

THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
OFFICIAL REPORT

[VOLUME 5]

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

17th Sitting

2.00 p.m.

Thursday, 22nd July, 1971

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Speaker

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

Members of the Government

People's National Congress

Elected Ministers

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

(Absent)

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

(Absent – on leave)

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

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

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

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

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

The Hon. D.A. Singh,
Minister of Trade

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

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

Appointed Ministers

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

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

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

Parliamentary Secretaries

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

Mr. P. Duncan, J.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture (Absent)

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

Mr. A. Salim,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture

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

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

Other Members

Mr. J.N. Aaron
Miss M.M. Ackman, Government Whip
Mr. K. Bancroft
Mr. N.J. Bissember
Mr. J. Budhoo, J.P.
Mr. L.I. Chan-A-Sue
Mr. E.F. Correia
Mr. M. Corrica
Mr. E.H.A. Fowler
Mr. R.J. Jordon
Mr. S.M. Saffee
Mr. R.C. Van Sluytman
Mr. M. Zaheeruddeen, J.P.
Mrs. L.E. Willems

Members of the Opposition

People's Progressive Party

Dr. C.B. Jagan,
Leader of the Opposition (Absent – on leave)
Mr. Ram Karran
Mr. R. Chandisingh
Dr. F.H.W. Ramsahoye, S.C. (Absent – on leave)
Mr. D.C. Jagan, J.P., Deputy Speaker (Absent)
Mr. E.M.G. Wilson
Mr. A.M. Hamid, J.P. Opposition Whip
Mr. G.H. Lall, J.P.
Mr. M.Y. Ally
Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud, J.P.
Mr. E.M. Stoby, J.P.
Mr. R. Ally
Mr. E.L. Ambrose
Mrs. L.M. Branco
Mr. Balchand Persaud
Mr. Bholu Persaud
Mr. I.R. Remington, J.P.
Mrs. R.P. Sahoye (Absent – on leave)
Mr. V. Teekah

United Force

Mrs. E. DaSilva

Mr. M.F. Singh

(Absent – on leave)

Mr. J.A. Sutton

Independent

Mr. R.E. Checks

OFFICERS

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

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

The National Assembly met at 2 p.m.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair.]

Prayers

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER**Leave to Members**

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, leave has been granted to the hon. Minister of Agriculture (Dr. Reid) for today's sitting to the hon. Member, Dr. Jagan, to the 31st August, 1971 to the hon. Member, Mr. Zaheerrudeen to the 24th July, 1971; to the hon. Member Dr. Ramsahoye for four weeks from today; and to the hon. Member Mr. M.F. Singh from today's sitting.

Acting Leader of the Opposition

I have been advised by the Leader of the Opposition that during his absence the hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran will act as Leader of the Opposition.

Tribute to the late H.M.E. Cholmondeley, C.C.H.

Hon. Members, it is with a sense of deep loss and sincere regret that I have to announce the death of Mr. H.M.E. Cholmondeley. Although he was not in the best of health for some time the news of his death was received with deep shock. The late Hugh Cholmondeley, Snr., was an educationalist, diplomat with and special adviser to the Prime Minister. He was one of the first Guyanese Education Officers, if not the first, and his career in this field is well-known to the older heads. But it is in this field of a diplomat and political adviser that he is well known to all Guyanese.

Hon. Members, as you know, Mr. Cholmondeley was political adviser to Mr. Forbes Burnham when he was Leader of the Opposition and continued to hold the same office when Mr. Burnham became Prime Minister. He was at the United Nations at the meeting when Guyana was admitted a member of that august body. His services were recognised by the Government and as a result he was awarded the Cacique's Crown of Honour in 1970 in appreciation of his outstanding service to the nation.

But it was the man Cholmondeley that endeared himself to those who knew him. He was a man of abundant kindness, always willing to help. His advice was sound and of mature judgment. He was a good man. His sincere and genuine friends and those who could claim his

friendship were indeed privileged. His loss is great to his wife, children and other relatives, but Guyana has also suffered tremendously by his death. To my dear friend, may he rest in peace.

Will hon. Members please stand in silence one minute as a mark of respect.

[The Hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran left the Chamber and returned after one minute.]

[Hon. Members stood in silence for one minute.]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition acting, I think your conduct just now was most unbecoming. When a moment of silence was requested you deliberately stood up and walked out of this House. I will not countenance such behaviour on occasions such as this. I think you ought to take the appropriate action.

