

**THE  
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

**OFFICIAL REPORT**

**[VOLUME 7]**

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

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**25<sup>th</sup> Sitting**

**2.00 p.m.**

**Wednesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> September, 1971**

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**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 – on leave)**

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

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

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

**(Absent – on leave)**

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

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

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

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

**(Absent - on leave)**

#### **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

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

The Hon. E.B. Mc David,  
Minister of Information and Culture

The Hon. Miss C.L. Baird,  
Minister of Education

#### **Parliamentary Secretaries**

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

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

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, Ministry 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. Jordan  
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  
Mr. Ram Karran  
Mr. R. Chandisingh  
Dr. F.H.W. Ramsahoye, S.C.  
Mr. D. C. Jagan, J.P., Deputy Speaker (Absent -- on leave)  
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., (Absent -- on leave)  
Mr. E.M. Stoby, J.P., Absent  
Mr. R. Ally  
Mr. E.L. Ambrose  
Mrs. L.M. Branco

Mr. Balchand Persaud  
Mr. Bholu Persaud  
Mr. I.R. Remington, J.P.  
Mrs. R. P. Sahoye  
Mr. V. Teekah

(Absent – on leave)

(Absent – on leave)

**United Force**

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

(Absent – on leave)

**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****MINISTERIAL CHANGES**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I have been advised that, with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> September, 1971 the hon. Miss S.M. Field-Ridley, formerly Minister of Education, has been designated Minister of Health, and the hon. Miss C.L. Baird, who has been appointed a Minister has been designated Minister of Education.

On behalf of all hon. Members of the Assembly and myself, I wish to congratulate Miss Baird on her appointment as a Minister and to welcome her to the Assembly. I also wish to extend best wishes to the two Ministers, Miss Field-Ridley and Miss Baird, in their respective assignments.

**LEAVE TO MEMBERS**

Leave has been granted to the hon. Prime Minister for today's sitting; the hon. Minister of Finance for the period 20<sup>th</sup> September to 4<sup>th</sup> October, 1971; the hon. Member Mr. D.C. Jagan for two months from 17<sup>th</sup> September; the hon. Member Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud for two weeks from the 18<sup>th</sup> of September; the hon. Member Mr. Bhola Persaud for three months from the 17<sup>th</sup> September; and the hon. Member Mr. M.F. Singh for today.

**RESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS**

The following Papers were laid:

- (1) Minutes of the Second Meeting of the Committee of Selection held on Wednesday, the 8<sup>th</sup> of September, 1971. [The Speaker (Chairman, Committee of Selection)]
- (2) (a) Report of the Director of Audit on the Accounts of the Transport and Harbours Department for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1968.

- (b) Report of the Director of Audit on the Accounts of the Guyana Post Office Savings Bank for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1969. [*The Minister of Housing and Reconstruction (Leader of the House) on behalf of the Minister of Finance.*]
- (3) Annual Report of the Transport and Harbours Department for the year 1969. [*The Minister of Communications*]

### QUESTIONS TO MINISTERS

#### THE MOTOR VEHICLES AND ROAD TRAFFIC (AMENDMENT) ACT, 1969

**Mr. R. Ally:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask Question No. 11 standing in my name:

Will the Minister say why were drivers of motor vehicles who took out their drivers' licences on 28<sup>th</sup> December, 1969, required to pay, in 1971, an additional \$5.00 for the three days in 1970?

**The Minister of Housing and Reconstruction (Leader of the House) (Mr. Ramsaroop)** (on behalf of the Minister of Finance): The question is not clear. Nevertheless, the following explanation of the effect of the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic (Amendment) Act, 1969, may be helpful to the hon. Member:

- (1) The Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic (Amendment) Act, 1969, which amended sub-section (3) of Section 29 of the Principal Ordinance, made all licences issued or renewed valid to the 31<sup>st</sup> December, of the year of issue. The Act became operative on the 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1970.
- (2) The amendment therefore provided for drivers' licences to be renewable on 1<sup>st</sup> January every year as distinct from the previous provision whereby drivers' licences remained in force for a period of 12 months from the date on which it was issued.
- (3) When licences which had been issued or renewed during 1969 expired during 1970, in accordance with the Act aforesaid. The fee for such renewal was \$5.00.

**Mr. R. Ally: Supplementary Question.** I wish the hon. Minister will say why when the Government vehicle drivers went to the Traffic Department on December, 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> to renew their licences the Traffic Officers refused to renew their licences? They were told that they will have to come back in January because the law has been changed - - *[Interruption]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member Mr. Ally, I do not think that would be a supplementary question, that would be a question, notice of which you have to give and get the necessary answers. If you wish to ask that question please give notice.

**2.20 p.m.**

**Mr. Hamid:** I beg to ask Question No. 12 standing in my name on the Order Paper: Will the Minister say whether he is aware that the well on Tiger Island, Essequibo River, has been out of order for very many months, and as a result of this the people are forced to wash with and to drink stagnant trench water?

If so, will the Minister say how soon action will be taken to get the well functioning again?

**The Minister of Works, Hydraulics and Supply (Mr. Green):** The natural flow of the Well on Tiger Island has stopped as a result of a general falling of well levels. However, a hand-operated "force and lift" pump was installed on the well head band by this means residents now obtain their supplies of water.

**Mr. Hamid:** I beg to ask Question No. 13 standing in my name on the Order Paper: Will the Minister say whether any money, and if so, how much, remains from an allocation in 1963 said to be \$163,000 for the improvement of the Bartica Water Supply?

Will the Minister say whether an undertaking was given to the Bartica Village Council to carry out the second and third stages of a pure water supply plan for Bartica, and if so, whether the undertaking was honoured?

**Mr. Green:** There was no allocation of \$163,000 in 1963 for the improvement of the Bartica Water Supply system.

An allocation of \$263,000 was provided for that purpose in the 1961 – 1964 Development Programme of the previous Government. Of this sum, \$118,000 was expended on the first phase of the two-phased water supply plan. The first phase was completed in 1962 but the second phase was not embarked upon though an undertaking to do so was given by the then Government.

**The Leader of the Opposition (Dr. Jagan):** May I ask a supplementary question? The hon. Minister indicated that only a certain portion of money was spent of what was previously allocated. Will the Minister say whether this Government and the past Government spent any money to complete the works which had been planned by the previous Government under the plan?

**Mr. Green:** Mr. Speaker, as I explained earlier, this was a plan for a particular period. I do not want to comment. If I did, I would explain that it was an ill-conceived plan, the way it was. The money was spent and that Government failed in 1962 to complete that programme. I suspect it was realised that the whole programme was a bad one for the particular area. We have continued maintenance and corrective works in this area and the residents are in receipt of water. As you know, Mr. Speaker, there is a national programme for water supply that will take in this area eventually.

**Mr. Hamid:** I wonder whether the Minister will answer the second part of the question.

**Mr. Green:** Mr. Speaker, I am unaware of any undertaking of this nature.



**Mr. R. Ally:** I wish the hon. Minister of Health to answer Question No. 14 standing in my name on the Order Paper:

- (a) Will the Minister say how soon the Government proposes to repair and paint the Public Hospital at Skeldon?
- (b) Will the Minister also say how early the Government proposes to furnish this hospital with beds, mattresses, sheets and other necessary items of furniture, and with a full stock of drugs?

**The Minister of Health** (Miss Field-Ridley): Mr. Speaker, in relation to Question No. 14:

- (a) Repairs are already in progress and some have in fact been completed. Painting of the building is being undertaken as a project during the Advance Guyana campaign. Perhaps the hon. Member will help with that.
- (b) Beds, mattresses, sheets etc. are gradually being replaced as supplies become available. The Ministry of Health has been unable to establish any significant drug shortage at the Skeldon Hospital.

**Mr. R. Ally:** May I ask a supplementary question. I wish the hon. Minister to say why there are missing windows at the hospital up to this day. The window sill is still missing.

**Mr. Speaker:** That is part of the repairs which, the hon. Minister is saying, are in progress.

**Mr. R. Ally:** Mr. Speaker, there are no repairs done there. Will the hon. Minister say the reason why, since this campaign started, the doctor and nurses and other employees at the hospital received just a tin of paint and they were trying to brighten up - - *[Interruption]*

**Mr. Speaker:** That is not a supplementary question.

**Mr. R. Ally:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. Minister is saying that painting has already started.

**Mr. Speaker:** I have ruled that is not a supplementary question.

**Mr. R. Ally:** I wish to hon. Minister to say the reason why there are missing windows at the hospital.

**Mr. Speaker:** I have already ruled.

**Mr. Wilson:** Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that the hon. Minister in her reply referred to the Advance Guyana Campaign, we would like to know why sufficient paint was not supplied to the hospital.

**Miss Field-Ridley:** I am not sure how relevant this is, but I am very glad for the opportunity to answer the question as put by the hon. Member. The Advance Guyana Campaign has been organized as an involvement of all the loyal citizens of Guyana. If the hon. Member who asked this question would participate in that programme, then the repairs and the painting would go much more quickly than they in fact have been going. It is not true to say they have been supplied with one tin of paint. That is so ridiculous that I do not think it deserves an answer.

Communities have been organised, in some cases to supply materials and labour, and Government has been helping. Repairs are underway and painting will not start until the repairs have reached a stage to make it feasible to paint. At that time I am sure the loyal residents of the area, with Government's help, will have enough paint, as much as they need, and the painting will proceed.

**Mr. R. Ally:** I wish the hon. Minister to say when last the Minister of Health visited that hospital. *[Interruption]*

I wish to ask the hon. Minister of Education Question No. 15 standing in my name on the Order Paper:

- (a) Will the Minister say whether she is aware that there are two Denominational Schools within the Line Path and Princetown areas, and that both schools have been trying to accommodate three times the number of children they were built to accommodate?
- (b) Will the Minister give consideration to the building of at least two large Government primary schools in this area, in order to ease the situation?

**The Minister of Education** (Miss Baird): The Answer to the Question is:

- (a) Yes, the Minister is aware that there are two denominational schools within the Line Path and Princetown areas. They are the Skeldon Church of Scotland and the Skeldon Anglican Schools and they are over crowded.
- (b) The Minister of Education proposes to have a Government School of 1,000 places constructed in the area by self-help. The project has been included in the school building programme under the next development plan. *[Applause]*

**Mr. R. Ally:** I wish the hon. Minister to say whether she is aware that in the year 1970, sometime in July, three members of the parent-teachers' association and I met the Permanent Secretary of that Ministry and the Permanent Secretary then told us that it was Government's intention to build a large primary school within that area before the new school year began in 1971. What has become of that school? *[Interruption]*

**Mr. Speaker:** I am not allowing that supplementary question as asked.

**Mr. R. Ally:** I should like to know if the hon. Minister is aware that the authorities of the Anglican School at No. 78 Village have now sought the permission of the Town Council there to use the community centre so as to house a part of that school. *[Interruption]*

**Mr. Speaker:** I am not allowing that supplementary question. You will have to give notice of that.

2.30 p.m.

## PUBLIC BUSINESS

### MOTIONS

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, by agreement between the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the House, the Motion standing on the Supplementary Order Paper in the name of the hon. Member Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud will be taken first.

### INCREASE IN THE PRICE OF PADDY AND RICE

“Whereas rice farmers and millers of Guyana are finding it uneconomical to continue to cultivate and manufacture paddy and rice;

And whereas production costs have increased by over 22% since 1966 while purchase prices have been drastically reduced;

And whereas the reduction of production of rice is seriously affecting the economy of Guyana:

Be it resolved that the Government take steps to increase the prices of paddy and rice to the farmers from the 1971 autumn crop on the basis of prices prevailing prior to 1966.” *[Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud]*

**Mr. Ram Karran:** Sir, I seek your permission to move, on behalf of the hon. Member Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud, a Motion standing in his name.

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. Member has been properly authorized to do that. Please proceed.

**Mr. Ram Karran:** Rice was described by a former Governor of this territory as a political football. It has been so described by several other persons. We love the game of football but we see, on this occasion, in relation to the rice industry, that the game is played by only one side. The other side is shackled to the goal-post while the Government continues to kick the ball in all directions, and not only to kick the ball, but to kick the farmers who comprise the other side of the team.

Government has set itself up to destroy the rice farmers of this country, its political opponents. This is a known fact,. The members of the Government have been unable to get the farmers of Guyana to support the P.N.C., obviously because of the mouthings by those who are in the leadership of the P.N.C. They say the rice farmers are racists but, as we know, the members of the present Government and the imperialists have used race in this country to set themselves in office. We have no doubt at all that the present racial divisions and the backing given by its supporters keep the present Government in office.

I remember that on one occasion my friends on the back benches referred to the big houses of the coolies. They did not remember the countless thousands of those who live like their Afro-Guyanese brothers in thatched houses or in dwellings not fit for human habitation. They seem to forget that, and that is why they have set out to destroy the rice farmers. In destroying the farmers they will undoubtedly destroy the rice industry, the economy and eventually the country.

I seem to hear reverberating in this Chamber and in the corridors the speech made by my friend, the hon. Member Mr. Saffee, on the 7<sup>th</sup> April, 1965, when he referred to Independence as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals. I shall have more to say about Mr. Saffee and his present position, but he is one who made the position of the rice industry very clear in that speech and in other speeches prior to his defection. Today he sits on the Rice Marketing Board. He has probably changed and taken back all that he said in those days.

I do not wish to prolong this debate or to read out, as I have so often done, the speeches made by turncoats in this Chamber. We recall that one of the first acts perpetrated against the rice farmers by this Government was the smashing of the Rice Marketing Board. It will be recalled that when this Board was set up during the war years, the then Governor and Sir Frank McDavid made sure that the Board had a large percentage of producers, though not a majority.

Indeed, except for the business community, the Rice Marketing Board was drawn exclusively from the Rice Producers Association. We recall the statement attributed to my friend the hon. Deputy Prime Minister when the farmers began to agitate against the breaking up of their Board. On his sick bed he said that he would loose the dogs to tear the coolie up. *[Laughter]* Hon. Members laugh but, not satisfied with the dilution of the Board, the members of the Government went further to prostitute it, to make sure that those who were sitting there were their supporters and to eliminate completely the Rice Production.

Who are the members of the Board today? It would be interesting to record in this House the names of those who sit on the Rice Marketing Board. On page 11 of the 1969-70 Annual Report of the Guyana Rice Marketing Board we see the section "Administration: The Board and its Committees". The full Board comprised the following:

Mr. G.B. Kennard	-	Chairman
Mr. W.G. Clarke		Vice-Chairman
Mr. J. Budhoo, J.P., M.P.		Member

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Mr. B.W. Carter	do
Mr. K. Hopkinson, J.P.	do
Mr. S. McKend	do
Mr. S.A. Patterson	do
Mr. H. Rahaman, J.P.	do
Mr. S.A. Storey	do
Mr. M. Saffee, M.P.	do
Mr. S.N. Yearwood	do

None of these persons, as far as I know, are members of the rice producing section of the Guyanese community.

The Executive Committee comprised the following.

Mr. G.B. Kennard	Chairman
Mr. W.G. Clarke	Vice-Chairman
Mr. S.A. Storey	Member
Mr. Saffee, M.P.	do
Mr. H. Rahaman, J.P.	do

There is no need for me to call out the names of the persons on the Appeals Committee, but there is a footnote which states that Mr. Storey was replaced on the 10<sup>th</sup> May, 1970, by Mr. M.M. Dial

As I observed earlier, rice farmers who were elected by the producers all over the country were not allowed to sit on the Rice Marketing Board.

I said before, and I wish to repeat it, that the members of this Government are afraid of elections. They only indulge in elections when they can rig them. They cannot rig elections in the Rice Producers Association; proxies are not allowed; the dead cannot vote; children and

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people yet to be born cannot vote. Therefore they follow a different path. They dare not recognize those elections. They like elections at Mahaica, the elections of the Guyana Association of Local Authorities, where they can bully their positions but they dare not face elections of the type indulged in by the rice producers of this country.

2.40 p.m.

Sir, it will be recalled that for two consecutive years their own Board, not this one I referred to, made recommendations for increased prices but the then Minister of Trade who had charge of the marketing of rice of this country overruled the Board and prices remained as they were. You will remember, the hon. Member Mr. Kendall telephoned his instructions to the Rice Marketing Board. Today there are further changes in the Rice Marketing Board and this Government would never cease. We were told at one time that those changes that were instituted were enough, that the rice industry will progress from then on, but year after year we have changes; this Government will never come to an end with its changes because its changes have not produced the results it has promised the farmers. Indeed, the changes might be an excuse for hon. Members of the Government to continue to befuddle themselves and farmers in this country by keeping their commodity below the cost of production. The new change we have is the Guyana State Corporation, what they call Guystac, has taken control of the Rice Marketing Board. Whether Guystac is going to give instructions to those members who are without fear and favour to discharge their duties, or whether the Corporation is going to fix the price of rice or the Minister is going to fix the price of rice one does not know yet, one will have to wait and see how the formula will work out.

I anticipate that all these contraptions that have been built by the Guyana Government to destroy the rice industry will have to be removed before this industry which was on its feet can climb on them again. I do not know what the Minister is going to tell us, but the records here are very clear that since 1966 when these footballers took office by changing the rules,, by getting their friends in the United Kingdom - -



**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran the hon. Members on the Government Benches cannot be described as footballers. I would ask you to refrain from making sarcastic and uncomplimentary remarks. I think we had an undertaking from your side of the House as well as the Government side of the House not to be sarcastic.

**Mr. Ram Karran:** I really cannot see how the appellation “footballers” is sarcastic; but if Your Honour directs me to withdraw it, I will. I was referring to footballers in relation to the term used by a former Governor and I opened my speech by referring to it.

**Mr. Speaker:** A former Governor said that rice was a political football but that does not mean that they can be described as footballers.

**Mr. Ram Karran:** The Footballers are there.

**Mr. Speaker:** Therefore they become footballers.

**Mr. Ram Karran:** Yes, they are making rice into a football. I refer to a booklet, “The rice industry – a case for increased rice and paddy” published by the Guyana Rice Producers Association, September 1971 a copy of which I will leave with the Clerk. I think it is good to have it for the record of the House. I wish to point out that there has been a significant reduction in the production of paddy and rice in this country. For instance in the year 1960-1961, production was 111,721 tons. In 1961/62 it was 129,000 tons and those figures are all the way down showing that last year 1969/1970 it was 123,745 tons. Taking out for rice retained by producers for animal feed and seeds we have 79,976 bags in 1969/1970. This table indicates that even though there have been better seed, better weather and all that, there has been a reduction in the production of rice.

One page 10 of this Report the Rice Producers’ Association makes out that the Government has even used inaccurate figures to boost production. I refer to the second paragraph of page 10 in which it is stated that:

“The estimate of production quoted in the table could not be very accurate. For example, in the crop year 1966/67 53,155 tons of rice were retained by producers for animal feed and seeds. In 1969/70, 48,908 tons or 14,247 tons less than 66/67 were retained for the same purposes. Therefore, the production figure of 123,745 tons of rice for 1969/70 could not be correct, as farmers should retain a near quantity of rice in 1966/67 crop year. In that case in 69/70 crop should be 100,000 tons of rice, therefore, the more accurate figures will be the quantity of rice delivered to the Rice Marketing Board.”

That, I think, sir, corrects the situation. I am sure that the Minister will be able to change the record in so far as this contention is concerned. The fact that the Government has reduced the price to the farmers is to the mind of the producers in this country and indeed to any reasonable person the cause for a drop in production; the hope and reward, they say, sweetens labour and no one can expect that farmers are going to do as much as they did before in order to get increased prices if the operation is unrewarding. Some of the big farmers have already turned to cattle – those who can afford. Others, including middle farmers, have turned to cane cultivation. Some of the very small ones have been squeezed out and they are looking for jobs swelling the unemployed army in Georgetown and in other places. Some of the, we have already debate in this House have already have been given the dick, the people at Black Bush Polder whose houses have been tied to bulldozers and have been pulled down obviously because they cannot see their way to pay their rents, they cannot pay their other charges as well as to face up t the ever-increasing cost of living caused by this Government.

**2.50 p.m.**

The result of the reduction in the price of 1966 and the unrewarding situation that prevails in the rice industry of Guyana have caused the Government to pull down these farmers' houses. This document, from which I quoted, indicates that with the reduction of price, the farmers had been receiving \$2 less per bag in relation to the grades which prevailed then. But it was made out that the Government did not only indulge in a straight reduction in the price of paddy but it had also manipulated the grades so that the farmers lost more. That was in 1966.

In that exercise, the Government had been making roughly \$2.25 more than it was making prior to the exercise.

