contributing towards the fund and at the same time paying rates and taxes.

The Chairman: I think you made that point before.

Mr. Remington: The Minister was not here. I now ask the Minister to look into this. I do not think it is fair. It is double taxation. I am asking the Minister to go into it and he should see that some of this fund is allocated to local authorities because the people are contributing towards these schemes.

Mr. Salim: Mr. Chairman, the answer to subhead 1, Establishment of New Local Authorities, is this: The Ministry is now considering how many new local authorities will be created. When that is ascertained we will know the number exactly.

Subhead 2, Loans to Local Authorities: This is not the only amount that will be spent in local authority areas for their general development fund. These sums are supplemented by various Ministries. To mention a few of the Ministries – the Ministry of National Development and Agriculture, the Ministry of Works and Communications, the Ministry of Co-operatives and Community Development. Applications are made by all local authorities and they are examined. On the advice of experts, loans are given. Similarly projects are examined by expert officers and grants are given when people are prepared to do self-help work to develop their areas.

There was a question on subhead 4, Purchase of Equipment. This is to provide for the purchase of one long base land rover. This is for the Ministry. There are a number of field officers, especially in the valuation division, who go around valuing properties. The land rover is to be used by the Ministry and not by the local authorities.

19.12.72

National Assembly

7 – 7.10 p.m.

Division XIII, Ministry of Local Government - \$561,000, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Assembly resumed.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, “That this Assembly do now adjourn until Wednesday, 20th December, 1972, at 2 p.m.” [Mr. Ramsaroop]

Adjourned accordingly at 7.10 p.m.