Mr. Ram Karran: Sir, it is said that it is better to be silent than to talk ill of the dead and I thought it might be better to be silent. I thought it might be better to be silent because this House is being reduced day after day.

Mr. Speaker: Please proceed with the agenda.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following papers were laid:

- (1) (a) Consumption Tax (Petroleum) Order, 1971 (No. 38) made under section 4 of the Consumption Tax Act, 1969 (No. 13), on the 7th July, 1971, and published in the Gazette on the 10th of July, 1971.
- (b) Loan Agreement (Second Sea Defence Project) between Guyana and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development dated June 24, 1971 (Loan Number 765 GUA)

(c) Financial Paper No. 4 of 1971 – Schedule of Supplementary Provision on the Capital Estimates for the period ending 31st of July, 1971, totalling \$1,500,000.00.

[**The Minister of Finance.**]

In terms of Standing Order No. 68 (1), the Minister named Tuesday, the 3rd of August, 1971, as the day for the consideration of the Financial Paper in Committee of Supply.

(2) Accounts of the National Insurance Board for the years 1969 and 1970, and the Reports of the Auditors thereon. [**The Minister of Labour and Social Security.**]

QUESTIONS TO MINISTERS

Printing of Documents for Insurance Companies

Mr. Ram Karran: On behalf of the hon. Member Dr. Jagan I beg to ask Question No. 4 standing in his name: Will the Minister of Trade say whether steps will be taken to ensure that forms and documents which are printed overseas for insurance companies and other businesses are printed in Guyana instead?

The Minister of Trade (Leader of the House) (Mr. Ramsaroop): The answer is as follows:

- (i) Several forms and documents used by the business community are already printed locally. For example, customs entry form are printed locally. Moreover, most of the forms and documents used by Government Ministries and public corporations are also printed locally.
- (ii) The Ministry will restrict importation of all forms and documents used by insurance companies and other businesses which it is satisfied could be printed locally or in a Carifta country.

ALLEGED ASSAULT ON LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

Mr. R. Ally: I wish to ask the hon. Minister of Home Affairs Question No. 5 standing in my name:

Will the Minister say what action has been taken against the person who assaulted Dr. Cheddi Jagan, Leader of the Opposition, at Burnham's Court, Independence Square, on 2nd September, 1969, when he was addressing a crowd on the question of the banning of a Guyanese, Dr. Clive Thomas, by the Jamaican Government?

If no action was taken against this person, will the Minister say what action was taken to discipline the policemen who were on duty at the time of the assault but who made an effort to arrest the person who assaulted Dr. Jagan?

The Minister of Home Affairs (Mr. Clarke): The answer is (i) no report was made to the Police at the time of the alleged assault, and subsequent efforts to identify the alleged perpetrators proved unsuccessful.

In light of the reply to the first question, no disciplinary action could be taken against any member of the Force.

Mr. R. Ally: Supplementary Question. I wish the hon. Minister to say whether it is true that the man who committed the assault on Dr. Jagan on that day in question was sent strictly from Congress Place and this man was sent to murder the Opposition Leader and the reason why this man has used such a heavy instrument –

Mr. Speaker: May I ask what is the question?

Mr. R. Ally: I want to ask the hon. Minister whether the police can do nothing because this person was sent from Congress Place.

Mr. Speaker: I will not allow that Supplementary Question and you are alleging that the Minister should know.

Mr. R. Ally: The hon. Minister is a member of the Peoples National Congress party.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member Mr. Teekah.

URGENT QUESTIONS

Mr. Teekah: Mr. Speaker, as you are aware, I wrote a letter indicating my intention to ask four questions of the Minister of Education under Standing Order 16. The questions are as follow:

- (a) Will the Minister state what were the reasons for the removal of Dr. Frank Williams from the Board of Governors of the University of Guyana?
- (b) Will the Minister say whether the funds voted for the University of Guyana will be adequate to permit the enrolment of all those students who have qualified for entry and who have passed the U.G. Entrance Examination?
- (c) If the answer to question (b) is in the negative, will the Minister say how many of those who have passed will be admitted?
- (d) Will the Minister say how many students who met the minimum qualification for entry have applied, and how many of those have passed the University Entrance Examination?