It will be recalled also that the Government and the Government-created Rice Marketing Board, not an elected Board, went to the West Indies to put up a case for increased production. Their case was that the farmers had been faced with increased cost of production and, indeed they were because a little before that, the Government had removed all subsidies, duty on gasoline, etc. and all the assistance to the farmers as a whole, assistance which went by way of the Rice Producers' Association, in the form of subsidized insecticides, in the form of subsidized seed paddy.

The Government then began a new programme by which it claimed it was helping the rice industry but indeed it was helping its friends. I say that deliberately and advisedly. Instead of giving universal assistance to all the farmers engaged in the industry, the Government withdrew it. The farmers lost more. The practice all along in the rice industry, and it was a good practice even though it was carried out by the imperialists, was that after the deduction of expenses by the Board, all went to the farmers.

The system of financing was that the Board borrowed money from the bank each year for the purchase of rice. Interest had to be paid for the money borrowed during that period, and, after all those expenses were paid, the farmers received the balance. Some people argue that that was a foolish system that the Board ought to have built up its own reserve. It does not matter one way or the other, because the money had to be found, interest had to be paid. And every time there was an increase in the price of rice paid by the purchasers overseas, or even increased local production, it went to the farmers. The farmers were satisfied that if an increase was won, they got an increase; if no increase was won, the price remained as it was.

For the first time in the history of the Rice Marketing Board we have had a reduction and we had a reduction at a time when the Government went with the Rice Marketing Board to argue

for an increased price, allegedly because the farmers were smelling hell. When the increased price was obtained, it seems to me dishonest for the Government to have pocketed that money in the Rice Marketing Board and to have deceived the farmers who got nothing. In fact, they did not receive what they were receiving prior to 1966. There was a considerable reduction in the price of the different grades. Even though there was a reduction in the price of rice purchased by the Board, the Board did not pass that reduction to the consumers in Guyana. The price remained the same.

Anyone who has been on this Rice Marketing Board will know that there are three criteria in so far as rice price structure is concerned, one is, the prices offered by West Indian purchasers must bear some relation to the cost of production, two, the price must bear some relation to the prevailing prices to the consumers in Guyana, and the third is that the price which they paid must be in relation to world prices. Despite the arguments they adduced to the West Indian purchasers, the prices to the farmers remained depressed. Despite what appeared in the newspapers that there had been an increase in the price, there has been really no increase.

On the East Coast, one sees slogans, many about clothing ourselves, feeding ourselves and housing ourselves through co-operatives. One would have thought that an inducement to the rice farmers and, indeed to all farmers in this country by way of increased prices would have helped but the attitude of the Government toward the rice farmers who produce the staple commodity is to starve yourselves. We are going back on the old slogan of the Prime Minister, eat less, sleep less, and work more. It is an old one. I do not remember it as readily as I remember the new slogan.

Perhaps the hon. Member Mr. Joaquin will recall that while those hon. Members sat on this side of the House a few years ago, they were very keen, in fact they moved a Motion to make the Rice Marketing Board, which was then controlled by the producers, into a co-operative.

Today they are shying away from co-operatives like the plague, especially in the rice industry. Why is this? They want co-operatives. "Self-Help" and "Co-operatives" are the cries of the day, but a co-operative for the Rice Marketing Board would undoubtedly not give the P.N.C. an opportunity to destroy their opponents in the rice industry. That is the reason.

I wish, if I may, sir, to refer to page 20 of the Annual Report of the Guyana Rice Marketing Board for 1969-70 where figures relating to the Board are set out. Through this exercise of deliberately depressing the price paid to farmers, by getting increased prices from the West Indian territories and not reducing, correspondingly, the price of rice for local consumers the Board has been able to show fantastic profits, which they are probably proud of.

On page 20 of the Annual Report we see that the profit for the year ended 30<sup>th</sup> September, 1969, was \$2,883,159 and for the year ended 30<sup>th</sup> September, 1970, the profit was \$2,677,957. The Income and Expenditure Account also shows that a very large sum, \$1,515,385, was used in the latter year for grants and aids (Schedule 2) and deducted while in the previous year ended 30<sup>th</sup> September, 1969, the sum of 716,105 was similarly used and deducted.

One does not mind grants and aids to the industry but, as I said at the outset, any grants and aids, or any assistance to that industry, should be universally applied. We do not find that this has happened. We find that selected groups in different parts of the country, those who will join the P.N.C., those who will know to what is going on in the country, are called by agents of the Government and are given money.

There is a man in the Essequibo district who used to grate coconuts. He is not a farmer in the sense that he plants or ploughs. He has people doing his farming because of the malpractices of the Government. This is not assistance to the industry. This must stop. One should be able to see clearly how this amount of \$1,515,385, was spent.

We were told that this money was spent for the acquisition of equipment to help the rice industry and to help farmers. First of all, let us deal with the equipment. In one year this sum of over one million dollars was spent. To buy what? Land Rovers. The hon. Member Mr. Saffee, who used to talk about jingling bells and chiming cymbals has one. The hon. Member Mr. Budhoo has one. [Mr. Budhoo: "I have not!"] I apologise, but five Land Rovers have been given to friends of the Government, allegedly to develop the rice industry. A motor cycle, 48 combines, harrows – this is the kind of exercise that was indulged in by the McDavid Government in the 1940s. This is one of the things that were inherited by the Rice Marketing Board of 1957, when it was found that it was far better for the farmers to own their own equipment. The members of the Government are finding that out now. The boys went with a combine the other day. A whole combine is missing and they cannot find it.

As I said, this exercise has already been exploded. The Government, or the Rice Marketing Board, or the Guyana Rice Corporation, cannot own equipment and use it beneficially except in the interest of a few friends. In 1957, when I used to be a member of the Rice Marketing Board, we got rid of the practice. We ran it down and encouraged the farmers to buy their own equipment. Today, the day of co-operatives, how much better would it not have been for the Government to encourage the farmers to own all this equipment in co-operatives so that the Board could be repaid.

The hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture cannot deny that a complete combine was lost. They do not know whether it is in the Mahaicony river, in the Canje river or in the Mahaica river. A lot more losses have taken place and the Government must get out of this, but it cannot. What will it do with this money if it gets out? It will have to pay the farmers and there will be no excuse for helping their friends.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has been singing a song – the tracks of the record are scratched – of increasing production, by means of which you are going to get increases. Despite his exhortations, despite his appeals and cajoling and threats, there has been

reduced production. The Government called for Blue Belle. There is a song we used to sing in school: “Oh where, tell me where”. The Blue Belle issue has failed. Blue Belle is dead and we have never had one word of apology from my hon. Friend, Mr. Jordan. He cannot apologise now because he is one of the silent members of this House who only vote.

### 3.10 p.m.

People were dismissed from the Ministry of Agriculture allegedly because they were not supporting the Government's policy on Blue Belle. The ex-Minister told us that Moses Ramnaraine was fired. But the Government does not say, “We apologise”, and send a letter of apology to Moses; because Moses was right. The same thing is going to happen with Starbonnet. We have all the big farmers who are friends of the Government, Perreira in Mahaicony and their friends. – I do not want to call other names. [Dr. Reid: “Call names”] Kayman Sankar. They do not want Starbonnet; they want the new hybrids – IR8. Mr. Perreira sent some of the hybrid rice to me and asked me to taste it. I understand that some was offered to the hon. Minister of Agriculture and he refused, he said he does not want IR8, he is afraid it might become contagious.

The Government's programme of the Starbonnet is also going to fail, and whether the Government likes it or not the farmers are going to produce the higher yielding variety. The Government must come out with an official statement rather than sending circulars to civil servants threatening them if they were to help the farmers to obtain the new hybrid variety threatening all sorts of things – fire and damnation – why is it? The Government has a spokesman – an information propaganda officer. Do not be so belated like the DaSent affair, come out now and make an official statement. Tell us why is it you are preventing the farmers from obtaining the new variety.

The Government is pushing Starbonnet. I have been and seen the Star Bonnet, I saw it on the West Coast Demerara and I have seen it in the Mahaicony area. Those farmers who are

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planting Starbonnet, who do not have adequate drainage and irrigation facilities and who are not prepared to use heavy doses of fertilizers are in for a rough time. In fact, the balloon is going to below as the Blue Belle went. If the Government has not done enough research on the new hybrid varieties let it say so to the country so that people might understand. But do not do as it is doing now in the case of the Blue Belle to put trifling increases as it has done, increase on the Starbonnet varieties which will not at all benefit the farmers in the country. A dozen farmers or so will benefit from what the Rice Marketing Board did yesterday. The clumsy way in which they did it, it is the same way the Government brought the Motion to the House.

The Members on the Government side are very clever men. The Rice Producers' Association went to talk to the Rice Marketing Board they made out a case I think the members of the R.M.B. even though they are drawn from the P.N.C. and even though they know so little about rice were convinced when these wise men spoke to them - -

**Mr. Hamid:** On a point of order. I wish to bring your attention to the fact that the hon. Minister who should know better should not read the newspapers.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you very much. Hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran may proceed.

**Mr. Ram Karran:** As I was saying, these members of the Rice Producers' Association went to the Board and put forward their claims, very hurriedly the Rice Marketing Board probably got in touch with the relevant Minister, the Minister of Agriculture, and they held a Board meeting right there and then in order to get this decision before today's meeting of Parliament. That is how these hon. Members operate. *[Interruption]*

The hon. Member says that they want to increase the yield. It is relevant to read again from their own report the performance of the rice industry in so far as their administration is concerned. I am reading from page 25 of the same Report which shows that in 1959/1960 the yield per acre of paddy was 15.3 bags of 140 lbs. In 1960/61, it was 12.7 bags, in 1961/62, 14.1



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bags; 1962/62 13.6 bags;; 1963/64 13.4 bags; 1964/65 is the relevant period, 13.0 bags. What do we have from 1965 onwards? The hon. Minister was crowing a little too early. In 1965/66 it was 12.7 bags; in 1966/76 12.3 bags; 1967/68 10.7 bags; 1968/69 9.6 bags; 1960/70 10.7 bags. [Mr. Budhoo: "Where did you get those figures from?"] Your own report. Where then is the contention of the Government that it must increase production before it is able to get increased prices? How then does the Government offer an increase in the price to the producers of Starbonnet when its own condition has not been met. This is not a case where we have had a change of Ministers. The Minister of Finance dealt with the Rice Marketing Board and the rice industry. The Minister of Agriculture is now dealing with it and it is the same person. How can the Government talk about increasing the production when it cannot increase production?

I want to refer to an article which appeared in the Guyana Graphic of Sunday in relation to the big industry and to draw hon. Members' attention to the fact that the Government was prepared to go all out in the big industry.

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Certainly, because their supporters mainly were engaged therein. Every facility. Co-operatives, subsidization from the marketing division to the point where the newspapers say we have over production of pigs but everyone knows that more than half of this country's population are non-pork eaters. One would have thought if this Government was interested in a pig industry, it would have found out in the Caribbean area, but it slept on it. The Government is one sided where its supporters are concerned, but in relation to the rice industry where its supporters are not working except in a few cases, it is putting pressure.

I wish to refer to this increase and to deal with it. What the Government has given does not touch the fringes in so far as the farmers are concerned, not even the starbonnet producers, and they have to produce a very good type of rice to benefit from the increases which the Rice Marketing Board has awarded. I wish to urge upon the Government, that farmers all over

Guyana recognize that the cost of living has gone up tremendously and the cost of production has gone up tremendously, as has been admitted by the Government itself and its Board, and it is high time that the farmers like every other section of the community should benefit from their hard work. There is a saying, sir, that “*Man wha gat rice ah pot, e na gat um ah plate.*” Let me tell the Government that this attitude which it has adopted in the past and which it seems to wish to continue in the future is not going to keep it where it is for long.

**Mr. Ambrose:** I should like to second the Motion moved by Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud and also speak immediately after seconding the Motion. I wish to say in support of this Motion before the House relating to an increase in the prices of rice and paddy, that to my mind it is long overdue. No one who knows anything about rice can agree that the present prices that are paid for rice and paddy are enough to offset the high cost of production as it is today. The cost of living and the cost of production in the past few years have risen tremendously, while the prices paid to farmers have not remained static but have been reduced.

The whole principle of price fixing has been in existence for far too long on a wrong premise. That is why we hear that rice production has been falling. This is true. The rice industry has not been growing fast enough to take care of the rapid progress that is necessary, and it is so because of this principle of price fixing. Many years ago, even before the Second World War, the prices used to be determined by the small traders who finally sat in Georgetown and decided the price of rice shipped to Georgetown. The farmers producing it had very little to say in this important part of the industry. They only went to the fields in the rain and the sun and produced, and when the commodity reached Georgetown, the prices were then determined by the small traders who sat in Georgetown to purchase rice.

After the Second World War, the Rice Marketing Board was created and the Board then began to take care of the price fixing but even though the then Government took over this important exercise, there was no proper criterion set out whereby a fair system of fixing prices

could be introduced. The Rice Marketing Board just fixed the prices which it felt were the best prices.

The farmers had very little say, even in 1946, when the Board was re-organised and there were eight members from the Government and eight members from the producers. Even then, prices were never fixed in accordance with a proper principle whereby the farmers could have benefited. The yardstick used was whatever they thought were good prices, those prices were fixed, and this has hindered the industry not only at home but abroad.

The problem that faced the many Guyana delegations at these conferences, they were the only sellers. There were many buyers; each West Indian territory having an individual representative, while Guyana had one single representative. Prices were determined by majority view. There was only one seller representative, while the delegation from the Caribbean comprised individuals from the many territories, and the representative of each territory took into account what was his local political and economic situation. On this score prices were determined there.

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This could have been seen quite clearly in the 1958 rice conference when the Guyana delegation actually walked out of the conference room deciding not to do any further business with the West Indies. Then only did they decide to give an increase of half cent per pound. There was no proper yardstick used. This goes on to this day.

Right now we are at the point of price fixing. There has been discussion at the Rice Marketing Board level and at the level of the R.P.A. and the R.M.B. Today we are discussing in Parliament the prices that will be paid for paddy and rice for the coming crop. What yardstick are we using? We hear what the Government thinks or what the Rice Marketing Board thinks.

There is no principle and this should not be. That is why the rice industry, rather than going forward, is going backward.

We are not able to live up to the high cost of production; we are not paying the farmers remunerative prices so that they themselves can put more into the rice industry and thereby increase the yield. In 1964 the rice conference in Barbados had actually agreed that future rice conferences should take into account the cost of production before determining the prices of the various grades of rice.

In 1965, the administration of the Rice Marketing Board was taken over and a new board, not an elected one, took its place. From then on we heard nothing. This is why we have run into these snags. This is why the rice farmers today are leaving the rice lands and are unable to produce rice under the present price structure.

On behalf of the Opposition I should like to ask the members of the Government to set some standard. They should agree to some principle; they should agree to a yardstick to determine all future prices of rice and paddy. This would mean that the rice industry would then be free from political interference no matter which Government has control at the top. The members of a Government would not be able to interfere directly or get into conflict with the rice industry and with rice production in this country. If some yardstick is set farmers must agree: if it costs you "X" dollars to produce, you would get a return for the labour which was put in.

In 1965 a rice committee was set up by the then Minister of Trade who was responsible for the Rice Marketing Board, Mr. W.O.R. Kendall. After examining various phases of the rice industry the committee came out with what we know as a cost-of-production figure. Though that committee was established by the then Government we hear little about its report.

In the following year, rather than adhering to what was set out in the report, the Government arbitrarily out the prices of rice. The rice committee had agreed that the cost of

producing one bag of rice in this country was as much as \$24.50. At the time the farmers were paid \$21.05 per bag for super rice. But the rice committee, after going all around the country and taking evidence, arrived at the figure of \$24.50 as the cost of production of one single bag of rice.

In that every year the prices of rice were not increased to meet what was set out as cost of production by this rice committee, but the prices went backward rather than forward. It is true that the rice industry is going backward. It is true that the production per acre is falling, but it must be clear that nearly 85 per cent of the 45,000 people in this country who are involved in the production of rice are small rice farmers who cultivate between 5 and 10 acres.

These people are no doubt facing increases in the cost of living, which is rising day after day. They are finding life very difficult and therefore less time is spent on the rice lands. That is why today the amount received per acre is less than it was, say, 5 or 10 years ago. Less time is spent on the land. The rice industry in this country is fortunate to have small farmers who hold between 7 and 10 acres. They plant their rice, clean the mares, go in and patch the rice, keep it clean and cultivate the bed head with greens; they own a milch cow and, indeed, spend 365 days on the land. That is why these people were getting a reasonable yield about 8 to 10 years ago, when the prices were better.

These very people, who, to my mind, are the cream of the industry, planted small areas of land and provided work for themselves. They did not have to molest the Government and hustle for jobs here and there. They kept on the land and fed themselves and their children. These people are finding life very difficult today and are turning to other forms of employment.

In my area 8,000 acres of land have been distributed with each farmer being given 5 or 6 acres. When the reaping begins, most of the farmers return home. Some go to the sugar plantations looking for work, some to the gold fields to see what they can do while the crop is growing. Today, rice is not as it was twenty years ago when it was possible to plant and then go

back and reap. Today many problems face the rice industry. After the planting stage, fertilizer has to be used; you have to attack the weeds, you have to attack the insects.

Rice needs attention every day but the farmers who should give this attention are elsewhere trying to eke out more money to make life a happy one. This is why the rice industry is going backward. The Government must make up its mind to have some proper principle for arriving at rice prices. These prices must not be fixed at ministerial meetings or at meetings of the Rice Marketing Board where the farmers are not adequately represented. This is far from satisfactory. There must be some yardstick set and the yardstick to measure such prices is the yardstick of cost of production.

Cost of production has risen. No one person in this country would believe that a rice farmer in 1958 received better prices than the rice farmers in 1971. No sane person would accept that, but it is so. In 1958 the farmers received \$17.60 for one single bag of No. 1 rice.

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The cost in production in many cases has risen by double. One bag of fertilizer in 1957 was \$14, today that very bag is nearly double. The 15/15 is nearly \$28 and the 10/10 fertilisers are in the vicinity of \$25. An ordinary tractor, say the 35 model Ferguson today is nearly \$8,000, in 1957 a man bought that very tractor for less than \$4,000. A combine was within the vicinity of \$18,000 to \$20,000 in 1958 today it is \$33,000. Everything has gone up. National wage rate was a little over \$2.00, today it is nearly \$5.00. The cost of one single empty bag in 1958 was 25¢ today the very empty bag is nearly 50¢. One single pound of potato in 1957 was 8¢, today it is 24¢ in the market.

There is no argument that can be presented in this House or anywhere in this country which should deprive the farmers from a substantial increase in the price for rice. This is clear. Everybody can see that in every part of this world labour cost has gone triple. I imagine the

farmer who produces rice he is earning less. Go at the waterfront and tell the workers that you would pay them the equivalent wages that they were receiving in 1957, and everybody in this Parliament would know what would take place in this country. It is impossible for any worker in any sector of our country to earn wages equivalent to 1957 and be satisfied. But if we introduce a proper yardstick these problems would be ironed out. Whoever are the members of the Rice Marketing Board, nominated or elected, they must follow this principle of cost of production. You cannot expect a farmer to continue to produce a commodity when each day and each year, for instance, the farmer loses money. No matter how determined the farmer would be, finally his energy would go. This is where we are now.

The Government in its own interest and in the interest of this country must realize that far too long the industry has suffered because of this bogus principle. From now on, it should be set out very clearly that cost of production must determine the factor of price fixing. Cost of production is determined by many factors. There might be some who might want to argue that in the West Indian countries you must face up with world cost of production, that we must compete. It is true that we must compete but we must agree that the cost of production is not only in the hands of the farmer who actually goes in the mud and rain to produce rice. These factors are also determined by the machinery department. For instance, no farmer who goes in the mud and rain to produce could determine the cost of a tractor or a combine. Farmers do not control the cost of bags which are produced outside the country, they do not control twine which is also produced outside the country, they do not control twine which is also produced outside the country and since the farmers are faced with these rising costs the Government must appreciate that under these circumstances we cannot compete, for instance, with countries like the United States of America. The farmer in the U.S.A. has a guarantee market; he does not have to think that this year he will get a lower price or next year he will get a higher price. His prices are set out by these principles of cost of production. No Government would want to appeal to the farmers to produce while they are producing at a loss and cannot earn a proper living.