I feel that the questions are of an urgent character because, firstly, very little time, even now remains for the selection and completion of arrangements for the entry of a large number of new students into the University of Guyana. Secondly, because the future of possibly hundreds of Guyanese may be adversely affected if funds are inadequate. But by permitting the questions to be asked, an opportunity may be afforded for remedial action to be taken by the Government.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member Mr. Teekah, I will not allow question (a):

Will the Minister state what were the reasons for the removal of Dr. Frank Williams from the Board of Governors of the University of Guyana?

I will also not allow question (d):

Will the Minister say how many students who met the minimum qualification for entry have applied, and how many of those have passed the University Entrance Examination?

Because I am of the opinion that these two questions are not urgent. I will permit you to ask question (c) depending on the answer given to question (b).

ADMISSION OF STUDENTS TO UNIVERSITY OF GUYANA

Mr. Teekah: Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask the following Questions:

- (i) Will the Minister say whether the funds voted for the University of Guyana will be adequate to permit the enrolment of all those students who have qualified for entry and who have passed the U.G. Entrance Examination?
- (ii) If the answer to question (b) is in the negative, will the Minister say how many of those who have passed will be admitted?

Mr. Speaker: I think you have changed a word of one sentence. My copy has “who have qualified” and not “who have passed”.

Mr. Teekah: As you are aware, Sir, these questions were first written to you in a letter by Dr. Jagan and then afterwards I wrote. I have the same questions. But if there has been a mistake I am sorry about that.

Mr. Speaker: Will you kindly repeat the question?

Mr. Teekah: My copy has:

- (i) Will the Minister say whether the funds voted for the University of Guyana will be adequate to permit the enrolment of all those students who have qualified for entry and who have passed the U.G. Entrance Examination?

The Minister of Education (Miss Field-Ridley): Mr. Speaker, with regard to question (i) I am advised that the Entrance Examination is merely one of the criteria used for selecting students for admission to the University of Guyana. Depending on the performance of candidates for entry, the University uses a variable cut-off point to decide which applicants should be considered for places, which necessarily limited by many factors only one of which is finance. There is therefore no question of passing or failing the Entrance Examination.

Having regard to the above and since I am further advised that the cut-off point for this year's Examination has not yet been determined by the University, the other question at (ii) does not arise.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS – FIRST READING

The following Bill was introduced and read a First time:

Customs (Amendment) Bill – [The Minister of Finance.]

PUBLIC BUSINESS

MOTION

APPROVAL OF GUARANTEES FOR LOAN BY

GUYANA TRANSPORT SERVICES LIMITED

“Whereas Guyana Transport Services Limited is a Company incorporated under the Companies Ordinance, Chapter 328, with limited liability in which Government of Guyana has a controlling interest;

And whereas the said Company is desirous of expanding its transport facilities to meet the demands of the Public;

And whereas in consequence of such expansion the said Company has been negotiating for the purchase of nineteen (19) buses;

And whereas in order to assist in the financing of the purchasing of such buses the Company needs a loan of five hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars (\$525,000);

And whereas the Guyana National Co-operative Bank and the American Life Insurance Company are willing to provide, on the basis of a guarantee by the Government of Guyana, loans of two hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars (\$275,000) and two hundred and fifty-thousand dollars (\$250,000) respectively.

Be it resolved that this National Assembly approve that the Government of Guyana guarantees the repayment of the following loans to be made to the Guyana Transport Services Limited for the purposes of purchasing nineteen (19) additional buses:

- (i) the sum of two hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars (\$275,000) to be made by the Guyana National Co-operative Bank to be repaid with interest over a period of thirty months, and
- (ii) the sum of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000) to be made by the American Life Insurance Company to be repaid with interest over a period of five years. [**The Minister of Finance.**]

The Minister of Finance (Mr. Hoyte): Your Honour, this motion before this honourable House seeks the Assembly's authority for Government to guarantee a loan of \$525,000 to be made to the Guyana Transport Services Limited. That company was incorporated last year to provide modern, efficient and comfortable transport services on the East Coast of Demerara. The need for such services arose out of the policy decision taken by the Government to phase out the East Coast railways. The Government at present has the majority holdings in the equity of the company; though, in all cases like these where companies fall under Government's aegis, Government hopes and expects that the co-operative societies would, over a period of time, take up more and more the equity, thereby reducing Government's holdings. The company is already in operation and is providing very useful and valuable services on the East Coast Demerara. The Company has under nineteen new buses and the sum which is being sought in the guarantee is to pay for those nineteen buses.

2.25 p.m.

Of the sum required, \$275,000 will be provided by the Guyana National Co-operative Bank and \$250,000 will be provided by the American Life Insurance Company Limited. It is to be noted that the loan from the Co-operative Bank will be repaid over a period of 30 months, while the loan from the American Life Insurance Company will be repaid over a period of five years.

I should make a comment on the loan provided by the American Life Insurance Company. It is interesting to note that insurance companies are now willing to provide finance for operations out of the traditional areas of gilt-edge securities by way of Government securities. This is a heartening departure because the Insurance Act of 1970 was devised to ensure that insurance companies in Guyana do not garner the savings of Guyanese for investment outside of Guyana. So I was heartened to see insurance companies seeking out new avenues for investment and showing confidence in business operations which are organised for the benefit and convenience of the Guyanese public. For this reason, the investment by the insurance company in this particular case will be regarded by the Ministry of Finance as approved investment for the purposes of the Insurance Act.

With these brief remarks, sir, I commend this Motion to this honourable House.

Mr. Speaker: The Motion is proposed.

Mr. Ram Karran: As usual, the hon. Minister of Finance has been very brief.
[*Interruption.*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Leader of the House, I expect a better example to be set by you.

The Minister of Trade (Leader of the House) (Mr. Ramsaroop): I apologise, Your Honour.

Mr. Ram Karran: This Motion seeks to guarantee the repayment by the Guyana Transport Services Limited of a certain sum of money. The hon. Minister tells us in his preamble that this company was incorporated last year and the Government has majority equity in it, and that it is hoped and expected that the co-operative movement will take over Government's holdings in this company.

I have secured from the Deeds Registry an extract of what the company has registered there, its Articles of Association, etc. filed by Messrs Clarke and Martin. The Secretary of this company is John Carter, not Sir John Carter, of 80 Gordon Street, Kitty, and a clerk at the Transport and Harbours Department. It says that the directors are Robert James Jordan – I think

we have him here – of 7 Canje Street, Section “K” Campbellville, and his status, a company executive. We have Winston Henry Griffith of 47 John Street –

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, would you let me know up to what date these particulars are relevant?

Mr. Ram Karran: Today, 22nd July.

Mr. Speaker: These records were filed as of what date?

Mr. Ram Karran: The 10th May, 1971. They are the Articles of Association. The shareholders are Robert James Jordan, one share valued at \$10, M.E. Clarke, one share valued at \$10; the share capital is \$1,500,000 divided into 150,000 shares of \$10 each. It is a private company. It might be.

The hon. Minister in his reply, although I thought it would have been his duty to inform us before he presented this to this House, will perhaps tell us how Government has a majority holding in this company's equity, judging from this extract which I have read. He says that Government hopes and expects the co-operative societies to take over Government's holdings. How is that going to be done, when is it going to be done? There are only two party hacks who are engaged in this operation, according to what was registered at the Deeds Registry some time ago.

May I then move off to the service which we are getting from these buses, which have been put into operation recently on the East Coast after a great deal of capital, in the form of vehicles, had been virtually abandoned by the Government, thrown into the scrap heaps on the West Coast and in the Canals Polders, and which would have been used for a considerable time with maintenance, of course, to save this country from going into debt.

All the operators, the pioneers of the East Coast and the East Bank, have been hustled off the road, their valuable vehicles to be used as fowl pens. This is capital which this country cannot afford to lose. A little boy going to school in Georgetown, paid the sum of six cents to travel from Bel Air to Georgetown. In order to get home in the magnificent castle with steel top

put up by the Government, he has to pay not six cents but fifteen cents, and he cannot drop out where he dropped out previously. The boy has to go right up to the Carib Hotel. I do not know if it is the Government's intention that he should end up in prostitution. Why can he not drop off at Bel Air, or at Sophia, or at Kasim's Highway, or wherever he wants to go? He has to go to the Carib Hotel.

This is not the only shortcoming of the service. One would have thought this Government, having removed the East Coast railway, would have made use of the facilities engaged in the transport services. As early as 1940, Major Rooke, C.M.G. made a report, but thus has probably been thrown into the wastepaper basket because these people only have been using one criterion, that is, spitefulness against the P.P.P.