This is why all these campaigns calling on the people to go to the land are falling to the ground. Nobody would leave Georgetown and go to the land and they would be more hungry. Aliko is an example. The Government should examine where a scheme of its own is falling to pieces, its own supporters are leaving the area. The question is that the people who are going to the land are finding it more and more difficult to earn a proper standard of living. We cannot compete with the United States where the tractors and combines are made. The farmers in the United States though getting a higher price can purchase a tractor or a combine on the market. For instance, in England the very Ferguson tractor we are paying \$7,000 to \$8,000 for you can get a reconditioned tractor for \$2,000. How can you then compete? In the United States you can get a combine for \$12,000 to \$15,000. In this country you purchase the very machine for \$30,000.

In the Far East labour cost of production of rice is less than half as it is in this country. In the Far East when the farmers produce a single bag of rice, say for \$5.00, it is costing us triple. How then can we compete?

This question of competing with world market must be clearly understood and it must be borne in mind – our representatives of rice in the Caribbean must bear in mind – that during the war year sin 1939/45 Guyana was selling rice to our Caribbean neighbours for about \$117.00 per ton while the American farmers were getting on the world market over \$350.00 per ton. This is more than triple. We never made any row then by talking about world prices. As a matter of fact, our Government then spoke in terms of our good neighbours, and we were supplying them rice at less than one-quarter of the cost that they could have got it any where in the world. Today, we must use all these arguments in presenting a proper argument for increased prices. The Government knows that when it got increases two years ago it was on this very premise it argued in the West Indies that the cost of production was going up. While no proper survey was made, the Government's case was presented on the premise that the cost of production of rice and paddy was going up. It was on this premise that the Government got an increase from the



Caribbean countries. Though the Government go the increase it was not passed down to the farmers. It is clear today the repercussion it has called. The farmers today, for instance, pay very little attention to the fields. The production per acre is falling tremendously and the Government has now resorted to new varieties Starbonnet and Blue Belle. The Government has already seen the reaction to the Blue Belle.

### 3.50 p.m.

The starbonnet variety has recently been introduced. Farmers all over the country have been attempting to give it a try. I myself as a farmer have made a try at it but while the results are not quite up to date, it does not appear that the starbonnet variety will be solving the rice industry's problem. I have tried it. I am not just talking. I have done everything possible with this new variety, reaping is now in progress, but all this talk we hear about it. It has not as yet proved itself.

Even if the Starbonnet variety should succeed, the Government must appreciate this important point, that it takes much more to produce Starbonnet than the ordinary varieties. When one is finished land preparation for the D-79 or D-110 or other local varieties, one has just begun to prepare the land for the Starbonnet variety. After the transplanting or shying, as the case may be, when the ordinary variety would stand up to our heavy rain or local conditions, the Starbonnet would not. Every time fertilizers have to be used. Each application of fertilizer is adding more to the cost of production and unless this variety can produce 30 to 35 bags, then it would be very difficult for it to be accepted generally by the farmers of this country.

Even if there is a little better price, if we accept the prices in today's newspapers, we would see a slight increase and it is clear to any practical farmer that that increase is far too little to give the people the impetus to go for the Starbonnet. Today, when the general cry of labour is shorter working hours, less working time, what we are doing by talking about Starbonnet is putting more time on the farmer. If we tell him that he must lengthen his working hours, then

we must be sure he will receive proper remuneration for this. I do not think at this time it looks so rosy. I hope the situation changes.

In conclusion, I want once more to appeal to the Government. This system must be changed. While it can assist the farmers, it can also assist the country's economy, and it will remove political interference. The farmers will then not have to look upon the Minister or a Government, and say: this Government is trying to humiliate us for political reasons. This yardstick of the cost of production and the cost of living would be used and therefore future rice prices would be determined in that context. No doubt, the farmers would be happy and the country's economy would be finally improved. Thank you.

*Question proposed.*

**Mr. R. Ally:** Mr. Speaker, the Rice Board today is doing everything possible so as to discourage rice farmers from the rice industry. In the colonial days, we had eight rice farmers' representatives on the Rice Marketing Board but today there are only three. One the Upper Corentyne, farmers who used to plant large acreages of rice, today find themselves in Dutch Guyana working with rice farmers at Nickerie. Why? Because rice in Guyana today cannot maintain a family any longer! This Government is only paying lip service to co-operatives. It is talking about co-operatives and trying to fool the nation and even the world that it believes in co-operatives.

The hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture not too long ago went over to the Essequibo Coast, at Anna Regina, and he asked the rice farmers there to tighten their belts because they will have to take on additional responsibilities. When the rice farmers asked what he wanted to tell them, he said, "What I want to tell you people is that I want to make the Rice Marketing Board a rice farmer's co-operative." But not too long ago a Bill was before this House and the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture was absent from the House when that Bill was passed here. We now hear that the Board has become a State Corporation instead of a farmers' co-operative Board.

The present Government is doing everything possible, as I said before, to destroy the rice industry and this is what the members have said before. They told us that when they were in the opposition. They were then calling the Government a rice government and a coolie government, which means that this Government, who was then in the opposition, meant what its members were saying. They were not saying it from their lips but they had it deep down in their hearts and since they got into office they put it into practice.

We have seen that they reduced the price when they got into office in 1965. They took away the subsidies from the rice industry, duty free gasoline, insecticide, weedicide; they increased the price of gags, even the price of agricultural machinery has gone up today. The price has sky-rocketed. Even the firms which usually bring these machines are trying to give up business. One cannot see new combines and tractors on the road. The farmers cannot afford to purchase new combines and tractors. Even the old ones, they cannot afford to repair them.

**4 p.m.**

Farmers who had two tractors or two combines are today trying to make one tractor or one combine out of the two because they are unable to buy spare parts. This Government should have made all these things duty free, especially spare parts for agricultural machinery. It should, at least, have subsidized insecticides and weedicides and given rice farmers duty free gasoline again. There are many tractors that operate with gasoline but because of its price farmers are unable to operate them. The tractors are lying idle under the houses of the farmers.

I think the Government should have given the farmers an increase of at least \$4 per bag on every grade of rice and not on top grades alone, Starbonnet and Extra Super, which I understand have received increases. Only one or two per cent of the farmers have those grades. The Government, therefore, is telling the farmers in plain words, "No increases". That is all.

If this Government really believes that the rice industry is responsible for a great part of the economy of this country then it should do something about it right now and not only pay lip-service to it. I think the hon. Minister of Agriculture, who is telling farmers all over the place that he intends to make some sort of progress where the rice industry is concerned, that he intends to improve the present conditions and to encourage the farmers to give him their co-operation, will have to increase the price of rice.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture could have gone into the figures and could have worked it out - - - to see that the farmers are losing money at the moment. On every acre of rice the farmer plants he is losing about \$18 from his pocket. This is why farmers are running away from the land.

If we turn to the 1969 Report of the Ministry of Agriculture we will see that the yield is going down every year. In 1963 the very persons who are today in the Government were in the Opposition and were doing everything possible to destroy the rice industry. They were sabotaging even the Rice Marketing Board. Yet in 1969 less rice was produced than in 1963. In 1963 it was not possible to get gasoline; we could not get fuel, even diesel, to operate tractors. For this reason, most farmers could not cultivate their crops and could not prepare their lands. In 1969 there was the lowest production in all the years since 1961.

I think that the Government should give this increase without any hesitation. The members of the Government will remember that only a few mornings ago the licence fee for trucks was increased. Because of this, the cost of production of rice has gone up as the truck owners are claiming that they cannot transport the rice for the same fee that they were charging previously.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, this will be a convenient time to take the suspension of the House.

*Sitting suspended at 4.05 p.m.*

**4.35 p.m.**

*On resumption - -*

**Mr. Speaker:** *Hon. Member, Mr. Roshan Ally.*

**Mr. Roshan Ally:** Mr. Speaker, I was saying just before the suspension that the Government should think of giving rice farmers an increase of at least \$4 per bag for all grades of rice. Every rice farmer is doing his best to get the highest grade for his rice because if he produces a high grade he will be getting a higher price. But bad weather and bugs cause him to produce lower grades. This is not the fault of the farmers.

Today rice millers are talking about increasing milling fees for the autumn crop. They are telling farmers in plain works that the prices of spare parts have gone up so high that they cannot afford to mill rice at the same fee they charged before. It cannot pay them to do so.

The cost of production is going up every day. I do not know whether it is the wish of this Government or whether it is due to the inexperience of the persons now sitting on the local authorities boards, but these local authorities are doing everything contrary to the rice farmers. This will cause very poor yields, they cannot get it either because the pump has broken down or because the trenches are not clean. At times when no water is needed, the local authorities flood the fields.

I do not know whether this is due to the inexperience of the new members of the local authorities – most of them have never served on local authorities before – or whether the Government is advising its councilors, so to speak, to destroy the rice industry. “Suffer the coolie,” the Government has said.

If you go to Springlands and stand on the Stelling and look across at Nickerie, you would feel, if you had a large stone in your hand, that you could pelt it across to Dutch Guiana. In that country the prices of the various grades of rice range from \$35 to \$44 per bag; here the price is \$20, \$21, and that is for Extra Super, but nobody gets that grade. When milling fees and truck charges are discounted – as I said before, the cost of transportation from Springlands has gone up – the money sent by the Board to the rice farmers is just \$19.20 per bag. Only water transportation and truck charges have been taken out.

The price of paddy in Dutch Guyana ranges from \$14 for the lowest grade to \$18. That is why the Dutch rice farmers can afford to employ Guyanese rice farmers. It pays a rice farmer from Guyana to go to Dutch Guiana and work with the rice farmer there.

**4.40 p.m.**

Is not this a shame and a disgrace to our Government? The people over in Surinam, even the Ministers and Members of Parliament are insulting our people when they go there. They tell them “Go back to your country and let your Government make betterment for you. Why came here and rob our people.” Guyanese today are moving all over the place. The Government knows this because it is trying to prevent them from leaving the country. Guyanese are under pressure and especially the rice farmers, they do not know what else to do because there is nothing more they could do at the moment. It is only when I entered this House this afternoon that I had seen this Motion on the Table; so I had not the opportunity of studying it. I feel because of that I was handicapped. Nevertheless, I should still like to appeal to this Government that it should rethink its decision and give the rice farmers at least \$4 per bag more on every grade of rice.

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. Member Mr. Wilson.

**Mr. Wilson:** Mr. Speaker, in making my contribution to this debate I wish merely by statistical evidence to support the charge made by the hon. Mover of the Motion that this Government is making virtual political football of the rice industry. From the time this

Government took office – it started as coalition with the United Force – the production of rice has been going down. Let us look at some figures.

**Mr. Speaker:** I think the hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran read all those facts. I wish hon. Members would not repeat themselves.

**Mr. Wilson:** As far as I recall I think he just refined generally to the decline, but he did not quote the figures.

**Mr. Speaker:** He did.

**Mr. Wilson:** All right. Be that as it may, production has been going down during the regime of this Government. Those figures quoted by the hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran proves that. Then there has been also reduction in prices during the regime of this Government. I do not recall that these were quoted by the hon. Member.

The Government at the time of assumption of office as coalition with the United Force deliberately, spitefully and vindictively reduced the prices paid to rice producers. They have been able to do this by removing the representatives of the Rice Producers from the Board. You will remember the occasion when the Bill for amending the Rice Marketing Board Ordinance was brought here and the producers came from all over the country to protest police dogs were let loose on them. This shows how cruel this Government can be, how bent it was on victimizing a people who gave their live blood to advance the economy of this country.

The Government did this in order to channel the substance of the rice producers to its supporters and we find there is the removal of the rice producers and at the same time the Government moved to change the variety. It insisted that the variety should be changed, that there should be Blue Belle and afterwards, Starbonnet. Let us see what this Government is doing with regard to the insistence in change on the variety of rice. I have here figures from a

F.A.O. Production Year Book and F.A.O. Trade Year books which show the difficult position in which this Government is putting itself when compared with the United States of America. This table is headed "Percentages of long, medium and short grain varieties produced in the United States of America." We see that whereas this Government is insisting that people must produce at one time only Blue Belle and at another time only Starbonnet, now we have figures here to show that the United States of America produced various types, three main types, and I should just give a few extracts from this table. In 1960, in the United States long grain was 48.3 per cent, medium 35.4 per cent and short 16.6 per cent. This shows where the United States did not insist on one particular type as this Government has been attempting to do. In 1961 the figures are very much the same and so on up to 1970. I shall read only the particular figures with regard to 1970. In 1970, the United States production, long grain 49.3 per cent, medium 40.4 per cent and short grain 10.3 per cent.

4.50 p.m.

This Government which is very much smaller in size in every way, area of production and amount of production, is trying to ape the United States of America. I think the hon. Deputy Prime Minister was at the time insisting that people must produce only starbonnet. He is asking for that particular type of rice because he wants to cater for the Jamaica market which wants long grain rice, 20,000 tons. That will call for the cultivation of 20,000 acres. The hon. Minister of Agriculture is hinging his chariot on a very tenuous base when he says that the people must produce this particular type of rice which is in demand mainly by the Jamaica market, and only to the extent of 20,000 tons. What is to happen to the vast acreage that has been under rice cultivation? There is little question about that. No thought is being given to that point.

I have information that the Rice Producers' Association has put forward a document presenting its case for increased production and the case is based mainly on these factors, increased cost of input as well as general increase in cost of living, and the profitability of the product. It also points out how the Rice Marketing Board could effect economies in order to



assist in meeting the increased charges. The Association is asking for an increase of \$4 a bag and has been able to show in its paper and its memorandum that this is quite easily possible, but I understand the Association also made a compromise in asking for only \$2 more a bag. I shall read what the Rice Producers' Association shows as regards the increased cost of input. This is from page 15:

“The cost of tractors and spare parts increased greatly while the model of the tractors changed slightly, they do the same amount of work and cost one and a half times more. For example, a tractor that pulled three ploughs in 1960 cost around \$4,000. Now a tractor that pulls the same amount of ploughs costs \$6,000, an increase of 50 per cent. The cost of spare parts has gone up by 50 per cent to 300 per cent since 1960. The cost of seed paddy mounted to \$11.95 per bag of 140 pounds. Fertilisers cost \$1.00 per hundredweight more than in 1960. Wages in other industries doubled. Combines present increase from 30,000 to 45,000. No wonder in 1969 only 392 tractors and combines were registered.”

In connection with this, I wish to refer to a tragic accident that occurred at Vreed-en-Hoop recently, when it was reported that a woman, because of the terrible financial situation in which she and her husband found themselves in investments in agricultural machinery, not only committed suicide but also administered poison to her children. It was no use living and she did not wish her children to live to face the misery that was in front of them. This was a very dramatic illustration of what the Government has done to the rice producers. The Government has destroyed their economy to the extent that they feel it is no use living. This is typical. Rice producers are feeling it is no use living under this Government because the Government is bent on destroying them.

Profitability of the product. The Rice Producers' Association has shown that on each ton of bulk rice, a net profit of \$40.00 is made, and when one multiplies this by the amount of production, it can be shown that the Rice Marketing Board can make \$4 million a year, but it is doing this at the expense of the farmers by denying them an increase. It is for this reason that the Rice Producers' Association is asking: give us a part of it.

What has this Government done? The rice producers have recently put forward a case. The Government, thought its leader of parliamentary business, has put this Motion on the Order Paper today. Two days ago, the Board met knowing that this Motion was coming up, announced new prices and caused publication of the new prices on the same day the Motion is to be debated. This reminds me of what the Government did about a Motion by the hon. Member Mr. Derek Jagan with regard to compensation, material status, illegitimate children and the like. At the same time, they put the hon. Member Mr. Jagan's Motion with another Motion by the hon. Attorney-General and Minister of State, which dealt substantially with the same subject.

**5 p.m.**

This is on page 2 of today's issue of the Guyana Graphic. The new prices are given. This reminds me of what the Prime Minister said when he was leader of the Opposition. I think it was after the 1961 Elections when he waited until the last minute to bring forward some election petitions against certain people. He said he had caught them with their pants down. I suppose this Government is saying it has caught the Rice Producers Association with its pants down or caught the P.P.P. with its pants down by bringing forward the Motion for an increase in prices and announcing an increase on the same day that the Motion is to be debated.

I want to show, Mr. Speaker, that these incases are not really increases. They appear to be increases but they are not really so. Let us see what the new prices are and compare them with the prices that prevailed in 1965. I do not know if it is parliamentary or not to say this is dishonest. If it is not, then I withdraw the word.

Let us see the prices in 1965 as compared with the new prices given today. Extra Super in 1965 was \$22.50. The new price announced today for Extra Super is \$22.50.

**Mr. Speaker:** What was the price before today?

**Mr. Wilson:** I told the House that the price was reduced in 1971. I was trying to show that in 1971 it was \$21. This only shows that they are making political football of the people, kicking them here and there.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member Mr. Wilson, I should like to direct your attention to the Motion which requests that prices of paddy and rice be increased from the autumn crop on the basis of prices prevailing prior to 1966. Have you read the Motion.

**Mr. Wilson:** Yes, sir, prior to 1966.

**Mr. Speaker:** That is what the Motion states.

**Mr. Wilson:** I am showing you the prices prior to 1965.

**Mr. Speaker:** Isn't that what the Motion is asking, namely, "that the Government take steps to increase the prices of paddy and rice to the farmers from the 1971 autumn crop on the basis of prices prevailing prior to 1966"?

**Mr. Wilson:** The point is well taken, Mr. Speaker, but this Government could do much better than that. The point is that the prices have to be taken back to the 1965 prices. I think the Rice Producers Association, in presenting its case, pointed out that at least the farmers could have been given \$2 more per bag. At the rate of one million bags per annum this would mean an expenditure of \$2 million. The Rice Producers Association showed how the sum of \$2 million could be raised. It pointed out that there is an agricultural machinery pool which is valued at about \$2 million. If the machinery is sold to co-operatives at least \$1 million would be obtained. I think the hon. Minister of Agriculture would agree that if the machinery in the pool is disposed of it could secure about \$1 million.

The Government is making a lot of noise about the Co-operative Republic and says that people must join co-operatives. I understand that at a meeting of the Board it was pointed out by the representatives of the rice producers that they would agree to rice farmers being organized

into co-operatives. The machinery from the pool could be handed over to the co-operatives and they would operate them more efficiently, it was claimed.

This handing over of machinery would bring in \$1 million. Then there is a surplus of half a million dollars. The Board had a surplus from 1969 of half a million dollars. In addition, loans to the extent of \$2.6 million have been made to farmers and certain other persons. When I say “person”, I am using the word in its wide sense. I mean bodies like the Greenland Co-operative Society. The R.P.A. has suggested that, if serious efforts are made to collect this money, at least \$1 million of this \$2.6 million could be realized.

I understand that the loans are made to farmers – that is quite in order – and to a society by the name of Greenland Co-operative Society. I do not know if this Greenland Co-operative Society has anything to do with anyone in this House by the name of Green, but this society has been given a very substantial amount of money belonging to the rice producers and not for purposes connected with rice production. The R.P.A. cannot understand what the operations of the Greenland Co-operative Society have to do with rice producers.

**Mr. Speaker:** Was it a gift?

**Mr. Wilson:** It was a loan, sir. The R.P.A. thinks that if loans are to be given they should be given to farmers and not to business enterprises that have nothing to do with the rice industry. A sum of money has also been loaned to the Community Development Department for self-help work not connected with the rice industry.

The R.P.A. is suggesting that efforts should be made to collect this money and it estimates that at least \$1 million could be realised. So that adding together the surplus in hand, half a million dollars, the money to be realised from the handing over of the machinery in the pool, \$1 million, and repayment of loans, let us say at least half a million dollars, you would raise \$2 million, and this sum could be used for increasing the price of rice by \$2 per bag, the average production being 1 million bags per year.

I should like, in conclusion, to urge the Government not to insist on the production of Star-Bonnet, because it is going to lead this country to ruin. This Government is trying to imitate the United States of America, but it is only imitating one aspect of the American policy. In the United States the farmers are subsidized by \$11.64 per bag of 140 lbs. in paddy, whilst, in Guyana, farmers only receive \$6.30 per bag. Look at the difference!

**5.10 p.m.**

It is no wonder that the rice producers cannot see their way and that they are being destroyed. We are very seriously urging upon this Government to broaden its scope or to widen its policies, with regard to the varieties.

My information is that there is a certain adviser to the Government, on Mr. Powar, who has been carrying out some researches recently and has been able to produce certain types which have become more or less indigenous to Guyana. He has produced hybrids by crossing the IR8 from the Philippines with D110, and also with No. 79. From these crossings he has produced hybrids that can stand up very well to climatic and other conditions in Guyana and types that are also acceptable to the world market. They are being made in alphabetical order. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, the Government spoke so much about this particular type of rice produced by the research of this gentleman and it is said that the rice is very palatable. I had the opportunity of tasting some of this rice and it compares very favourably with the Starbonnet. I have tasted both so that I can speak from experience.