2.35 p.m.

The Government has scrapped the East Coast railway beyond Mahaica. The hon. Minister of Communications probably does not know, but it has been scrapped from Mahaica to Rosignol. Even though this House has recently passed a large sum of money for the rehabilitation of the road going to Burma, we know that the road has been washed away, the money has been unaccounted for, as happens so often in the Ministry of Works, Hydraulics and Supply. The Transport and Harbours Department has now been asked to run a service from Georgetown to Burma to bring rice.

This is the way in which things are being done by this Government. A lot of things are likely to happen. While this House has been reluctant to discuss the situation at present occurring in the Mahaica/Cane Grove area – I refer to the flooding of the area – while representations are being made to the Minister of Agriculture cattle which have been saved from the Upper Mahaica are now straddling along the railway so as to get grass to eat. We expect that his sudden service that the Government has decided to run will create more free beef for the P.N.C. supporters in that area. The Government has closed the pounds. The Government has no thought for agriculture and the poor people. The Members of the Government are only thinking in terms of themselves – Mr. R.J. Jordan, Mr. Winston H. Griffith and the rest of them, who happen to be followers-on of the P.N.C.

Another point that is of significance and importance to the transport service in this country has been made long ago, and anyone who has common sense will realise that the roads we have today, even though rehabilitated to a certain extent, cannot hope to transport the large number of people travelling on the roads today. In fact every debate in this House refers to the number of people that are killed every day. The one road cannot cope with the heavy traffic, especially during the peak hours of people going in the countryside and others coming to the city. This Government has done absolutely nothing to solve that problem, but comes today to say that it needs money to buy 19 buses in addition to the number of cars that are on the road and those coming out of the garage every day. We may kill lots of our young people. A Government spokesman referred to the young people of our country as the richest resources of our country. Well then stop killing them. [*Interruption.*] The most important asset is being slaughtered on the roads. What is the Government doing? The Government, in my opinion, is making absolutely no effort to do something. I hope that it will take some advice from knowledgeable people, not necessarily from the P.P.P., but people who can give it the information it needs on this subject. If that is done, we may be able to approach our transport problems as quickly as possible.

We are indeed suspicious of all the approaches the Government makes to all these people to borrow money and especially this one which smells very much. The Government has controlling interest in this company; it has told us this in clear language, in writing. How is it that the Government has shares in it? It is because people like Robert Jordan and Winston H. Griffith are directors? Merely by having Winston H. Griffith as Managing-Director of the Transport and Harbours Department.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member Mr. Wilson.**Mr. Wilson:** Mr. Speaker, the Government cannot be too strongly criticised for having this without involving the former operators of the bus service on the East Coast and the other parts of the country. The Government rode roughshod over these people's living, caused them to stop operating their buses, and have thrown them aside like junk. I think it is heartless on the part of this Government. These people have been pioneers on the road. It must not lose sight of the fact that at one time the operators had to get tractors to pull the buses out of the mine on the West

Coast Berbice. These people bore the hardship in those difficult days. The Government says that it wants to make the small man a real man. Here is a good opportunity to involve these same operators in a co-operative. But instead of doing that, the Government is brushing them aside. It got the Guyana Development Corporation to operate the service and then it says it has formed some sort of bogus company where R.J. Jordan is Chairman and is telling us that it has controlling shares in that company.

Mr. Speaker, if you go to the premises of the former operators you will see their buses rotting; some of them use them as fowl coops. Is this how the Government is interested in people? Now it is bringing in 19 more buses. I wonder if it took a survey to justify this in relation to the taxis that are operating a service and to determine whether it will not be pushing the taxi drivers out of commission and cause them to lose money and create unemployment. I wonder if the Government has gone into this question very carefully.

Speaking on this, I should like to draw the hon. Minister of Communications to another point. I think he should be the person dealing with this matter; what I have to say does not concern the Minister of Finance. I hope that the Minister of Communications will be given an opportunity to do his work. They make him redundant in many ways – the civil aviation services, the telephone services are out of his hand. I do not know what this Minister of Communications had to do. He has companies and corporations to do all his work.

2.45 p.m.

There are no bus sheds. People have to stand in the rain and the sun. [*Interruption.*] you have your limousine to travel in. many days when I am going home I have to rescue little babies from the sun and the rain. It is not my duty to do this. There should be bus sheds where passengers can be accommodated comfortably, but the people have to stand there for hours. The rain wets them; the sun comes and dries them. This is the sort of interest.

I should like to draw attention to the section of the road that is very narrow. The Government says it is widening the road. That would not be enough. There should have been some deviation. I see Beharry is putting up something there. At this particular part, I see persons

going up on the wall to signal the bus. If they should stand on the road against the wall, it is likely that some vehicle would knock them down. So, I am asking the Government to look into these matters to protect the people.

On this question, I must make reference also to parking space for taxis and buses in Georgetown. I hope the Minister of Finance will allow the Minister of Communications to do some work. I hope he will not make it clear that he is redundant. A fire destroyed some places, a nest of prostitution, and one would have thought it was a blessing in disguise. I think the Minister of Communications should have been alert enough to seize the opportunity to acquire that area for the purpose of parking, but I see new buildings going up. Where are they parking the 19 buses? In Hadfield Street? We would like to hear if there is going to be adequate accommodation for passengers, that there will not be standing up with their packages and the like. I think the Government must do more to show its interest with regard to road transport facilities for the people of Guyana.

Mr. Sutton: The Government for funds to acquire additional buses. Now that the service has been operating for some time, there has been an opportunity to assess the requirements and this must be a step in the right direction to improve the service. Nevertheless, I am sure the Government will welcome constructive criticism as far as the East Coast bus service is concerned and will probably take the opportunity of clarifying quite a few points which so many people in the country are anxious to know about.

We would believe that the Government would involve itself and as many of its citizens as possible in income-earning opportunities, particularly in the utility and central services. The point was raised by previous speakers that the composition of this company does not seem to be clear and one wonders if in fact the citizens of the country are being given an opportunity, if they so wish, to contribute or to become a part of this service.

We have been told that the main intention of Government's efforts in this matter and in other economic ventures is to have all streams of the community partaking more meaningfully in the economic benefits which the country can afford. This leads us to the question as to whether, where services or other economic ventures of this nature are concerned, the Government's

intention is to make participation by all members of the public possible by making shares available to them.

It is possibly, at this stage, a good thing that the Government says that it owns the majority of the capital interest, and therefore it is under an obligation to see that the company does the right thing – that it gets proper equipment when the equipment is required and that it does not fail to do its best by way of services to the people and maximum financial return due to a lack of proper equipment and proper management.

One wonders and would hope that the Government sees the need, not only to acquire the services, but to develop the services in such a manner that it leaves very little room for criticism. For instance, the Government has phased out the section of the railway from Mahaica to Rosignol. We are told in due course the Mahaica – Georgetown section will also be phased out, but a most important point was raised by the last speaker, the hon. Member Mr. Wilson, that we see no sign or intention of the Government providing the protection for would-be travelers as was seen in the case of the railway stations. Wherever the railway stopped, the big stations had big buildings, the little stations had something. Shelter was considered necessary.

2.55 p.m.

I think everybody here knows that it is the reverse where the bus service on the East Coast is concerned. In other words, except for the final terminus at Rosignol and Georgetown there is hardly a stop with shelter. I can think of none of the stops where shelter is provided. Most of us who travel from Georgetown to Rosignol must have seen people standing in the rain waiting for the bus, their parcels on the road and no where to put them. I hope that the Government would accept this, because shelters are a necessity and you cannot say that you are improving the service when people have no protection when they are waiting for the bus.

Another very important point. I am sure the hours of half past seven and nine o'clock in the morning several Members of this House must have had the pleasure of spending an hour or more to travel from Georgetown to Mahaica, and they have had the experience of having to stand still while a bus stops at a stop. This cannot be done at the moment but we hope that the

Government will provide sheds and lay-bys at the bus stops so as not to hinder the flow of traffic when buses stop to pick up or put down passengers.

We heard that at some future date the possibility exists for developing a road on the present foundation from which the railway is being removed. We hope that that will come to pass in the not too distant future, because it is a vital necessity. Those of us who have been to Trinidad and Jamaica where railways have been phased out have seen that even though this happened, two things stick out, in that the same problem we have here on the East Coast where traffic is almost impossible time wide. You spend one hour travelling 15 to 16 miles exists on the Princess Elizabeth Highway. I hope that the Government is not going to wait until this happens here, because it is building up. At least lay-bys can be provided at the stops; in this way there will be no interference with the other traffic. There should be a through road. I think it would be quite unfair for anybody to accept that an opportunity will not be taken.