I cannot understand why this Government is insisting that the people must produce Starbonnet rather than making use of the results of their own research which have given varieties that can compete and compare very favourably with those other varieties produced. But of course one can understand this Government, it says that it is politically non-aligned but it seems that it is always dancing to the tune of its master the United States of America. Mr. Nixon says, "I am going to China." Guyana Government invites trade mission from China... The Nixon

Government says that it is removing certain restrictions from Cuba, this Government is saying that it will trade with Cuba. The United States says, “Starbonnet”, this Government says, “Starbonnet”. This is just like the story in Esop’s fables where the baby frog went home and told his mother that he saw a big creature and the mother want to show that, “There must be nothing bigger than I.” So she said, “How big was this creature?” It tried to compare itself with the ox and he said big like this: and she puffed and puffed until at last she burst. This Government is going to burst until it destroys itself if it continues to imitate the United States of America.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture (Dr. Reid): Mr. Speaker, rice is always a subject that provokes a lot of emotion in this House. Not so long ago we discussed rice in some detail and this afternoon I simply want to bring my friends back to earth. We are dealing now with prices. We are not going to rake care of the extraneous matters. Let us deal with rice. One gentleman who is supposed to be very knowledgeable has put down as his formula for prices that it must be the cost of production.

The Rice Producers Association that they have been directing our attention to so often in this debate talked just like that and the R.P.A. decided that it must make representation for new prices upward and the argument must be, as they have outlined, a little modified in that book, cost of production. They have given detail. A copy was sent to me, and a copy was sent to the Prime Minister. A letter was signed by the General Secretary of the R.P.A. Mr. Jairam Karran submitting this copy. It was dated 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 1970 – not very long ago. And to their great confusion when the cost of production per acre was totaled up it came to no less than \$277.10 per acre. If you were to fix the rice price to accommodate that then this country will really have to subsidise this industry many folds.

When these details were being analysed those great gentlemen from the R.P.A. hung their heads in shame. I do not think they have done the same thing in that book. They probably have not reached that high level of \$277.10 per acre. An acre in some parts of this country will give

you no more than five bags. They have already told you our national average has gone down to as low as nine bags per acre, they have said it. It is true that the national average went down lower and lower over the years and when we came to 1969 it had reached that low as 9.6 bags per acre. If you are to accommodate that type of average to take care of the cost of production of \$277.10 per acre, work out the mathematics now and see how much you must pay for one bag. Then those who are saying that we want to destroy it will find the destruction will come almost overnight. Because we produce rice in this country not only to feed ourselves, but for our overseas markets. It is good, therefore, for us to come back to earth, to sanity, remove the emotion and see what the picture is in the world today.

This is a document carefully prepared by the Executive Chairman of the Guyana Rice Corporation. This is what is recorded. "World prices have fallen by 50 to 60 per cent compared even with 1968." Prices have dropped so low that even the surplus that we had we could not accept world market prices.

**5.20 p.m.**

For instance, recent quotations for rice of the average quality exported by Guyana have fallen to as low as \$13 per bag, CIF port of delivery, and this same quality of rice is purchased from the farmers today at \$17 per bag. Who is the mad man that must change that upward from \$17 to something more when you sold in the world market at \$13 per bag? But this has been the trend over the years, that as production fell, farmers shouted, farmers put the pressure on, then the next best thing to do was to carry the price up. And if they want to tell you the truth, sir, that is the trend that would have destroyed this rice industry.

In 1950, our national average was 16.9 bags but in 1969, we talk of 9.6 bags. What will happen to this country if this trend goes on, even if you want to accommodate this difficult situation by raising prices? Before long, we must price ourselves out of the world market. We cannot leave the farmers alone. We cannot leave the farmers to this utter destruction.

Something has to be done to stop this downward trend and this is what has already happened, because the national average is no more 9.6 bags. It is 13.5 bags. They quoted up to 1969 and everybody stopped abruptly because 1970 was going to give us an indication for the future and they did not want to mention that at all. The national average reached 13.5. But more than that!

The last spring crop of 37,000 tons was the highest yield ever in the history of this country. What has really happened in this exercise, with all they have been talking, those who have been raising prices, those who have been making political arrangements to carry prices way out of range? What has happened to change this picture? It is because there is a new interest in what the farmers are doing. It is a closeness to the farmers now. Some of my friends were in the rice industry. They also spoke in this House. They would tell you, sir, if they want to, there was a time when they had a certain number of acres but today their number of acres has increased; almost doubled. Is it because the industry cannot pay? It is because that is a good farmer who knows what to do to put himself in a position to want more land for cultivation.

This yield that has gone up is the sign. If we are to make our farmer economically viable, there is only one way left for us to go toward that now, and that is, to increase the production per acre so that at the end of the crop when all his expenses are deducted he will have more money for himself. If Guyana departs from this line of action, then the rice industry will be rally destroyed, because we will not be able to sell anything.

There was a time when they shouted for so long that the rice industry would have been destroyed. Today, it is good to hear them say that the rice industry has surpluses. And their great quarrel is that they must get the surpluses. But if we continue in that old pattern, leaving the farmers unattended, without the proper direction and instruction, then the industry must be destroyed. The surplus in these days must be ploughed back into the industry. There is no other way to do it. Why must we quarrel because yield is dropping? Are we not to find out why yield is dropping? Is rice the only money crop that has been grown in this country over the



years? Sugar cane was growing here before rice. Yet one hears production goes up every year. They should be concerned about what has happened.

Rice production has been going down because the practices of husbandry have been bad and the good farmers know this. When he ploughs and drains the best of his land into the sea, how does he get the high yield? When some of the schemes were started, the average was 28 bags per acre. Today it is 5 bags per acre. What kind of husbandry did they have over the years? They get into the fields and they wash out the surface soil. They wash this, the only top soil which is useful but which is not deep, into the rivers and streams and expect the land to be still productive, and we must subsidise inefficiency by raising prices to meet the cost of production. *[Interruption]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member Mr. Hamid, I have already spoken to you.

**Mr. Hamid:** Very well, sir.

**Dr. Reid:** We have other evidence in this rice business where farmers are taking advice, where farmers are settling down to do this type of work instead of talking of \$277 cost of production per acre. Here we have a few farmers. They have no reason to tell lies on themselves. Farmers would not tell you they are making money if they are not. Even when they are making money, it is difficult to find out. We have a farmer, I presume he is honest, he has given us his cost of production up to the time of reaping the crop as \$99.00. He probably made a lot of economies because in our own husbandry we were able to produce at \$121 per acre. But, Mr. Speaker, this shows you the kind of direction that the R.P.A. gives. It is in keeping with its behavior over the years because even when that Association was in charge of the rice industry, the members themselves admitted, as I explained in this House, that they were dishonest to themselves and to the farmers. From their own writings, from their own words, they admitted that they were dishonest to themselves and dishonest to the farmers.

They say that the grading has gone up. If we are to have an industry that is going to compete in the world, there are certain things that we must do and one is to grade the rice properly. Previously people were graded. I have often repeated this in this House. A man would carry one truck-load of rice and by the time it was graded it was two. He would carry in low grade rice and because he had a particular name he would come out with Extra No. 1. All sorts of things happened and my friends know this. This is no fairy tale.

The quarrel about grading is that we have now decided that the correct thing is to grade the rice and not the people. This is important. A farmer must get what he deserves and the way to do it properly is to grade the rice, so that if he does not do well he will know it needs a little more effort to do better. Farmers are accepting this. They used to quarrel about this, but nowadays they are seeing good sense in it because they get better returns for their higher grade.

There are men on the Board who are committed to think hard about the rice industry. They work hard on this and they have decided to change prices. Last year they made some slight changes and this year they have gone a little further in making changes, but they cannot change prices for low grade stuff, because this will encourage bad husbandry and bad practices.

How will the farmer improve in what he is doing to maintain his industry, to let it be viable, to let it be something that will stay on in Guyana throughout the years if we pay higher prices for low grades, if we pay more than the rice can be sold for in any country? Prices have been geared according to the quality of the rice. That is all that has happened here. Some of the varieties, like Star-Bonnet and Blue Belle, have been upgraded and our ordinary varieties, our Extra Super and Extra No. 1, the ordinary varieties, have been upgraded in price. This is the way we believe that this should be done and that is how the Board has been able to do this and to publish the prices at a time when prices are usually published because the crop is now being reaped.

There are other things we do for the rice industry. I heard my friends on the other side shouting, “Start the co-operatives and let them get tractors. Give over the Rice Marketing Board to the co-operatives and let them go on.” I wish that always, as we perform, we will make sure that when we hand anything over to a co-operative we hand over something that is viable, something that can work. It would be unfair to our co-operatives if we unloaded on them something that we are not sure is a viable institution, or a viable piece of equipment. This rule must always be observed.

There are some basic troubles that must be removed in the rice industry. We attempt to do this by the seminars we hold, by the field-days we hold. Today should have been a field-day – I think a field-day is being held, but since we have to give Wednesday to the business of the members of the Opposition and I had some work to do here, I had this talking exercise, I had to come here. Some hon. Members are asking that we should stop at 6.30 We cannot. We have to go on until we finish this work because there is other work to be done outside this House.

These co-operatives have to be put in a position where they can make a profit from what they do. The surplus that we get in the rice industry, instead of putting all on price, a decision has been made and we have to follow that decision. We must correct some of the practices in the field. We must get down to the ground and help the farmer at that level. That is the only sensible thing to do because what would it matter to a farmer who is getting five bags per acre if you increased his price to \$4 which hon. Members are asking for? If you can move that farmer from five bags to fifteen, to twenty, to twenty-five, you have done something for him. You have prevented him from being a beggar.

We do not want the farmers to be beggars all their days. They will not be beggars, if we can improve their practices, help them with their land, with the koker they have not got, the dam that is not good, the drain that is not there, the tractor that they have not got, if we can make sure that they can get it into the field so that ploughing is done properly and they are satisfied and if we make sure that production will change.

That is the reason why the national average has now changed upward. Must we at this time used up all the surplus on prices only and leave those farmers to themselves again when we know that many of them, even if we give them prices, would not rally benefit? Are we going out there to fool the farmers? Are we going to make a political arrangement with them while we are in office and forget them when we are out of office or, as a matter of fact, kick them all about when we are out of office so that they die and it does not matter to us? Not at all!

There was a time when we did not take enough care of our markets, but this Government must always ensure that it takes care of its markets. Some years ago the country of Venezuela asked Guyana to send some rice. The hon. Members opposition know this. Venezuela wanted to buy rice. It was not in the time of the present Board; it was in the days of the P.P.P. Venezuela had arranged to buy thousands of bags of rice and the members of the Board were so happy about this arrangement that they travelled to Venezuela to see the unloading. When the bags were opened all sorts of refuse were found inside. The Venezuelans were so annoyed that they nearly destroyed them. From that day Venezuela has never ordered rice from Guyana. As a matter of fact, because of that incident Venezuela started to cultivate rice and right now it is putting more and more under cultivation. Probably, if Guiana had not done that trick, instead of Venezuela expanding its rice cultivation, we would have been still supplying that country.

We cannot afford to let markets go wildly like that or let anybody carry on the marketing of this commodity. The rice industry is too important and Government must always be there to ensure that there is a proper Rice Marketing Board that will give justice to the people who purchase the rice from us. There must be fair play this time. There must be justice to our customers because we need these customers and customers these days are not like the customers of long ago.

Hon. Members say that Star Bonnet is going to fail but if we are not prepared to give the customer what he wants we will have to get out of business. Even Gimpex will have to go out

of business if it is not prepared to give to customers what they want. If our customers call for long grain, better quality rice, it is our bounden duty to ensure that we go along this way. We cannot do it all at one time, but there must be a point at which we began and fortunately for us we began a little early or else we would have lost some markets completely. A few of the markets that we now have ask for one variety of rice. Do not tell them about any other variety. They are asking for Star Bonnet and some are asking for Blue Belle. If you cannot supply them, then you have no market. We have made a decision that we will go after these markets and continue to maintain our rice industry.

**5.40 p.m.**

Because of that, my old and respected friend, the hon. Member Mr. Wilson believes that whatever America does, Guyana does. I did not think that he would have been so daring to say that. Because on their side they used to follow so carefully what their bosses said that they told falsehoods all over the world. They talked of nationalization all the time but when it comes to doing it the bosses say, "You dare and we get you". I do not know what these hon. Members are talking about. They have taken no independent line any place. If we were following America DEMBA would have been DEMBA instead of GUYBAU. We would not have been pushing co-operatives in this country. This is not the American way of life, this is not their policy and programme. But they have seen now probably for the first time the type of Government that is really non-aligned, and indeed in the Third World, Guyana holds no mean place.

There was a time when they said we must not change the variety at all. Nowadays I hear them say, "Oh let the people plant hybrid". What kind of people are these? They were saying grow 79 and D110 until doom's day, now they say "Grow the hybrid". If we are to ensure that we do things properly we must observe time because it takes time to develop a new variety that can be put on the market that will have some permanence. If you err in this direction then you suffer for many more years to come. If you throw on the market a variety that people will reject

after a year or two you have really put your rice industry in trouble. Starbonnet took ten years to be perfect. All the checks and balances had to be imposed on it so that when it reaches the customer you are sure that whenever you send a sample of Starbonnet it will be just that. Its length will be good, its thinness will be good, its colour will be good and there will be no segregation, that is, going back to its parent variety. These hybrids have a way, unless properly tested and proved, to plow a “throw back”. It happens to people too; sometimes these matters even reach the divorce court. Because people do not understand the “throw back”. We must be aware of this, that when a new variety has come into the field, into the experimental station, it does not mean that it is time for it to be widespread to all farmers or else you will be getting yourself into trouble; and this has happened in this country already. It is not outside of our own history.

There was a time when they talked about 6044 and 6047. These were issued to farmers in those days with a lot of enthusiasm, but they were used prematurely. What was the result? They segregated back to parent type and one of the parent types is our old 79. Do you see any 6044 in the field now? Do you see any 6047 in the field now? None at all! But you will see 79. If we should go along with one of the improved hybrids and it should go back to the parent variety – the hon. Member told us it was the fancy one that is grown in the Far East, the one that they call - - -, that troublesome fellow that would not sell in these parts of the world; if you attempt to grow it production is high, but what is the use? No markets. Farmers will have it all stocked up. They will return to times like 1964 early 1965 when weevils and other pests destroyed their labour.

More care must be taken in what we do, and that is what, this Government is doing. The hon. Members made mention not so long ago that we carried Mr. Pawar around this country to talk to people, that we must change the variety as time goes on. They nearly crucified him. The change is necessary. The old varieties have their great disadvantages, our practices have changed, they have changed to machinery and things like that. They now believe, and they know too, and that is why I think they are supporting it, they know that if we should fall for that

and go on with the new varieties too early and the segregation takes place the rice industry will really be damned. So you find all the PPP people are lifting Mr. Powar high into the air now because he is pursuing something that the Minister of Agriculture and all the specialists believe is not the right thing to do. We have to live here when he is gone. We have to do something which will benefit our farmers permanently. We are not passers-by. We are not serving other masters; our master is the people of Guyana. This is the story of the rice industry.

**The Leader of the Opposition** (Dr. Jagan): We have listened to a great deal of heat but very little sense. Clearly the Minister has got himself into a whole heap of contradictions. He said, "We must not increase prices because the yield is low, what is the purpose of increasing prices when the yield is so small." Price is that greatest incentive in all countries of the world so far as farmers are concerned. The first point that a farmer looks at: What is the relation to his cost of production? What is his input? What is his output? Clearly in terms of output – income I am talking about price is a factor and an important factor but he disregards this. He says that production is the factor, but he does not see the dialectics of this.

Sir, to come to production. What are the factors of production? Land, water control, variety, fertilizers, and mechanization. Land and water control – what has the Government done about this? Where are its drainage and irrigation programmes? It has scrapped them all. Where is the Tapacuma Extension Scheme? Where is the Mahaicony/Mahaica/Abary Scheme? Where are all the follow-up schemes for Boeraserie? What nonsense are the Members of the Government talking about wanting to increase production?

**5.50 p.m.**

**Variety.** We had a plant breeder before Pawar came here; he spent many years to breed new varieties. What did they do? Scrap everything that was done because the Yankees said, "Blue Belle." Pawar went along with them in the early period. They themselves had to, although they tried to ram Blue Belle down the throats of the people; they gave it up. Next,

Star-Bonnet. You do not have to have a plant breeder. You just take it from the United States. That is Star Bonnet and Blue Belle. Let us hear a debate between the expert, Pawar, who has done a lot of research here, and all their experts. But they would curse the man behind his back - - - a scientist.

The United States – you have the statistics here – produced in 1970, 49 per cent in long grain, 40 per cent in medium grain, and 10 per cent in short grain. Yet we are going to divert our whole production to long grain variety. For what purpose? Most of our export crop is to the West Indies. We produce a negligible quantity for export outside the West Indies today. One-third or more of our crop is eaten in Guyana. Do they want long grain variety? Do the Trinidadians want it? First, the Minister's emphasis was yield. Now it has gone from yield to variety. Long grain.

This so-called Jamaica market is 20,000 tons which is equivalent to 40,000 tons of paddy, Roughly that is equivalent to 20,000 acres. Why then are we in this unholy haste to tell all the farmers all over the country, regardless of conditions, water control, price of fertilizer, economics of that operation, to grow Star Bonnet? All we need for the Jamaican market is 40,000 tons of paddies, equivalent to 20,000 acres of rice, but we are going to like a dragline, bulldoze the people. That is why they cannot get results. That is why rice production is going down. Let them go and find out yields.

I am sorry I did not bring the rice. Blast has taken it over in Wakenaam. Blast was controlled here. It was only on the East Bank and the new varieties which are being bred to become blast resistant. You do not experiment. You bring Star Bonnet. For what purpose? We are told that the Government has now before it five varieties recommended – hybrids. Do you mean to say that this man is going to stake his international reputation? If so, has his opinion been tested in the light of other people's opinions, people who are world experts in rice?



Are we taking the cush-cush people that they are padding up in all the Ministries, to say, “yes” if the Minister says “grow Star Bonnet”, all of them bow and say, “yes”? That is what we have been reduced to in this country. Let the legislators go to the Experimental Station to see how these people are misinforming this House and this country. Five varieties of hybrids have been given to them. Yields are far higher than Star Bonnet. The input factors of production are not as great. They do not require so much fertilizer. They can grow in conditions under which two-thirds of our crops are grown in this country.

We have water control at Mahaicony-Abary. The experts are there. The Government started with Blue Belle. It has gone to Star Bonnet. Tell us what the figures are not only for those with proper water control, but also their own varieties. They have a protected price and market outside. They do not sell through the Board. They ship to the Board and without grading at the Board are awarded their own grades and export prices at the Board, while the farmers have to be cheated in grades and prices at the Board. And yet the Rice Corporation at Mahaicony-Abary is losing money every year.

These people are totally illogical. There are the facts. Can they deny it that at Mahaicony-Abary, which is a Government station, where they have all the factors, all the scientists, all the brains and protected prices and markets, they are losing money? That is why rice production is going down. Two-thirds of the country has no water control, yet they are forcing people to grow Starbonnet. Look at the price incentive they are giving: \$1.50 for Extra Super Star Bonnet, \$1 for Super Star Bonnet, another \$1 for the ordinary varieties Extra Super, and 50 cents for Super. Let them give us the statistics, how many people are awarded Extra No. 1 and Super.

The Government must make up its mind. The facts are here. The United States farmer receives a figure of \$11.64 a bag whilst Guyana farmers are receiving \$6.30 a bag for the same Star Bonnet. Not only that. The American Government buys from the farmers at subsidized prices, pays them to keep land idle, what is called the soil bank, and then in turn sends it out at a

subsidized price or gives it away under PL 480 to countries like Jamaica. What are we going to do? The hon. Minister is ignorant of economics; he knows about animals. He does not understand.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Leader of the Opposition, we had reached some agreement.

**Dr. Jagan:** I withdraw the word, “ignorant”, sir. Obviously, the hon. Minister does not understand that wage factor alone is not the main factor in production, that cheap labour is not always the most efficient labour, that in the United States, they deal with large cultivations, they use tremendous mechanization, they use aeroplanes to cultivate and spray fields. *[Interruption by the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture.]* I shall not divert and allow him to divert me.