I am sure that hon. Members of this House it matters not whether it is a Member of the Opposition I think it has been heard of that in other parts of the world where the Government has taken over a service there has been absolutely no help for compensation to the persons who were running the service. When the Trinidad Government took over the bus service compensation was given to the people. When the Jamaica Government took over the bus service the people were paid compensation.

Now, the Government took over the bus service and no compensation has been given to these poor people. Admitted that these buses operate in a faster way and whereas it took four hours to get to New Amsterdam, the journey can now be made in two hours. But what do we find? They waited until the road was completed. There are, comparatively speaking, few problems as far as the type of vehicle maintenance is concerned. The Government knows nothing of breaking two or three springs a week. All that happened was that these people were given a notice saying, "Get off the road, and how you live, that is your business." People meet you on the streets and tell you "Man how your Government can do something like that?"

The Government has removed some of the buses and has told the people that they can operate on the West Coast. We all know that the West Coast road is being rebuilt. They will be

permitted them to operate, and as soon as the road has been complete the Government will take over the service and give them no compensation. How can that be right? No one likes to be associated with such behaviour. I am ashamed of the whole thing, Mr. Speaker.

I think the Government can improve the services, but it does not have to ride roughshod over everybody. I hope that the Government will make it possible for the people to believe “Well, this is our bus service. If we want to invest our dollars we would like the Minister to assure us now that it will be so, it will be publicly known.” We were told that the co-operatives will be invited to participate in the operation as well as private citizens to ensure that the people of Guyana own the service.

I think I have covered the question of lay-bys. I think I have covered the question of making this company available to the ordinary man to make the small man a real man. Finally, I hope that the Government will give immediate thought to this question of the East Coast road – buying buses to put on the roads and not providing lay-bys. Instead of seeing our death rate on the roads go down, we will see it rise. We must ensure that our alternatives are at least no worse than what we are putting out of existence.

3.05 p.m.

Mr. Hoyte (replying): While I understand the pre-occupation of the hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran with prostitution, I decline to follow him into that murky milieu of which he has special knowledge, but I should like to take a little time off to improve his education in things legal. It is always laughable that with no training in a particular specialised field, it is his wont to take it upon himself to draw conclusions upon all which have been taken within that particular area of competence.

The hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran sought to draw some conclusion from a copy of the Memorandum of Association of the company, Guyana Transport Services Limited. Any person with the slightest knowledge of the law and the requirements of our Company Law will know that the Memorandum of Association does not give you the shareholding of a company, and I would merely explain that for the benefit of the hon. Member – [*Interruption.*] I would assure

him that the company is not a private company. Again, “private” company is a legal concept: the Guyana Transport Services Limited is a public company. I hope I have improved his education.

I propose to deal with some of the matters of substance raised chiefly by the hon. Member Mr. Sutton. It is wholly untrue to say that the former operators of buses on the East Coast were not given an opportunity to participate in this company. When the company was being formed by the Guyana Development Corporation, all these owners were written to and the suggestion was made that they ought to form themselves into a co-operative in order to take up the shareholding in the new entity. Your Honour, no reply was ever made to the offer by the Guyana Development Corporation.

I wish to state at this point that Government is not going to deal with individuals where economic operations are concerned. We are wedded to a co-operative philosophy and we are not going to allow individuals to take up shareholdings in any company in which the Government has any say. More than that – [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran, you sought the assistance of the Chair in order not to be interrupted and you are worse than that. Please do not let it occur again.

Mr. Hoyte: The former owners of buses made representations to the hon. Prime Minister through their lawyers, one of whom was the hon. Member Dr. Ramsahoye. The Prime Ministers then put proposals to them whereby their buses would be valued and that valuation would be taken up in shares to be held by them. Even that offer was refused. The point is that Government has gone out of its way - not out of its way really, because Government conceded that this service was one in which the people ought to participate – to ensure that among the first persons who ought to be able to participate were the people who formerly made a livelihood out of providing the service. No matter how inefficiently, the point is they did run a service and they were given the opportunity. That opportunity to participate on a co-operative basis is still open.

Government was of the view that the workers immediately concerned in the transport services should become involved, and an offer was made both to the Transport Workers’ Union and the Transport Workers’ Co-operative Credit Union for them to buy shares in the new entity.

The Transport Workers Union has made certain deposits towards the acquisition of the shares. The Credit Union has so far not made up its mind as to participation or the number of shares it will take up.

There is the intention on the part of the Government, as I said when I was opening, that co-operative societies should become involved in all of the companies, in all of the commercial entities in which Government participates. That is the policy of the Government, that policy remains, and it is the publicly-stated policy of the Government and the party which forms the Government.

It is true, as the hon. Member Mr. Sutton has pointed out, that the facilities on the route for shelter are inadequate. I would just wish to say in passing – [Mr. Wilson: “I was first to speak about it.”] I would not wish to deprive the hon. Member Mr. Wilson of the glory of having made an observation which is essentially accurate. I would say, first of all, we must remember that the people who ran the services before offered no such facilities, but I do not advance that as a reason why the new company ought not to set about providing such facilities. It is not accurate to say that apart from the terminus at Georgetown and the terminus at Rosignol, there is no shelter. There is adequate facility for shelter at Mahaicony which is somewhere halfway between, and it is proposed to extend this type of facility along the coast. We have to understand, however, that the company is now in a formative stage and such capital as it obtains has to go first into acquiring buses, acquiring the necessary support goods and services to get the buses running.

I should point out, too, that the company did seek to facilitate the public by putting up good signs to indicate where the buses would stop. I think it is public knowledge that those signs have been deliberately destroyed by supporters of the People’s Progressive Party – [Interruption.]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, Mr. Maccie Hamid, I would expect you as Whip of the Opposition to behave much better.**Mr. Hamid:** I apologise, Sir.

Mr. Hoyte: The Company has had to put those signs on the road. They are for the convenience of the travelling members of the public.

There seems to be a slight misunderstanding on the part of the Members that Government is borrowing this money. Government is not borrowing this money. The money is being borrowed by the Guyana Transport Services Limited from the Guyana National Co-operative Bank and the American Life Insurance Company. This is a borrowing in the normal commercial way.

3.15 p.m.

As I said on another occasion, Government having set up these entities, is not going to fund them any longer; they have to go out into the financial market and get funds for working capital and for other purposes for the running of the business. But in this case Government provides a guarantee to all lending institutions because the company is young and has not yet financial viability, and banks and other financial institutions being in business themselves, wish to be assured of the safety of the money they are advancing. In the circumstances, Government considers it advisable and not unreasonable that the guarantee should be given.

I hope that I have answered the matters of substance which have been raised by hon. Members. In doing so, I commend the Motion to the House.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

CONSUMPTION TAX (PETROLEUM) ORDER 1971 (No. 38)

“Be it resolved that this National Assembly, in terms of Section 5 (1) of the Consumption Tax Act, 1969 (No. 13), confirm the Consumption Tax (Petroleum) Order, 1971 (No. 38), which was made on the 7th of July, 1971, and published in the Gazette on the 10th of July, 1971.” [The Minister of Finance.]

Mr. Hoyte: Your Honour, under the Carifta Agreement Member Territories are required progressively to eliminate the protection element in customs duties of certain items originating within the Carifta Area. One of such items is petroleum products. The customs duties on petroleum products, as indeed on large varieties of other goods of CARIFTA origin, will eliminate progressively over a period of five years ending in 1973, in which year the duty will be eliminated completely. The first Order was made on the 1st of May 1969. Its purpose was to reduce the customs duties on petroleum products in accordance with the CARIFTA Agreement. What this Order seeks to do is to recoup the duty which has been lost by way of the reduction of the customs import by way of consumption tax. This sort of pattern is familiar because similar Orders have been made from time to time and laid in this House and debated.

With respect to petroleum products, it will be seen that this Order seeks to make provision for a variation in the consumption tax over the period 1970 to 1973. In other words, as the customs duties are reduced in accordance with the CARIFTA Agreement, the consumption tax increases proportionately to recoup the losses. This is a familiar pattern and the order is before this honourable House.

Question proposed, put, and agreed.

Motion carried.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Leader of the House.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, “That this Assembly do now adjourn until Tuesday, 3rd of August, 1971 at 2 o’clock in the afternoon. [**Mr. Ramsaroop.**]

Adjourned accordingly at 3.21 p.m.