**6 p.m.**

Look at the Government’s policy! We are going to deal with Global-Agri in a little while. Look at rice! These are the products of the United States and we hear about soya beans behind the scene too. There is a surplus in these products in the United States of America. We know that the United States today has a deficit for the first time in 50 years, perhaps in 100 years. There is a deficit in trade. They forced their puppets to put a 10 per cent tax on cheaper goods for socialist countries. *[Interruption.]* They are not puppets, yet we see it in practice.

The United States experiences difficulties in selling goods abroad, yet we are going to produce not only the same product but the same varieties. There was the previous example which probably still operates, where Connell and Company were marketing Guyana rice, not the Guyana variety, but what is called “Rooster Brand”, in its own bags under its brand name.

In these days of gluts and difficulties of finding markets in the world, how do you expect to compete against the United States, which subsidises its exports, which gives them away for political reasons, when you are going to allow them to sell your rice under their brand name? Today people do not buy rice; they buy brands. People do not buy soap; they buy brands; they

buy a name. We have no name. Are we going to grow the same variety that the United States has? What does this mean? It means in this world situation of growing difficulties to find markets we will come more and more under the political domination of the United States. Then she can say "Unless you do so and so you are not going to have markets." How are you going to sell when you are selling the same thing the United States has a surplus in and the same brand names?

Perhaps my friends do not see imperialism operating with all its sinister manoeuvres as clearly as we do but we warn them. We give them free advice. This is dangerous. What is the position with corn? We are importing corn today but we hope to replace it later on by production internally. That is a never never land. We are importing millions of pounds of corn. The five varieties of hybrids which we have could produce what we need in terms of food production for more people. Hungry people in the city and elsewhere could get cheap food, as cheap as it was in the P.P.P. time.

Where are vegetables and ground provisions now? The members of the Government have accused the Rice Producers Association of sabotaging. Who has sabotaged the ground provisions but the Government with its policy? Why is it that ground provisions are today selling at a minimum price of 12¢ per lb? The policy of the Government is all wrong and the Government must be concerned about this because this is not only a matter of concern to the P.N.C. This is national interest.

The trend in Latin America is there to see. Countries which exported agricultural produce, which were self-sufficient, are today big importers of food and this is the direction in which we are heading. This is a serious matter. Their masters will not allow them to industrialise the country. They are to fall back on agriculture and say, "Agriculture is the backbone of the country." Yet they are killing it. Look at the figures in any field of production and you will see! Look at the prices in the markets. That alone will tell what is happening. The consumers can tell you through their bellies that the policy is wrong.

We cannot go on like this. Favouritism is there; the use of the profits of the Board to subsidise their friends for political purposes. This will pay political dividends in the short run but not in the long run. It cannot. Go and see some of the friends who have been helped with loans. Do not go to the big industry alone where you said you cannot collect the loans, but go to the rice industry also. The Government takes the money from all the farmers generally who should have received increases of \$2 million, \$3 million, \$4 million, and gives it to its friends who eat it up. They sell the fertilizer; they sell things. This is the Government's dilemma. It want to make farmers of people who are not farmers because it fails to give them industrial jobs. Your masters tell you that you cannot industrialise the country.

To come back to prices. I have sat in West Indies conferences negotiating prices on behalf of the farmers. Three factors have always been used: world price; factors in the cost of production locally; the necessity to give the farmers a fair return. These are the three factors that are used.

I heard the hon. Minister say that world prices are down but the West Indians have learned through their taste buds that cheaper external rice is not always the best rice. They got used to Guyana rice and its odour and they have learned to take it. Thus the two other factors have always been the main factors in determining price – cost of production and a reasonable return for the farmers.

Can we truly say that what is being done today is reasonable? The Government is dishonest. It used these factors to get an increase in prices but did not pass the increase on the farmers. The members of the Government will not deny this. This is dishonesty; it is cheating. They take the money instead and give it to their friends.

Not only would I say that West Indians, by and large, have dealt fairly with us in rice, but they have also a moral obligation because we give them a *quidproquo*. We buy CARIFTA

goods, industrial goods, coming from Jamaica and from Trinidad and Tobago. Even though prices are cheaper outside, even though quality may be better in many cases, in the interest of this so-called “regionalism” which they have fostered – the Yankee-dominated, the imperialist-dominated, regionalism – we give them a *quid pro quo*. The Guyana Government has surrendered industrialization of Guyana in favour of industrialization of the West Indies.

Be that as it may, what has happened is that we have to pay more. Therefore, they should give us more and they have been giving us. But this Government, dishonestly I say – I use this word advisedly and deliberately because it is in the record. Their delegates to the Conference dominated the board. We have the record. They put up a case for increased prices. They got them and when they got them they did not give them to the farmers. That is dishonest

#### 6.10 p.m.

I say, sir, that what the Government has done is nothing. It cannot satisfy the basic problems confronting the farmers today. It is not only discriminatory against political opponents but it is also anti-national, it is against the long-term interest of this country. As long as this Government continues, agriculture will be the backbone of the country, there will be not industrialization. But according to its policies, its discrimination, agriculture is bound to go down as it has been going down. The Government must seriously take stock of this and not come here and try to score debating points. Why does not this Government debate? So when one talks one can talk from this side. The Government does not do that because the Members are afraid to be exposed.

I repeat, the hybrids offer the possibility of forty to sixty bags per acre. The hybrids offer the possibility of three to four crops per year. In Zealand, India and other places what was called the Green Revolution because they have used new varieties and so on it has changed the production problem so far as food is concerned. Some of these countries which were net

importers of food, are now beginning to look for markets outside but we do not want to take advantage of this because this Government has it deep down in its mind that certain sections of the community must not go ahead and it is out to destroy its political opponents by any means, put pressure on them so that they would come to its knees and beg it for jobs, land and loans.

*[Interruption.]*

Look at these, they cannot win an R.P.A. election statutorily run free and fair. They cannot win one seat in the sugar belt. We saw that recently in election for cane weighers; yet they won all the seats for the local government election. This is dishonest. This is why this country cannot make headway.

They talk one thing about co-ops. I thought the Rice Marketing Board was a co-operative. I was a member when in colonial days they had eight Rice Producers Association and eight for the Government and in those days we fought hard because the Chairman belonged to the Government eight, and always give the farmers the bird. We fought hard when we got into Government and we changed that. We gave the farmers 11 out of 16. They had the majority, they were running the show. This is what you call co-operative. Co-operative means basically people running the show. How can hon. Members of the Government talk about co-operatives and the main one, the Guyana Price Board, they are destroying? The Guyana Marketing Corporation is being run bureaucratically with hacks. How does this Government expect things to progress when all over the local areas it is handpicking people because it controls local authorities? It does not even trust its supporters like Llewellyn John. It does not even trust the ballot box, the Government says, "Show hands." What a disgraceful situation!

Any reasonable man looking at the political situation whether in Uganda, in Ghana, whether in Indonesia where there was also talk about going to socialism, where there was also rule by virtual dictatorship – which we have here – will see that those people lost out and they lost out fundamentally because the people were not really involved. This is going to happen here too; it is just a matter of time. But I hope that they are over there not only some political

climbers and bureaucratic capitalists who want to become capitalists tomorrow; I would hope that there are also some truly national patriotic people on that side who see the interest of the nation before the interest of a few who want to ride rich, to ride rough shod over the masses of the people. I close by warning the Government that these shallow tricks and these maneuvers will serve only for a short while; they cannot succeed for long.

6.20 p.m.

*Question put.*

**Mr. Ram Karran:** Division!

*Assembly divided: Ayes 12, Noes 25, Declined to vote 2, as follows:*

<b>Ayes</b>	<b>Noes</b>	<b>Declined to vote</b>
Mr. Teekah	Mrs. Willems	Mr. Sutton
Mr. Remington	Mr. Zaheeruddin	Mrs. Da Silva - 2
Mr. Balchand Persaud	Mr. Van Sluytman	
Mrs. Branco	Mr. Safee	
Mr. Ambrose	Mr. Fowler	
Mr. R. Ally	Mr. Corrica	
Mr. M.Y. Ally	Mr. Correia	
Mr. Hamid	Mr. Chan-A-Sue	
Mr. Wilson	Mr. Budhoo	
Mr. Chandisingh	Mr. Bancroft	
Mr. Ram Karran	Miss Ackman	
Dr. Jagan - 12	Mr. Aaron	
	Mr. Wrights	
	Mr. Thomas	
	Mr. Thomas	

Mr. Salim  
Mr. Duncan  
Mr. Joaquin  
Mr. Mingo  
Mr. Clarke  
Mr. D.A. Singh  
Mr. Ramsaroop  
Miss Field-Ridley  
Mr. Carrington  
Mr. Kasim  
Dr. Reid - 25

*Motion negative.*

**Mr. Speaker:** By agreement with the hon. Leader of the Opposition, we will take the Motion standing in the name of the hon. Member Mr. Teekah.

#### DISMISSAL OF MRS. HAZEL DASENT

“Whereas the Hon. Minister of Education ordered the transfer of the Secretary of the Charlestown Government Secondary School, Mrs. Hazel DaSent, to the Bush Lot Government Secondary School, West Coast Berbice, with effect from the 14<sup>th</sup> October, 1970;

And whereas after strong protests had been made by and on behalf of Mrs. DaSent to the effect that no just cause existed for her transfer to the Bush Lot Government Secondary School, the Minister of Education directed that Mrs. DaSent be transferred instead to the Zeeburg Government Secondary School with effect from 14<sup>th</sup> October, 1970;

And whereas on representations made by and on behalf of Mrs. DaSent, the Ministry of Education permitted her to continue in her post as Secretary of the Charlestown Government Secondary School on and after 14<sup>th</sup> October, 1970;



And whereas Mrs. DaSent was dismissed as Secretary of the Charlestown Government Secondary School on 2<sup>nd</sup> June, 1971;

And whereas efforts made by and on behalf of Mrs. DaSent to have discussions opened by the Ministry of Education on the matter in accordance with established trade union practice and with a view to arriving at a satisfactory solution, have been completely ineffective;

And whereas Mrs. DaSent has been himi humiliated in the eyes of the community and is suffering great hardship as a consequence of her dismissal;

And whereas the post of Secretary of the Charlestown Government Secondary School has been vacant since the termination of Mrs. DaSent's services;

Be it resolved that this National Assembly agrees that the decision to dismiss Mrs. DaSent should be rescinded and that she should be reinstated as Secretary to the Charlestown Government Secondary School with effect from 2<sup>nd</sup> June, 1971."

**[Mr. Teekah.]**

**Mr. Teekah:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to move the motion on the Order Paper standing in my name. Today is a most historic day. Historic because it is the first time since December, 1964, that the views of the aggrieved and the oppressed are being expressed in debates on Motions emanating from the Benches of the Opposition. It is with relevance that today in Guyana a Motion condemning victimization and asserting the rights of the ordinary citizen, the ordinary proletarian, is being discussed in the highest forum of this land. To this National Assembly of the Parliament of Guyana has been brought the case of a comparatively defenceless woman, who has been wronged by those behind whom stands the whole State apparatus. I refer to the case of the illegally dismissed secretary of the Charlestown Government Secondary School, Mrs. Hazel DaSent.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states in article 23 (1):

"Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment."

I will show to this National Assembly that Mrs. Hazel DaSent has been prevented from doing her work. She has been dismissed and she therefore needs the protection of this National Assembly of the parliament of Guyana. I will show, too, by some 17 letters exchanged between herself and the Ministry of Education, that this innocent Guyanese has been seriously wronged by the authorities in the Ministry of Education.

Mrs. Hazel DaSent was appointed Secretary of the Charlestown Government Secondary School on the 20<sup>th</sup> September, 1966. She worked for almost four years very well without having any problems with the Headmasters or the Headmistress under who she served. She served under three Headmasters, namely, Messrs. Wilson, Owen, and Sattuar, and one Headmistress, Mrs. Payne. She had no problems, but unfortunately, in February last year, one Mrs. Pamela St. Clair was appointed to the Charlestown Government Secondary School. Later, she became Acting Headmistress of the school.

To understand fully this case, sir, and Members of the House, it is important to know who is Mrs. Pamela St. Clair with whom Mrs. DaSent had a serious problem leading up to her dismissal. Mrs. St. Clair is the daughter of Mr. Vaughn-Cooke, the former Principal of the Teachers' Training College, the former school mate of the then Minister of Education, Miss Shirley Field-Ridley, the wife of a diplomat of the Government of Guyana, Mr. Noel St. Clair now stationed in Washington. This is the lady who was the Acting Headmistress of the Charlestown Government Secondary School.

The hon. Minister of Home Affairs (Mr. Clarke) from his seat asks whether she was qualified. For the benefit of his House, she possesses a First Degree from the University of the West Indies, has not more than two years' broken practice in the teaching profession, she was appointed over and above the head of one Mr. Abdool Sattaur, who possesses a Degree from the University of Guyana, who is a trained teacher with 16 years' service in the teaching profession. Mr. St. Clair, friend of the then Minister of Education, was appointed Acting Headmistress above this gentleman.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, if you are going on to a new point, perhaps this may be a convenient stage for us to have the suspension for an hour and a half.

*Sitting suspended at 6.30 p.m.*

**8.05 p.m.**

*On resumption - -*

**Mr. Teekah:** Mr. Speaker, I shall continue to outline the case of Mrs. A ent. On the 15<sup>th</sup> July last year, the day before school closed for the August vacation, the Acting Headmistress of the Charlestown Government Secondary School enquired from Mrs. DaSent what arrangements were being made for secretarial work during the August vacation. Mrs. DaSent explained to the Acting Headmistress that the practice over the past four years was that she concluded her work on the closing day of the school and, like the rest of the staff, went off on holiday. The Acting Headmistress informed Mrs. DaSent that her services would be needed for one week after the school was closed.

Mrs. DaSent agreed to work for the week. She went and did the work. At the end of the week she told the headmistress, acting, that, in case she needed secretarial work to be done during the holiday period, she should contact her at home. The headmistress, acting, took the address where she could be contacted. The address Mrs. DaSent gave was 275 East La Penitence.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> August, 1970, Mrs. DaSent went to her office at the school to collect an English book which she had left in a drawer. To her great surprise and astonishment, she found a young lady at her desk. She inquired the reason for the young lady being there. The young lady told her that she was the new secretary of the school. Her name was Edol Rutherford.

Mr. DaSent became alarmed and sought to make inquiries of the headmistress, acting, Mrs. St. Clair. Mrs. St. Clair could not be contacted. On the following day, 5<sup>th</sup> August, 1970, Mrs. DaSent spoke with Mrs. St. Clair and asked about the presence of Miss Rutherford who claimed to be the new secretary of the school. Mrs. St. Clair told Mrs. DaSent that she had been transferred by the Ministry; the young lady, Miss Rutherford, was the new secretary and she, Mrs. DaSent, should get in touch with Mr. Basil Arno, Senior Education Officer (Personnel) who would explain the situation to her.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> August, the following day, Mrs. DaSent went to the Ministry of Education to speak with Mr. Arno. He was busy and could not entertain an interview with Mrs. DaSent. On the 7<sup>th</sup> August, he met Mrs. DaSent and spoke with her. Mrs. DaSent inquired from Mr. Arno about the alleged transfer. He told her that she was in fact transferred but her transfer was ordered by someone above him and therefore she should speak with the Chief Education Officer.

Mrs. DaSent tried to seek an interview with the Chief Education Officer, Mr. Gaston Fox. The following week she was able to have an interview with him. Mr. Fox told Mrs. DaSent that, as far as he was aware, there was no transfer of Mrs. DaSent to any other school. He called for her file and, on looking through the file, told her, "There is nothing against you in your file and I see no transfer here. Therefore you should go back on holiday and if at the end of the month, that is, August, 1970, you do not get your salary, return to me. You should also turn out to duty on the 14<sup>th</sup> September, the day of the resumption of school."

As the end of August, Mrs. DaSent received her salary for the month of August. On the 14<sup>th</sup> September, when school re-opened, Mrs. DaSent found the young lady, Miss Rutherford, in her office. The headmistress, acting, told Mrs. DaSent, "You have been transferred. Why are you here?" Mrs. DaSent said, "I have not had any transfer from the Ministry. I spoke with the Senior Education Officer (Personnel), Mr. Arno, and Mr. Fox, the Chief Education Officer. I have been told to return to this school."

On the afternoon of the 14<sup>th</sup> September, 1970, Mrs. DaSent received a notice of transfer from the Charlestown Government Secondary School to the Bush Lot Government Secondary School, West Coast Berbice. She went to the Chief Education Officer, Mr. Fox, and explained to him that she had received a letter to the effect that she was transferred from the Charlestown government Secondary School to the Bush Lot Government Secondary School and the letter was signed by Mr. Basil Arno, Senior Education Officer, Personnel Division.

Mr. Fox, Chief Education Officer, told Mrs. DaSent that he did not order the transfer of the secretary of the Charlestown Government Secondary School, nor did any officer of the Ministry of Education do so, but that the transfer was ordered by the Minister of Education, Miss Shirley Field-Ridley. He advised Mrs. DaSent to seek an interview with the hon. Minister of Education, Miss Shirley Field-Ridley.

Mr. Fox further advised her that if the interview was not satisfactory and if the grounds for her transfer were not reasonable she should put the case to her union, the Guyana Public Service Association.

Mrs. DaSent went to the Ministry and had an interview with the Minister of Education. She explained to the Minister that she had been transferred, but no officer of the Ministry of Education had ordered the transfer and that the Chief Education Officer had told her to speak with her, the Minister of Education.

### 8.15 p.m.

The Minister of Education said, "So what? You do not have to request a transfer, it is just given." Mrs. DaSent asked why was she being transferred, because the Officer said there was nothing in the file against her. The then Minister of Education told her that the Ministry has found somebody who could do the work efficiently. Mrs. DaSent then told the Minister, "It seems as if I was inefficient or I am charged for inefficiency." The Minister, according to Mrs.

DaSent – because this is what she told me, she told me every single thing – she explained to the Minister that if she was charged for inefficiency the charges should be brought before her and she would have an opportunity to defend herself. The Minister is reported to have told Mrs. DaSent, “All right, do not worry with all that, you ought to work in now surroundings. Next you must learn that you must work during the holidays.”

Again it is reported that Mrs. DaSent told the then Minister of Education that she was not charged for not working during the holiday period. As a matter of fact, during the past four years of her being at Charlestown she never worked during the holidays, and when she was asked by Miss Sinclair the acting Headmistress to work for one week, she did comply with the request. The Minister told her, “All right, if you do not want to go to Bush Lot there is a vacancy at Zeeburg Government Secondary School” but that if she should accept the appointment at Zeeburg she would have first of all to resign her post at the Charlestown Government Secondary School. Mrs. DaSent is reported to have told the Minister that she was a married woman, having three children the youngest being two years old and this would cause a serious disruption in her family life, and she could not work at the Zeeburg Government Secondary School. The then Minister of Education (Miss Field-Ridley) is reported to have told her, “All right, if you do not want to go to Zeeburg I have a vacancy here at the Ministry and you can get this job, but you have to resign your post at Charlestown.” Secondly, that this job is on the open vote. It must be borne in mind, sir, that the post at Charlestown then was one on the fixed Establishment. It was advertised in 1966; Mrs. DaSent applied for the post, she went for a test she passed the test and she was appointed on the Fixed Establishment. But in all the proposals by the then hon. Minister of Education was the condition that she must resign her post at Charlestown Government Secondary School.

The interview ended on an unsatisfactory note for Mrs. DaSent. She then took the advice of the Chief Education Officer (Mr. Gladston Fox) and put the matter to the Public Service Association, her Union. On the 10<sup>th</sup> October, 1970 the Guyana Public Service Association wrote the Chief Education Officer on this issue. On the 12<sup>th</sup> October, 1970 the

Senior Education Officer (Personnel) Mr. Basil Arno sent a letter to Mrs. DaSent confirming the officer made by the Minister of Education to the secretary ship of the Zeeburg Government Secondary School. But again this was also on the Unfixed Establishment. She had to resign her post, she had to go from the Fixed Establishment to the Unfixed Establishment. Secondly the fact is that she was not being transferred for any satisfactory reasons.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> October, 1970 following the receipt of the letter of the 12<sup>th</sup> from Mr. Aron, Mrs. DaSent wrote the following letter:

“Dear Sir,

I hereby acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 12<sup>th</sup> October, 1970; as was the case with your letter of 14<sup>th</sup> September, 1970, your letter of 12<sup>th</sup> October, 1970 also leaves me quite dumbfounded, for again I say that at no time did I request a transfer. On the other hand I have not had the courtesy of a reply to my letter of 21<sup>st</sup> September, 1970 in which I asked for an investigation.

I would be very pleased to have your early reply and would be awaiting this.”

On the 15<sup>th</sup> October, 1970 the Guyana Public Service Association sent a letter addressed to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education outlining the case of Mrs. DaSent. In the letter of the 15<sup>th</sup> October, 1970 the Secretary of the Public Service Association Mr. Roy McArthur said this in paragraphs 11 and 12. I want to quote what was said here as very pertinent to the case. I quote paragraph 11.

“It is the considered view of my Association that there has been a breakdown in communication in this case. From the evidence, it appears that Mrs. DaSent enjoyed the privilege of the holiday as a matter of practice and convention for a period of four years.

If that privilege was purely by arrangement with the then Headmaster and not a custom within the Service, the corrective method is not a transfer but rather a letter explaining what her conditions of service are. It must be remembered that a new appointee will always be guided by practice and convention in the absence of specific instructions, and your Personnel Section is not without fault in this matter.”

Paragraph 12 and I want to emphasise what is stated in this paragraph.

“The transfer as viewed by my Association is, in the circumstances, an act of victimization as the problem could have been solved administratively by the issue of a simple letter explaining Mrs. DaSent’s conditions of service. My Association therefore requests that the transfer be withdrawn.”

8.25 p.m.

That was the letter of the Guyana Public Service Association to the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education. On the 18<sup>th</sup> October, just to show the very intriguing trends of this case, Mrs. DaSent received the following letter from Mr. Basil Arno for the Chief Education Officer, dated 14<sup>th</sup> October. It states as follows:

“Further to my letter of even number dated 12<sup>th</sup> October, 1970, I have to inform you that permission is hereby granted for Mrs. DaSent to continue her employment at the Charlestown Government Secondary School until 31<sup>st</sup> October, 1970.”

Mr. Basil Arno has written another letter giving her permission to continue in her post at Charlestown. I have 17 letters to show this House the depth of the involvement of certain persons in the Ministry of Education. So she had a letter from Mr. Basil Arno for the Chief Education Officer allowing her to continue in her post at Charlestown to 31<sup>st</sup> October. The 31<sup>st</sup>



October passed, nothing happened. She got her salary, she continued as Secretary; she replied to the Chief Education Officer.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> November, 1970, the young lady who was first sent to be the Secretary to the school, Miss Edol Rutherford, received a letter from Mr. Arno and this is the very interesting letter she received.

“The appointment of Edol Rutherford as a Commercial Teacher is approved with effect from 4<sup>th</sup> August, 1970 subject to medical examination by a Government Medical Officer . . .

Details of age, qualification, etc. should be entered on the attached State of Particulars and returned to this office as early as possible along with a signed copy of the attached Letter of Appointment.

Salary at the rate of \$96.50 per month in the scale \$96.50 - \$140.50.

Yours faithfully,

Sgd. B.E. Arno,

For Chief Education Officer.”

What does one conclude by that letter? One concludes the following: that first of all, there was a strenuous effort on the part of the Minister in conjunction with the Acting Headmistress to appoint Miss Ruteherford as Secretary of the Charlestown Government Secondary School. The fact that Mrs. DaSent put up a stout resistance to the transfer compelled the Minister and her colleagues, not to appoint her as Secretary but as Commercial Teacher. It is abundantly clear that all that those who were in authority at the Ministry of Education were interested in was to find employment for Miss Rutherford. If they could not find employment as Secretary of the school, they were appointing her as Commercial Teacher.

Mrs. DaSent, of course, continued to seek clarification from the Acting Headmistress because although Miss Rutherford had a letter from the Ministry appointing her as Commercial Teacher, the Acting Headmistress was giving her the duties of Secretary. On the 25<sup>th</sup> November last year, when Mrs. DaSent went along with the rest of the staff for her salary for the month of November, in the presence of four teachers who can verify what she said and what actually happened, the Acting Headmistress, Mrs. St. Clair, refused to give Mrs. DaSent her salary. As a matter of fact, she took the money from her drawer and said: "Here is your salary but I am not giving you because you are not supposed to be here. I am sending it back to the Ministry of Education. I do not know why they sent it to me." When Mrs. DaSent enquired why she was doing this, she said, the manager of the school directed her to do that.

Mr. DaSent then wrote the Guyana Public Service Association about not having her salary for the month of November. The G.P.S.A. did nothing to get her salary for the month of November. As a matter of fact, she even sent a lawyer's letter to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, demanding her salary. Then came the month of December and the same thing happened. In the presence of Mrs. Payne, again the Acting Headmistress, Mrs. St. Clair, refused to give Mrs. DaSent her salary and said again she was sending it back to the Ministry. When Mrs. DaSent enquired again, she said, "the Manager of the school instructed me to return your salary to the head office and I am not going to pay you."

Mrs. DaSent then wrote a letter to the manager of the school, Mr. Benjie Agard. Mrs. DaSent went to the Manager of the school herself and she took the letter explaining that for the months of November and December, she did not receive her salary and the Acting Headmistress said that he instructed her to do so. The Manager said, "No, I did not instruct the Headmistress acting to do so, but the Headmistress told me that you are not working there and you ought not to be paid."

On the representation of the Manager of the school, Mr. Benjie Agard, on the 21<sup>st</sup> December, 1970, she received her salary for the months of November and December. She went on holiday during the Christmas period and resumed her duties as secretary of the Charlestown Government Secondary School for the months of January and February.

Mrs. DaSent had no problems during this period, January-February, but on the 4<sup>th</sup> March, 1971, she received a letter from one Mr. A. Bynoe, who signed for the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education, appointing her to the secretary ship of the Zeeburg Government Secondary School. He addressed her as “Miss” DaSent; she is “Mrs.” DaSent. The letter is as follows:

“Dear Miss DaSent,

I wish to offer you an appointment to the post of Secretary at Zeeburg Government Secondary School ... with a salary of \$1566 p.a. on the salary scale Clb \$1200// 1,350 x 72 – 1,845//1,878 per annum. You will also be eligible to receive an Interim Relief allowance of 6½ % of your salary. The duties of the post are shown at the back hereof.

2. The appointment which is on the Unfixed Establishment is non-pensionable and confirmation thereto is subject to your passing the prescribed medical examination and to satisfactory work and conduct during a probationary period of one (1) year from the date of your appointment. Of course your appointment is subject to Local General Orders and other regulations and Departmental Rules in force from time to time.

3. Please inform me early at any rate not later than 20<sup>th</sup> March, 1971 if you accept this appointment.

Yours sincerely,

(Sgd.) A. Bynoe

for Permanent Secretary.”

I want to stress the following points; you are appointing a person, who is already appointed on the Fixed Establishment, to the Unfixed Establishment, a non-pensionable post.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member Mr. Teekah, I think you said that an offer was made to her in the letter. An offer is not an appointment.

**Mr. Teekah:** The letter states that an appointment is offered. Someone who has a permanent job, who has served for four years, who is already on the Fixed Establishment, is offered a non-pensionable post on the Unfixed Establishment.

Secondly, you are asking that person to serve a probationary period of one year. How could this be right, in the name of justice? How could the Minister of Education say that she has a case against this lady? Which person on that side of the House could say that this lady is in the wrong? Who will defend something like this? Clearly, the Government is just brutalizing an innocent person. Another point is that an identical letter was sent to Miss Rutherford.

Two things must be borne in mind here: one was that, according to the Ministry of Education, it was acting on the premise that there were two posts, one at Charlestown and one at Zeeburg Government Secondary School. Here is a person who is already in a post at Charlestown. Here is a new person who has not yet been appointed to the secretaryship of any school. Her latest appointment was that of commercial teacher. The first person is occupying a post for four years. You are removing her and sending her across to the West Coast, Demerara, while a new person is being appointed to the post which was held by the former for four years. Is that right? Do the consciences of the hon. Members of that side of the House tell them that is correct.

The third point is that, prior to that date, all the secretaries were on the Fixed Establishment but because this lady was putting up resistance, because she was fighting, the Minister and her officers decided to appoint all secretaries on the Unfixed Establishment from then on. This would enable the Ministry to transfer them at will and with less difficulty. Because the secretaries were on the Fixed Establishment, Mrs. DaSent had a strong case. She was resisting so they were all to be put on the Unfixed Establishment where they could be removed at will.

The fact is that people were serving already on the Unfixed Establishment. By which trade union practice and procedure could that be done? The Ministry could not have dare to do that with unions like G.A.W.U., C.C.W.U or N.A.C.C.I.E., but because it was dealing with an important union like the Guyana Public Service Association, it dared to do that. There would have been a big strike had the other unions been involved but because the Public Service Association is an impotent association, its officers kow-tow to the Government; they play ball with the Government. The officers love this because they are promoted when these things happen.

That letter was written on 4<sup>th</sup> March, 1971. On the 5<sup>th</sup> March Mrs. De Sent received the following letters:

“Dear Mrs. DaSent,

“I wish to inform you that your services as Secretary of Zeeburg Government Secondary School will be terminated with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April, 1971.

Your will, however, be offered further employment (also as a Secretary) by the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April, 1971.

Yours faithfully,  
(Sgd.) B. Arno  
for Chief Education Officer.”

Mrs. DaSent was appointed on the 4<sup>th</sup> March by Mr. Bynoe and on the following day Mr. Arno sent a letter saying that her services were terminated.

**Mr. Speaker:** As far as my recollection goes she was offered an appointment, which is a different thing from being appointed. You must not make statements which are misleading.

**Mr. Teekah:** Let me explain. The letter on the 4<sup>th</sup> stated that the Ministry was offering her an appointment at Zeeburg. The letter sent on the following day stated that her services at the same school were terminated. That is who I am saying.

I the letter dated 4<sup>th</sup> March Mrs. DaSent was given until the 20<sup>th</sup> March to accept appointment. The 20<sup>th</sup> March had not expired but on the following day, 5<sup>th</sup> March, another officer of the Ministry terminated her services at the school although she was given until the 20<sup>th</sup> March to accept appointment.

8.45 p.m.

Mrs. DaSent wrote the following letter to the Permanent Secretary Ministry of Education:

“Sir,

I am in receipt of your letter Ref. No. S/PAS – 9 dated March 4, 1971, offering to appoint me as Secretary of Zeeburg Government Secondary School, along with a letter of dismissal dated March 5, 1971 on which is included an offer signed by B.E. Arno for the Chief Education Officer.

As a result of the dialogue enforced upon me over these months, you have by your action conceded that there exists a Trade Disrupts, which must now of necessity be referred to Conciliation and or Arbitration.

At this juncture I am compelled to have you address your mind to my repeated requests and or reminders for an enquiry into the dispute.

In order that I may be better able to address the minds of and to move the competent authority to once and for all put to an end such arbitrary decisions, injustices, malpractices, discrimination and victimization, I request that you furnish me without delay, moreso, by return mail extracts of the General Orders, Regulations, Bylaws and Departmental Rules that Govern my appointment dated September, 1966 which is a necessity in accordance with law and a precedent of Industrial Practice.”

That was her reply to the letters appointing her on the 4<sup>th</sup> and terminating her appointment on the 5<sup>th</sup>.

Mrs. DaSent realizing what was happening also went to the Ombudsman to seek his assistance, Her Union this time was being very quiet on the matter and she thought that the Ombudsman to whom so much is said re his impartiality and his non-political character, she went to him to seek redress. She wrote the following letter to the Ombudsman. I want to show this Parliament that this case is being brought as a last resort:

“19<sup>th</sup> March, 1971.

Dear Sir,

When I last had an interview with you in connection with what I felt were injustices meted out to me, you advised me to write you, briefly stating the relevant facts of the letter.

I did not correspond with you before now as it seemed the matter had been dropped by certain officers in the Ministry of Education. However, recently two letters were received by me dated 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> March, 1971 respectively, which indicated that the matter is far from closed.

Along with the above mentioned letters I am attaching copies of all letters, with respect to this case. I am now forced to formally ask you to use your good offices and intervene in this matter as I am certain that a few officers attached to the Ministry of Education are carrying out a campaign of intimidation and victimization against me with the intention of persecuting me until I am either dismissed from or leave my job.

Thanking you for your kind consideration in this matter.

Yours faithfully,  
Hazel DaSent.”

She appealed to the Ombudsman for assistance and clearly she saw what was happening.

In the meantime the Headmistress (acting) of the Charlestown Government Secondary School Miss Sinclair was preparing to leave Guyana for Brazil. Since 16<sup>th</sup> March, 1971, Miss



Sinclair did not report for duty at Charlestown. In her absence the acting Headmaster Mr. Abdul Sattaur recognized Mrs. DaSent as the duly appointed Secretary of that School, that Mrs. DaSent was now functioning as Secretary of the School left Miss Rutherford without duties of Secretary but she was called upon to teach commercial subjects. Miss Rutherford went to the Minister of Education. I have here a letter from Miss Rutherford. It is addressed:

“75 Breda St.,  
Werk-en-Rust,  
Georgetown.

Dear Sir,

I would like to inform you that by the instructions of the Minister of Education I was asked to work at the Ministry of Education from 20<sup>th</sup> March to 31<sup>st</sup> March, 1971. I therefore reported for duty from the date stated above.”

**Mr. Speaker**, one concludes from this letter that when the acting Headmaster was allowing Mrs. DaSent to carry out her functions as Secretary immediately Miss Rutherford got in touch with the Minister and by her letter here she said she was instructed by the Minister. Normally, no employee at that level is in touch with the Minister, that person is in touch with the Manager of the School, the Headmaster, the District Education Officer, the Education Officer (Personnel), you do not jump from there to the Minister. It only shows that the Minister was deeply involved in the matter, that the Minister was herself handling the affairs and it was on the instructions of the Minister, not even consulting the Headmaster of the School withdrew the young lady from Charlestown and took her to the Ministry of Education. As a matter of fact, from the contents of her letter you could see she did not report for duty at Charlestown where she was appointed commercial teacher, but three days after she started to work at the Ministry of

Education she wrote the letter to the Headmaster of the School stating that the Minister instructed her to go.

Since then it is important to note that Miss Rutherford did not again report for duty at Charlestown Government Secondary School. As a matter of fact, to this day Miss Rutherford is working in the Ministry. It seems very clear that the Minister was in collusion with the acting Headmistress and where is Miss Sinclair? She has gone to Brazil without even informing the Minister, she left fro Brazil on 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 1971.

8.55 p.m.

In the meantime, another amusing letter was received by Mrs. DaSent from the Ministry of Education, this time from Mr. Basil Arno, dated 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 1971. It states:

“Dear Mrs. DaSent,

I wish to inform you that my letter dated 5<sup>th</sup> March, 1971 re termination of your services as Secretary of Zeeburg Government Secondary School is hereby withdrawn.

Your permanent appointment therefore stands and you are requested to report to the Headmaster of the abovenamed school on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 1971.

Yours faithfully

Sgd. B. Arno

for Chief Education Officer.”

So we had one letter on the 4<sup>th</sup> offering her an Appointment at Zeeburg by Bynoe, one on the 5<sup>th</sup> terminating her services at Zeeburg by Arno, one now on the 23<sup>rd</sup> April withdrawing the letter of termination. But this was followed by a letter dated 26<sup>th</sup> April written by Mr. Bynoe, the man who offered her the appointment in the first place. It states:

“Dear Mrs. DaSent,

I wish to refer to my letter S/PAS – 9 dated 4<sup>th</sup> April, 1971 and to inform you that the offer made therein has hereby withdrawn.

Yours faithfully,  
Sgd. A. Bynoe  
for Permanent Secretary.”

We have two Government officers, on Mr. Bynoe, one Mr. Arno, one on the 4<sup>th</sup> offering an appointment, one on the 5<sup>th</sup> terminating it, one on the 23<sup>rd</sup> April withdrawing his letter of termination, one on the 26<sup>th</sup> April withdrawing the offer made on the 4<sup>th</sup> March. Clearly, the lady really was subjected to undue suffering because no Member of Parliament would like his party leader to do him that as far as appointment to the National Assembly is concerned. None of us would like the party leader to be offering him in one letter and taking it back in another. That is playing ducks and drakes. Everyone in this building would know something was seriously wrong. After receiving those four very disturbing letters, Mrs. DaSent wrote the following letter. She was writing to the Chief Education Officer.

Dear Sir,

I am in receipt of a letter No. S/PAS – 9 dated 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 1971, signed by Mr. B. Arno for Chief Education Officer.”

She also refers to a letter dated 27<sup>th</sup> April, 1971 signed by Mr. Bynoe.

“I do not understand however, what is meant by that cryptic letter, what the writer meant is not clear. Further, I am puzzled over the status of that communication, since there has been no reply to my letter of 21<sup>st</sup> September, 1970 and subsequent reminders, re an enquiry into the dispute.

In the circumstances therefore, I am obliged to continue in my substantive position at Charlestown Government Secondary School.

I request that you furnish me without delay, more so, by return mail, extracts of the General Orders, Regulations, Bylaws and Departmental Rules that govern my appointment dated September, 1966, which is a necessity in accordance with law and a precedent of industrial practice.

“Also” –

and I want to emphasise this last paragraph of hers –

“With every letter which I have received from the Ministry, there always seems to be some change of mind on the part of the officers who have been writing these letters.”

Clearly, any human being in the same position would write a similar letter. No one could follow which officer's instruction to go by, one appointing you, one terminating your services, and so she wrote this letter. Having written Mr. Basil Arno that letter dated 26<sup>th</sup> April, 1971, Mr. Basil Arno – when you are poor, it is a bad thing; when you are weak, it is a very bad thing; when you have power, people act recklessly – countered her letter asking for the General Orders, dismissing her.

“Dear Mrs. DaSent,

I wish to refer to your letter dated 26<sup>th</sup> April, 1971, informing me of your intention to remain posted at Charlestown.”

A complete distortion.

“2. I have noticed that you did not give any reasons for your decision. In this respect therefore I can only say that you are openly disregarding the instructions contained in my letter of 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 1971, in which you were requested to report to Zeeburg Government Secondary School. You would recall that you were notified of your posting to Zeeburg since 12<sup>th</sup> October, 1971, and you failed to comply with that instruction. Despite several efforts subsequently, you have refused to comply with lawful instructions.”

Taking advantage.

“3. Now that you have stated quite categorically that you have no intention of removing from Charlestown I am to inform you that it has been decided that your appointment at Charlestown Government Secondary School be terminated with effect from 2<sup>nd</sup> June, 1971. In lieu of adequate notice, approval has been given for you to receive one (1) month’s salary.

Yours faithfully,  
Sgd. A. Bynoe  
for Permanent Secretary.”

This letter has been sent to the worker, the Secretary of the Charlestown Government Secondary School. The previous letter did not say anything that the lady refused to obey instructions. All she was doing was enquiring which instruction she must obey. Mrs. DaSent answered Mr. Arno's dismissal letter by one of the 14<sup>th</sup> July.

“Dear Sir,

This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 31<sup>st</sup> May, 1971.

Paragraph 1 of your said letter obviously is a misinterpretation of my letter of 26<sup>th</sup> April, 1971. In my said letter I expressed no intention as is introduced by you therein, but explained my circumstances and sought assistance from you in respect of same.

I must also take issue with you in respect of paragraph 2 of your letter of 31<sup>st</sup> May, 1971, wherein you acted on premises (grounds) which were false, and consequently stated that you did not see any reasons for my decision, when I have made no decision. You continue on this false premise and ignored my letter of 26<sup>th</sup> April, 1971 which was made in reply to yours of 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 1971. While negotiations and correspondence were in progress and an investigation was expected to have been made into the circumstances for my claims of victimization you have sought to dismiss me.

Again I must draw to your attention that the premises under which you acted were false, in that you referred to a posting to Zeeburg since 12<sup>th</sup> October, 1970 and grounded your dismissal on my alleged failure to comply with that instruction: but I draw to your attention that since the letter of 12<sup>th</sup> October, 1970, this was countermanded by further instructions to remain at Charlestown Government Secondary School. I have never refused to comply with any lawful instructions and no charge was ever made on me in this respect and dealt with under the General Orders as are required.

I must also draw to your attention that negotiations between us continued during April, 1971 and a letter was sent to the Secretary of the Zeeburg Government Secondary School in my name with the words 'You are requested to report to the Headmaster'. In reply to this surprising communication, I wrote the letter of 26<sup>th</sup> April, seeking clarification and also asking for particulars of my employment under the General Orders and otherwise, so that I could satisfy myself as to the proper and lawful position in all circumstances and to act accordingly. You, however, thought differently and acted on the said false premise that I had expressed an intention in my said letter of 26<sup>th</sup> April, 1971.

As to paragraph 3 of your letter of 31<sup>st</sup> May, 1971, again I draw to your attention the false premises on which you acted when you relied on the statement, 'you have stated quite categorically that you have no intention of removing'. I wish to emphasize that there is no categorical statement of intention not to remove in my letter of 26<sup>th</sup> April, 1971. Indeed there is no expression of intention not to remove. The reason for your dismissal is therefore non-existent and I draw this to your attention. Again I request an enquiry into the circumstances of my case.

Yours faithfully

Hazel DaSent

Secretary of

Charlestown Govt. Sec. School."

9.05 p.m.

**Mr. Speaker:** Time!

**Mr. Hamid:** I beg to move that the hon. Member be given a further fifteen minutes to continue his speech.

**Mr. Ram Karran:** I beg to second the Motion.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

**Mr. Teekah:** Clearly what has taken place here is that the letter of dismissal was dispatched at a time when letters were going back and forth from officers of the Ministry, on the one hand, and Mrs. DaSent, on the other. At the time of dismissal, Mrs. DaSent was seeking clarification from the Senior Education Officer responsible for personnel, but, rather than giving clarification or providing assistance, the Ministry of Education showed no tolerance and no respect for justice and dismissed an employee of that Ministry.

This is a case where those in authority, from the Minister right down – and when I say “the Minister”, I mean the then Minister, Miss Shirley Field-Ridley – the Minister and the Senior Officers of the Ministry of Education, clothed with sweeping powers, used their powers to punish an employee of the Ministry unjustifiably.

It has been made out in a publication issued by one of the Ministries of the Government and by statements from the Ministry of Education that Mrs. DaSent was fighting against transfer, that she should know that the Government has a right to transfer any employee. Mrs. DaSent was not fighting transfer under normal conditions. It is very clear from the letters read tonight that she was fighting, and continues to fight, the attempt by those in authority to use their powers to remove her from her post and put someone of their choice there, the fact that the then Minister of Education, conspiring with the acting headmistress of the school, was transferring Mrs. DaSent from the post to which she was appointed in order to put someone there whom they wanted to get in. It was clearly an act on the part of the Minister of Education to get employment for someone by her whims and fancies.



It must be borne in mind, when hon. Members are considering this case to cast their vote, that first of all efforts were made to appoint Miss Rutherford at the school. Secondly, when this failed, they appointed her as a commercial teacher. When Mr. St. Clair, who was protecting her at the school, went to Brazil, they brought Miss Rutherford to the Ministry in Georgetown to work. Clearly the emphasis was not to penalize Mrs. DaSent because she was acting inefficiently or was insubordinate, but to have Miss Rutherford at all costs. The Minister of Education only used the weapon of inefficiency and insubordination to get Mrs. DaSent out and to get Miss Rutherford in. It was a very injudicious act on the part of the Minister of Education in collusion with senior officers of the Ministry and Mrs. St. Clair, a friend of the Minister's, who was acting headmistress of the school

Justice must be done. For too long since this Government has been in power it has been riding roughshod over the Guyanese people. It has been strangling civil rights in this country. The case of Hazel DaSent is a case of a former supporter of the Government or, maybe, a present supporter, for all we know.

I have been able to meet this lady recently. I spoke with her and, Mr. Speaker, I wish there were a hundred Hazel DaSents in this country, because she has the guts and the courage to fight any injustice meted out to her. I wish there were more like her in this country. She appealed to her union, the Guyana Public Service Association. She received no redress. I know they are very impotent. I wish to quote a letter which the union wrote to her on 10<sup>th</sup> August, 1971:

“Dear Madam,

On 30<sup>th</sup> July, 1971, representatives of the P.S.A. met the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of education, and discussed the question of your reinstatement in the Public

Service. However, the matter was not finalized as your views as to what transfer is acceptable to you were not known.

2. I would be grateful therefore if you inform me quickly whether you are willing to accept a reasonable transfer so that negotiations with the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, can be continued.”

Here is a union which is not really worth its salt. First it sends a letter on the 15<sup>th</sup> October saying that it was an act of victimization.

**9.15 p.m.**

Now, Mr. Speaker, here in a letter of 10<sup>th</sup> August the Union is telling the lady to take the transfer. Mrs. DaSent replied as follows:

“Dear Sir,

This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 10<sup>th</sup> August, 1971.

I note with concern that my complaint against discrimination and victimization was not dealt with by yourselves at the meeting of 30<sup>th</sup> July, 1971, with the Permanent Secretary, of the Ministry of Education. Consequently, your premises and basis of negotiations appear to have been a transfer acceptable to me.

The transfer, in my case, originated and proceeded purely as an act of victimization, as was expressed by you in your letter of 15<sup>th</sup> October, 1970, addressed to

the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education; on this basis I repeat my request to you for representation against this victimization.

If the issue of victimization is not satisfactorily settled, I expect that I would be subject again to further victimization, and it was to prevent this likelihood that your representation was expected in this respect; also as you know, one could be victimized under various modes and manners, forms and disguises. It is the duty of the Guyana Public Service Association to cause victimization to cease.

It is clear to me that the matter of my victimization is a matter too formidable for the Guyana Public Service Association to handle. I therefore formally request that the Trades Union Congress be brought into the matter.”

This is her reply to the P.S.A. because they accepted that this was a clear case of victimization.

In conclusion I want to say that this matter is now before the National Assembly of the Parliament of Guyana. This lady appealed to everyone in the Ministry, from the Personnel officers to the Chief Education Officer, the Permanent Secretary, to the Minister and to her trade union. She also appealed to the Ombudsman.

Therefore only one place is left, sir – the Parliament, the highest forum of the land where the representatives of the people sit. On many occasions the Members on the Government side, say they are interested in the welfare of the small man. This is the type of test whether they are on the side of the small man – how they will vote.

Mr. Speaker, before I formally move the Motion I want to quote from Pastor Demuller for the benefit of the Members of this Government. He said these words during the fascist period in Germany under Hitler:

“When they came for the Jews, I was not a Jew.

When they came for the communists, I was not a communist.

When they came for the trade unionists, I was not a trade unionist.

When they came for the Catholics, I was not a Catholic.

When they came for me it was too late, there were no one to protest for me.”

I now therefore with a very deep feeling of justice formally move the Motion on the Order Paper standing in my name. I exhort hon. Members of this House to give it their unqualified support.

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. Member Mrs. DaSilva.

**Mrs. DaSilva:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to second the Motion proposed by the hon. Member Mr. Vincent Teekah. We of the United Force do not often see eye to eye with Members of communist parties but tonight we unite with them because this is a matter of justice where a citizen of our country is being victimized. *[Interruption.]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, please permit Mrs. DaSilva to speak.

**Mr. DaSilva:** We join with them because a citizen of our country regardless of her colour, regardless of her political affiliation, is being victimized and we are concerned with that. We are concerned with this young woman who is making a brave stand to fight for justice, to fight a principle. She has stated over and over again she has never refused transfer; all she has asked is that the matter be investigated.

It would be interesting to note that at the time a transfer was given to Mrs. DaSent in September 1970 four members of the Charlestown Government Secondary School were also offered transfers: one requested a transfer; some had to take it because they did not want to make a fuss, they took it whether it was convenient or not because they did not want to make a fuss, another person had to resign because that person was not prepared to take it. Mrs. DaSent alone is prepared to try and put across her case so that justice will be done. It is interesting too, that one other person on the staff of the Charlestown Government Secondary School who was offered a transfer to another part of the country did not take it. It did not suit her and she is still on the staff of the Charlestown Government Secondary School because she has contacts with the P.N.C., because she has friends with power. Mrs. DaSent has not got friends with power who can phone up and say "She must remain because she wishes to remain; I say she must remain." Mrs. DaSent has got to come to the people of Guyana to try and help her, because she has appealed to everyone. She has appealed to the Ombudsman, a gentleman held in the highest respect in this country and all that she has got so far is an acknowledgement of her letter saying that it has been received and the matter is being looked into. It is dated 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 1971 and nothing more has been heard from the Ombudsman as to what is happening. And now, of course, we know the story told so well by the hon. Member Mr. Teekah of Mrs. DaSent's struggle and her subsequent dismissal.

**9.25 p.m.**

She has now sought that it comes before the highest forum in the country, our Parliament, and we have had Members of the Government on the opposite side of the Room scoffing and becoming fed up because the hon. Member Mr. Teekah had to go into the minutest details to get across the points of Mrs. DaSent's troubles. This was very necessary but they did not want to listen. They just want to scoff. They are not concerned, they are all working, they belong to the party in power. The People's National Congress, some of the members – I will say there are some who are not like that – they feel they are on top and they can crush and keep down whomsoever they wish and they must put up with it. There are still some and I am proud that

one of the some is a woman, who is still able to stand up and fight for their rights, and we are here tonight to try and help her.

I wonder whether the people on the other side will use their consciences or vote like sheep and follow their party and say, “no, she is not to be re-instated”, or will they realize it is a just cause, it can happen to anybody. The day you fall from grace, God help you. Look at Pat Limerick. Look at Llewellyn John. Not only has Mrs. DaSent been victimized but from the 1<sup>st</sup> 6 April this year, 24 secretaries in Government secondary schools have been taken off the Fixed Establishment and put on the Unfixed Establishment, to make it easier to move them around.

Nobody is questioning or trying to interfere with the working of the Ministry, and it may be necessary that this has got to be done, but justice has got to be done and these 24 secretaries of secondary schools who have been moved from the Fixed Establishment, have they been given their rights, have their pensions been made for their services up to the 31<sup>st</sup> of March, or have they been just given letters saying, “as from the 1<sup>st</sup> April you will now be on the Unfixed Establishment?” I wonder whether the Minister would care to answer that and tell us what is being done, because they too are being innocently victimized because of the DaSent story.

We were told by the hon. Member Mr. Teekah of her struggles, of the incompetence of her union. Had it been GAWU or C.C.W.U., or one of the powerful unions, we would have had all the teachers in the country on strike, but this union has not bothered to fight the case of its member. I just wonder if it is a co-incidence or reward for things well done that MR. E.A. Sills, who was President at the time when this matter was before the Union, has two or three months ago, jumped above the heads of about five people and been made Accountant-General. He has jumped over these heads. I do not know whether it is a matter of co-incidence or if Mr. Sills has become extra brilliant and extra capable that this appointment has been made.

Talking about efficiency, I wish to read again this letter, because we had very many remarks thrust at Mr. Teekah when he was speaking of his copies of the letters, but this is the original of a letter signed by Mr. Bynoe on the 26<sup>th</sup> April in which he says:

“Dear Mrs. DaSent,

I wish to refer to my letter S/PAS – 9 dated 4<sup>th</sup> April, 1971 and to inform you that the offer made therein has hereby withdrawn.”

This letter is signed by Mr. Bynoe and the typist is Edol Rutherford, the efficient young lady who was put at Charlestown Government Secondary School. Not only have we got the “therein has hereby” but there is so much confusion, she has got 4<sup>th</sup> April and I think she really means 4<sup>th</sup> March, and Mr. Bynoe signed it too. This is from the office of the Ministry of Education so that speaks a lot for the efficiency. We have a new Minister of Education, and may I take this opportunity of welcoming her. We hope we will have better relations in the Ministry of Education than we have had in the past that people will be working in the Ministry for the benefit of all. I hope also that Miss Field-Ridley now that she is over in Health, will do much to improve that Ministry. That, of course, is another matter.

We are here then to fight this case for Mrs. DaSent, to put her case before the Members of this House. If they reject it and the press reports correctly and in detail what has been said here for the world to know, everyone will know that there are still people in Guyana fighting for justice, even if it is still one woman. She has been given the push around but she is not prepared to take it. This was the beginning of the row because she was not prepared to be pushed around by Mrs. St. Clair.

It is very ironical that Miss Field-Ridley and Mrs. St. Clair were schoolmates together and knew each other all their lives. When friends fall out it is a terrible thing! Mrs. St. Clair, when she wanted to go to Brazil, wanted the Minister to help her get a scholarship to study Portuguese.

The Minister refused to assist her to get this. I think the Minister was right and fair when she told Mrs. St. Clair, “what interest could you have in the school, what interest do you have in it that you want to go off to Brazil?” and refused to grant her the necessary permission to go and to help her to get a scholarship. Mrs. St. Clair packed up and went off on her own on 2<sup>nd</sup> April.

We hear so much nowadays about what is going on in the different Ministries and who is honest and who is dishonest, but somebody said he wanted proof of these things. Mrs. St. Clair has gone to Brazil and I wonder how she got tax clearance because I understand that to secure tax clearance, she must have had a notice form the Education Department. She was not dismissed and she did not resign. She just cleared out and she secured tax clearance.

**9.35 p.m.**

These, then, are some of the points I wish to make in support of the Motion moved by the hon. Member, Mr. Vincent Teekah.

There is no need for me to go all the way through and mention the dates. The story was very well told. The point remains that this woman was justified in seeking help from the Ministry of Education to have her matter discussed and investigated.

It is interesting to note, and worth repetition, that Mr. Arno is alleged to have said that he was told to do this: the order came from higher up. And when Mrs. DaSent went to the Chief Education Officer, Mr. Fox, he knew nothing about it. There was nothing in her file about it. Who is the higher person who dealt with this? Maybe somebody else would care to answer this question. It is obvious that unless one has friends in high places one has a very hard time and that is why – although we may be only three of us – we will continue to fight and to stand and support a just and reasonable demand. That is why I now second this Motion as moved by the hon. Member Mr. Vincent Teekah.



**Suspension of Standing Order**

**Mr. Ramsaroop:** Before the hon. Minister states her position, may I, with respect, pursuant to Standing Order 9 (3) of the Standing Orders of this House, respectfully move the suspension of Standing Order 9 (1) to enable us to proceed beyond 10 p.m. to finish the business on the Order Paper today.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

*Standing Order 9 (1) suspended.*

**DISMISSAL OF MRS. DASENT**

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**The Minister of Health**(*Miss Field-Ridley*): Mr. Speaker, in a way it is a good thing that this matter is before the House this evening. There are aspects of the debate that must cause some amount of sadness, sadness because the way in which the matter has been presented has caused certain members of the Opposition to feel that they should make attacks on Government officers and public officers, who are certainly not members of the House and are not in a position to defend themselves. This aspect of the whole matter really saddens me.

In addition to this, the way in which the matter was presented, if I were to answer the points, it would involve my discussing the personal business of many of the people involved, some very innocent, and also the personal attributes of some of the people involved, because the facts were inaccurately presented. I shall try not to do this as much as I am able because it pains me to have to discuss the personal affairs of individual members of the Public Service in this way in the House.

Let me give hon. Members an example of some of the things I mean. It is alleged that the Headmistress of the school is the wife of a top-ranking diplomat. To counter this I have to state a fact which the hon. Member knows and this is the young lady's personal business. She was once married to a Mr. Noel Sinclair who is now in the diplomatic service but that marriage collapsed a long time ago. She has been divorced a longtime ago. Certainly, at the time of her appointment she was not married to a diplomat. She was not married at all, but I hate to go into that kind of detail to counter the points made by the hon. Members on the other side. All that information, misrepresented though it was to the House, is in the knowledge of the hon. Member. He ought not to have presented the case in the way it has been presented.

I think that it is good that this matter has been discussed in this House and before I go any further I should like to put the matter in the context of what is happening in Guyana and then perhaps look at it in a little more detail.

All of us have heard, from time immemorial, allegations of the incompetence of the Government Service, allegations of how ineffective public servants can be. We have heard of indiscipline in the Ministries. Sections of the public have on many occasions complained and alleged that many people who now work for the citizens of the country through the employment of the Government would not last one day in the private sector. We have heard members of the Opposition come to this House and tell us how ineffective our public officers are, how uninvolved some of them are in the work. It is against this kind of background I should like to look at this matter, because one thing that is necessary for an efficient Public Service is a disciplined Public Service and this is the crux of this matter.

It is good, again, that this matter is discussed before the House because it has received a lot of publicity in the Press and one very restrained reply from the Ministry of Education through the Ministry of Information. That was deliberately restrained because we in the Ministry of Education felt that here was a young lady who had children, who had a future in front of her, and

therefore we thought it in our best interest and in her best interest to keep this matter on a low key and to keep as much as possible any acrimony out of the situation.

Tonight I should like to simplify the matter and to clear it from lots of irrelevant issues that have been put into it and that have crept into the presentation by the hon. Member Mr. Teekah. Basically the facts are very simple and even the hon. Members on the other side could not get away from them.

A young lady is issued with a notice of transfer. She is transferred from a Georgetown school to a school out of Georgetown. Let me here say that I do not understand the big point that has been made by members of the Opposition of transfer from the Fixed Establishment to the Unfixed Establishment because all servants of Government are liable to transfer in the interest of the Service. Mrs. DaSent is liable to transfer just as anybody else on the Fixed or Unfixed Establishment.

Can hon. Members imagine a situation where we are saying that we need trained people to develop our hinterland and where we are short of skills out side of Georgetown and officers refuse to accept a transfer to go outside of Georgetown because it is not convenient for their family arrangements? Can hon. Members imagine the chaos that would come to this country if a policeman, for example, refused to be transferred because he had two children and his personal convenience did not make it possible for him to accept the transfer?

How many servants of the public, of the people, of the Government, have accepted transfers in the face of greater hardship than that which we have had here presented by Mrs. DaSent through the mouth of the hon. Member Mr. Teekah? How many teachers are serving in the hinterland at great sacrifice to themselves? How many civil servants are there, how many members of the Forces who have all accepted transfers?

It is very significant that Mrs. DaSent's union which made representations in October 1970 and again in August 1971 recognised very clearly that the principle of transfer was one which had to be accepted. As a matter of fact, the union advised Mrs. DaSent that she should accept the transfer and then in a recent letter to her asked whether she would give them permission to talk again to the Ministry of Education about transfer to another replace. Hon. Members have noted her reply, as read by the hon. Member (Mr. Teekah), that she was not interested in discussing the question of transfer; what she wanted to discuss was victimization.

What is this victimization? Let me say right away that I admire the courage and perseverance of Mrs. DaSent. I want this to be very clear, because I think it does take courage to continue as she has continued. Whether she is right or wrong is irrelevant to the question of her courage.

It is also significant to know that her own union and the other relevant unions, like the one which represents secondary school teachers, have not supported her at all in this matter of transfer.

#### 9.45 p.m.

It is not without significance that it falls on the political parties to make political mileage out of this matter. But as I was asking, Mr. Speaker, wherein lies this victimization? The Opposition does not seem to be very clear about this. At one time they alleged that it was victimization because of the Minister's involvement and the hon. Member Mr. Teekah started with a very dramatic presentation of the alleged friendship between the then Minister and the Headmistress of that school. Again I hate to talk about things like these but I am very flattered when Members of the Opposition regard me as a contemporary of the Headmistress; they are thereby taking about six years off of my life. Perhaps this is a way of paying a compliment to me and I have accepted it in the spirit in which I hope it was meant. They implied that because of my friendship with this Headmistress who is my contemporary I was in collusion with her to hound Mrs. DaSent out of the school. I do not want to go into the details as to whether or not I

was at school with her. What is very interesting is that that Headmistress was dismissed by the Ministry of Education under the same Minister before Mrs. DaSent was dismissed for the very same principle, that of indiscipline. Because it is a principle that every Ministry must take very seriously.

Mrs. DaSent in her case refused to accept the transfer. The transfer was effective on the 31<sup>st</sup> October 1970 and at the end of May 1971 she was still in that school. The hon. Member has brought a lot of correspondence to the attention of the House. What he has not said was that the correspondence was addressed to her as Secretary of the Zeeburg Government Secondary School which was where she ought to have been but we understand why it was not in his interest to make that point.

The victimization they say came about – and I dealt with one aspect of it – because I as Minister was a friend of the Headmistress and was hounding Mrs. DaSent out of the school. As I pointed out before Mrs. DaSent was fired the Headmistress herself had been guilty of an act of gross indiscipline as gross as that of Mrs. DaSent and she had been fired. This is the person they say is my friend. But they do not always seem clear as to whether the victimization occurred because it was the Minister's act or the act of senior officials and they keep moving from one to the other.

They alleged a lot of discussion between various senior officers of the Ministry: Mr. Arno and Mrs. DaSent, the Chief Education Officer and Mrs. DaSent. They alleged that Mrs. DaSent came to the Minister and told the Minister that the Chief Education Officer had advised her to see the Minister because there was nothing on her files and etc. That is a fictitious interview; certainly I have no knowledge of it. I do not know if at the time I had been replaced by some other Minister without my knowledge and I was off on a day dream. But certainly that conversation did not take place. I did see Mrs. DaSent and the burden of her representation was that she could not go as far as Bush Lot because she had children and it would be inconvenient for her to travel that distance. There was no mention of victimization, no mention at that time

that she thought the transfer was unfair for any other reason except it was inconvenient to her domestic arrangements. I got in touch with my officers, consulted with them and discovered that there was only one other vacancy for Secretary in a Secondary School. That was at Zeeburg School a place ten miles away from Vreed-en-Hoop. As you know, sir, Vreed-en-Hoop is just across the River. I told her that we would be willing to give her a choice, if she preferred to go to Zeeburg we would be willing to have her transferred there.

Let me make the point, sir, that if you were to cross by that Ferry any day you will see many Government servants travelling from Georgetown to areas further than Zeeburg. There are also students who live there who come to the University of Guyana, who come to the Technical Institute who come to Secondary Schools who therefore find it possible to travel early in the morning and in the evening that ten miles and a short ferry across the River to function in the interest of the Government and people of Guyana. But, Mr. Speaker, she said it was not convenient to her. Mrs. DaSent had not quite made up her mind, however, and that is why the letter was sent offering her this choice. I do not know what more the Ministry could have done in the circumstances. We offered her the only other alternative position. We went further than this, sir. She ought to have taken up her new appointment in the middle of October, because of her statement that her domestic arrangements would be put out – she had to make arrangements for that sort of thing – we gave her an additional fortnight to put herself in order. This is why the second letter was sent. We gave her to the end of the month to take up her appointment at Zeeburg, but she did not. Thereafter the hon. Member has brought to the attention of the House several letters that have passed, some of them are completely irrelevant to this DaSent issue.

I will try to clarify the position as simply as I can so that hon. Members would understand and what was happening and what caused the letter of March. Secretaries of Government Secondary Schools, when Mrs. DaSent was appointed, came under the regulations governing the Teaching Service. As you know the Ministry of Education has two arms: it has a professional or teaching arm and it has the normal civil service arm the Public Service and we are responsible for appointments etc. to a certain level and the Public Service Commission for a higher level.

Previously Secretaries came under the Teaching sector and this is why all the correspondence with Mrs. DaSent are signed by the Senior Education Officer (Personnel). He is head of the teachers personnel and signed on behalf of the Chief Education Officer because this was how her appointment came about, this is the section which governed her. But for some time now, the Ministry had felt that a separate cadre of secretaries should be appointed who did not come under the teachers section but came just as Secretaries in the Ministry under the Public Service sector of the Ministry.

It was a relatively simple exercise or it ought to have been. All Secretaries were written to by the Public sector section, Mr. Bynoe's section, offering them appointments and by Mr. Arno's section terminating their appointments so that their appointments under the teachers sector would be terminated and new appointments would be offered under the public sector. When this was done it was felt that we ought to have more discussion with the Secretaries and therefore we withdrew our letters so that we could have further discussions with all the secretaries. This had nothing to do with the DaSent issue; it was a culmination of a process which had started a long time before and it was completely irrelevant to the discussion here tonight. But, Mr. Speaker, the important thing still remains and that is the question of transfer and the question of whether this transfer was victimization.

**9.55 p.m.**

There was an allegation, and this was another grumble on which they placed the victimization charge, that this whole thing came about because the Minister was trying to find a job for one Miss Rutherford. As Minister, I did meet Miss Rutherford some time during her appointment but I had no previous knowledge of the existence of Miss Rutherford. She was appointed to the school in the normal way and I am afraid I do not know anything about her. I have taken the trouble to check, however, and have discovered that certainly Miss Rutherford less than anybody perhaps, would not have needed any help to get a job. She is so well qualified

that she was offered permanent employment by the Public Service Commission at a higher level than the secretary of the Charlestown Government Secondary School.

I discovered this because the debate was coming on and I took the trouble to check. The hon. Member is telling me she is a member of the PNC group. He is telling me things that I have no knowledge of. Perhaps he holds two cards and has entrée to both sides.

First of all, victimization could not have been because I know the headmistress, because I think my actions have shown that very clearly, that whether I know the headmistress or not I will stand as I did as Minister of Education, as I shall as Minister of Health, for a disciplined service, and will do everything I can to ensure that we do achieve a disciplined service. If we do not, we have a ridiculous situation where some public officers are made to carry a work load that is far too heavy, while other officers just do nothing at all but float, as the young people say.

It could not have been the victimization they alleged. Victimisation could not have been an attempt to find a job for Miss Rutherford because her qualifications are so very good that she certainly needs no help to get a job, even if I would ever consider trying to find a job for her. What does this case of victimization come down to? It only stands on the question that she was transferred after four years in a secondary school to another secondary school. This was not a disciplinary transfer so it is irrelevant for me to talk about her competence.

Let me make one point, sir, that all people, members on the other side who were Ministers and involved in Government activities, and members on this side, would appreciate. It is so difficult to get competent secretaries that no Government officer or no Minister would fire a competent secretary unless they had suddenly gone berserk. Private industry has made the same complaint, that those involved find it difficult to recruit competent secretaries, and this was one consideration which led to my restraint and the restraint of the Ministry of Education in answering the weekly allegations by Mrs. DaSent, that she would need a job somewhere and that the less we said about the matter would be most helpful to her.



Because it was not a disciplinary transfer, I do not intend to go into the details of her performance except to say that she worked for four years in the one school and it was very clear at the end of that period that the time had come in the interest of both the efficiency of the Ministry and in the interest of Mrs. DaSent that she be transferred. This is why the notice of transfer was sent to her. It is impossible - -

**Mr. Speaker:** Are you moving on to another point?

**Miss Field-Ridley:** Yes sir.

**Mr. Speaker:** Perhaps it may be a convenient time to take the 15-minute suspension.

*Sitting suspended at 10 p.m.*

**10.15 p.m.**

*On resumption - -*

**Miss Field-Ridley:** I think it is common knowledge now that Mrs. DaSent has consistently used every possible avenue to bring this matter to the attention of the public, and of the Ministry, and of the Minister, and it was certainly no secret that she alone picketed the Ministry, and in company, especially political company. I am not by any means complaining about this because I regard this as one of the hazards of political life, and one which I accept and accept cheerfully in this case, because I am convinced of the rightness of the action of the Ministry. But the point I want to make is that it is not at all the most pleasant experience to be subjected to this kind of treatment.

Were it not for our conviction and certainly my conviction of the rightness of the situation, we would have compromised this situation a long time ago, and this matter need not have reached the House. It would have been a simple thing to resist that kind of pressure by

making some arrangement either through the union or with Mrs. DaSent that would have avoided the matter coming to the House.

You see, sir, in the past, this Government has been accused of victimization. I keep on using the word because it has been used by members on the other side on all kinds of grounds. They have said on other occasions, for example, and I think one hon. Member mentioned tonight, perhaps from his Chair, that we have been biased in favour of party members and have victimized non-party members. Tonight they come to the House with the claim that a person has been victimized, who, they assert, is a party member. It was the hon. Member Mr. Maccie Hamid who, from his seat, said she was a member of the party, and the hon. Member Mr. Vincent Teekah said that she was a supporter of the party. Presumably, they have knowledge. It is obviously therefore met victimization on political grounds.

It could not be a vendetta or a victimization against her family, because it is significant that on the first day she picketed, I might be wrong, it was around the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June, I remember the incident very clearly, because at that time she had a very personalized placard that said: "My children are hungry. Your children are fed.", but it came the Monday after her husband's promotion was published in the *Official Gazette*. And they say it is a case of victimization. It obviously is not victimization on personal grounds.

The other charge they are wont to make is that this Government is guilty of victimization on racial grounds. I would not like to be misinterpreting the hon. Member on the other side, but as I understand it, when he started his interjection, he made the point that one Mr. Sattaur had been overlooked in preference to Mrs. Jeanne Sinclair, when the appointment of acting head was being made. I do not know exactly what was the point he was trying to prove but I think for the records I should make it very clear that Mrs. Sinclair became a graduate of the University of the West Indies in 1965, and from that date has had continuous service as a teacher, except for a period of about five months when she worked with the Ministry of External Affairs, that during that period, she has had years of experience as senior mistress. Mr. Sattaur is a graduate from

the University of Guyana, and bear in mind, sir, that that University's first set of graduates came out in 1968 and he was not among the first batch, and has, therefore, only a few years of graduate service to his credit, and certainly not in a senior position in any Government Secondary School.

**10.20 p.m.**

Your will recall, sir, that the same hon. Gentleman, Mr. Teekah, tried to take me to task on the occasion of the debate on the last Estimates on the ground that a person who was not a graduate had no right to be appointed as Head of a secondary school. It is his own principle that we are applying here but now it suits him to come and put it in a slightly different way.

It is clear that in this case we cannot be accused of discrimination on racial grounds, the Opposition's - - - being that we discriminate against non-Africans. I think Mrs. DaSent's picture has been in the newspapers so many times with her Afro hair cut and her clearly African features that everyone will know that she is of African descent. Therefore, it could not be victimization on these grounds.

I think it was because of the difficulty of paining any of these usual tags on to this particular case that the members of the Opposition resorted to what I would regard as not quite in the best taste of alleging that it was victimization because of a personal attachment between the Headmistress of the school and the then Minister of Education.

We have come here tonight and we are discussing a question of transfer. Perhaps I should make the point, which I am sure hon. Members know, that every week there are several transfers, especially among teachers and civil servants, from one school to another.

The hon. Member Mrs. DaSilva mentioned that around this time four other teachers were transferred. It is nothing at all unusual for an officer to be transferred from one school to another. It is a strictly routine exercise and Mrs. DaSent was given an ordinary letter of transfer,

the kind of letter that an officer just copies from a precedent because he has issued hundreds of others.

Mrs. DaSent chose to make an issue of this and she was aided and abetted in this as hon. Members have themselves alleged, not by her recognized trade union, not by the trade union which one would think would take up this matter, the trade union representing secondary schools – and she did go to this union – but by groups and political parties who have taken upon themselves the task of trying to discredit this Government and who, failing to find major issues, have held upon this because they feel they can elicit some amount of public sympathy by misrepresenting the facts.

Who are the people who have been supporting this issue? P.P.P., the U.F., I see, M.A.O., the Anti-Discrimination Group. You name the organization that has been trying to make life difficult for the Government and that is the one that has taken up this issue. [*Interruption.*] We hear from members of the Opposition that he others are afraid. Let us take the Public Service Association. How many cases has that Association taken up successfully? It would not have had the membership it has unless it had been able to do this.

It is interesting to know exactly why in this case that Association withdrew the representations it had started so vigorously. It is because, having investigated the matter, it discovered that there was not a leg to stand on.

This has been another significant aspect of the DaSent affair. Many people have been approached. As a matter of tact her final approach went to practically every organization that she or anyone could think of. A few people have come out to support her, have investigated the matter and then have withdrawn from it, not because of the Minister of Education or the Ministry of Education for the Government, but because there was no case to be supported. There was no validity in the claim which she was making.

Not very long ago, when I was Minister of Education – this is a case that is not at all unique; many members of the Public Service can attest to having the same experience – a married officer in the Berbice area was transferred to the Matthews Ridge area. Transfers happen so frequently that they are well known to us. His wife is a teacher and she was left working in the Berbice area. That officer, a dedicated officer, did not stop to say, “It is not convenient for me to leave my wife and children.” He recognized that in the interest of the Public Service it was his duty to go to Matthews Ridge. He went to Matthews Ridge and thereafter tried to make whatever arrangements were convenient to secure the comfort of his wife and children near him. Therefore are literally tens of files that attest to this kind of procedure in the Ministry of Education and every other Ministry has the same sort of procedure.

In conclusion, I just want to remind the hon. Members of this House when they are considering this matter that it is not a lone woman battling against evil forces. It is a fundamental principle involved. Do you want to have an undisciplined Public Service or do you want an efficient and disciplined Public Service? Do you want to have a Public Service where officers decide for themselves whether they will obey the instructions given to them by the proper authority, or do you want officers to act the opposite way? Do you want a Service – and we can have this if members are not firm about cases like this – where every man is a law unto himself and every person, because of some little thing that might gain public sympathy, can appeal to the public at large to put his side of the case and, because of that, secure the abolition of a principle that to me lies at the basis of everything that we want to achieve in Guyana.

We say we are independent. We say we are a Co-operative Republic. We have set our goals. The nation is behind us. But there are a few people who have to understand that discipline must be at the core of any progressive nation, especially a small progressive one.  
*[Applause.]*

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

**Mr. Teekah** (replying): Mr. Speaker, I must congratulate the hon. Minister of Health who has answered for her misdeeds. She has been very evasive and has been successful as a slick distorter of the facts.

First, as far as the gaining of political kudos, or advantage, is concerned, the People's Progressive Party only came into this matter after Mrs. DaSent fought everywhere else. She came to us last. *[Interruption by Mr. Green.]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Minister, I can well understand your concern, but please be quite.

**Mr. Teekah:** When Mrs. DaSent first contacted the hon. Leader of the Opposition he advised her to let the matter be dealt with by her union, that we would come in at the very end as a last resort. Mrs. DaSent only came to the P.P.P. when she was attacked at her home one night about three weeks ago.

**10.30 p.m.**

When terrorists were sent to break up her door it was at that stage that she came to the people's Progressive Party.

The hon. Minister of Health spoke about discipline in the Service. Mrs. DaSent from all the correspondence read here tonight never refused to be transferred. At the beginning of the issue they told her that she was insubordinate and inefficient. She asked to be called up and the matter tried so that she would have an opportunity to defend herself. After a while when they ceased to use the weapon of insubordination or the weapon of inefficiency and when they proceeded to send her across to Zeeburg she asked for the General Orders. Can the Minister say that the General Orders governing her appointment were sent to her? You could see from all the letters she was asking repeatedly for the General Orders to be sent to her. Why did not they send the General Orders to her?

She was on the Fixed Establishment and they were transferring her to the Unfixed Establishment. Why? Is not this against normal trade union practice? The hon. Minister speaking about Fixed and Unfixed Establishments that all are subject to transfer. That is not the point, we know all are subject to transfer. What we say is on the Fixed Establishment you are entitled to a pension. Secondly, the Unfixed Establishment offers a greater degree of manipulation. Two points: (1) The Unfixed Establishment is non-pensionable, and (2) it is open to victimization. Is not this a normal trade union practice that you do not move a person from a post and put him or her below unless a person is inefficient? I would think that the Government would want to respect trade union practices and procedures. I reiterate it is simply because the Union to which Mrs. DaSent belonged is impotent and weak, that is why they are doing this. No other union would allow you to demote an employee like that, having not found her guilty of any mistake.

The hon. Minister made the point why did not Mrs. DaSent go to the teachers' union. The fact is she was a public servant and she went to the P.S.A. that is the correct one she must go to. She was appointed on the Fixed Establishment in the Public Service of this country and which other union must she be a member. She is not a teacher, she is a public servant and so she became a member of the P.S.A. And talking about other people in support, I have a letter here from the University Staff Association backing her. Will the Minister deny that?

Concerning the points made when I spoke about appointing people who are graduates conveniently to secondary school. Mr. Speaker, I never contended tonight in this debate that Mr. Sattaur or for that matter any teacher should be appointed to the headmastership or headmistress hip of any secondary school of this country without being a graduate. What I was saying was that this man also had a degree like Miss Sinclair but this man was a trained teacher which Miss Sinclair is not. This man has a longer period of service to the Teaching Service. She had a broken service because when she left she joined the diplomatic service in Venezuela. She has rejoined the teaching service.

Concerning racial grounds we never contended from this side of the House that this was discrimination. I said the young lady might have been a supporter of the Government, and I never for one moment said Mrs. DaSent was being victimized on racial grounds; there are many other grounds on which you can victimized somebody. And showing, sir, the basis of the Minister's attempt to justify what she has done was that Mrs. DaSent was indiscipline, and so on and so fourth, she was resisting a transfer. To show that those persons responsible for this issue were not spiteful or callous why were they insisting that Mrs. DaSent be transferred to Bush Lot or Zeeburg knowing that she is a married woman and had three children and Miss Rutherford is single. As a matter of fact, Miss Rutherford belongs to Mahaicony and she is much closer to Bush Lot. If you wanted a secretary at Zeeburg, she is now living with her relatives in Georgetown and she is single why cannot she go there which is much easier to do? Is it a heartless Government we have in this country? Is it that the Minister is saying we have no appreciation or understanding, that we lack all these things that we cannot understand a person's problems, we just transfer people willy-nilly. It only shows that they are just being spiteful and callous.

10.40 p.m.

The Minister spoke about discipline. The lady was never charged with indiscipline, or incompetence, or insubordination. She was demanding, which is her right, because trade unions exist in this country, to have a copy of the General Orders. I should like to refresh the memory of the Minister. One Mr. Semple, who is Chairman of the Berbice Branch of the Guyana Public Service Association, said that the political appointments and promotions were causing indiscipline in the Public Service Association, said that the political appointments and promotions were causing indiscipline in the Public Service and that has thrown the whole matter into the lap of the Government. Why blame Mrs. DaSent when they are responsible for making political appointments and promotions?



For example, the hon. Minister of Works, Hydraulics and Supply is supposed to have long sleeves on shirts in Parliament. He just rolled them up. Power drunkenness. Showing disrespect to the Speaker. I should like to submit that all this is happening and the Minister could come here tonight and make a big fuss, very evasive, use irrelevant statements to justify

**10.40 p.m.**

the actions of her Ministry precisely because they have been fortunate to deal with people representing Mrs. DaSent who, in all probability, are subject to corruption. The reference made by the hon. Member Mrs. Da Silva about the steep promotion of Mr. Sills has much relevance to this matter.

It is sad, however, that if Mrs. DaSent losses her battle for justice, it will not augur well for the future of Guyana. I want to say to those who are in authority, and who have a lot of power, let them heed the words of my friend, Mr. Eusi Kwayana. "The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away." They have the right to vote for justice or injustice. If they vote for justice it will be good. It augurs well for the future of Guyana. If they vote for injustice, for victimization, for discrimination, Mr. Speaker, I am sure generations to come will never forgive them. That is why I wish to once again repeat my exhortation to the Members of the House, to think on this matter very carefully. It is a question of a comparatively poor and defenceless woman fighting against the whole State machinery. This is why I call upon them to let their conscience be their guide and support this Motion. We have seen Jordan, Kwayna, Bissember. They are all now examples for all to see. The old Guyanese saying is, "Today for me, tomorrow for you." In order that posterity will not condemn them, let them support the Motion before the House.

**Question put.**

**Mr. Ram Karran:** Division

**Assembly divided:** Ayes 14, Noes 24 as follows:

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National Assembly

10.40 – 10.50 p.m.

**Ayes**

Mr. Sutton  
Mrs. Da Silva  
Mr. Teekah  
Mr. Remington  
Mr. Balchand Persaud  
Mr. Branco  
Mr. Ambrose  
Mr. R. Ally  
Mr. M.Y. Ally  
Mr. Lall  
Mr. Hamid  
Mr. Wilson  
Mr. Chandisingh  
Mr. Ram Karran - 14

**Noes**

Mrs. Willems  
Mr. Zaheeruddin  
Mr. Van Sluytman  
Mr. Saffee  
Mr. Fowler  
Mr. Corrica  
Mr. Chan-A-Sue  
Mr. Budhoo  
Mr. Bancroft  
Miss Ackman  
Mr. Aaron  
Mr. Wrights  
Mr. Thomas  
Mr. Salim  
Mr. Duncan  
Mr. Joaquin  
Mr. Mingo  
Mr. Clarke  
Mr. D.A. Singh  
Mr. Ramsaroop  
Miss Field-Ridley  
Mr. Carrington  
Mr. Kasim  
Dr. Reid - 24

*Motion negative.*

**OPERATIONS OF GLOBAL-AGRI**

“Whereas on 12<sup>th</sup> July, 1970, the Ministry of Finance announced that the total assets of Global-Agri, said to be a multi-,million dollar project for in the Berbice River, had been acquired by the Government;

And whereas the collapse of this project, in which the Government had earlier announced that it was taking a controlling 51% interest of the shares, has gravely disturbed public confidence in the Government;

And whereas the National Assembly has not been furnished with any information about this project and is therefore completely unaware of the amounts paid in acquiring either the 51% controlling interest in the Company, or subsequently, its total assets, and is equally unaware of the circumstances which led to the collapse of the project;

And whereas it is believed that, among other defects, there was no proper assessment of technical aspects of the project such as whether or not corn could be grown economically in the chosen area;

And whereas the Chairman of Global-Agri, Mr. Stanley Green, has had to leave Guyana hurriedly and in circumstances which have increased the grave doubts of Guyanese tax-payers about the efficient functioning of the various arms of the Government and the Ministry of Agriculture in particular;

And whereas it appears that a great deal of expensive machinery and equipment has been imported into the country and is now lying somewhere on the site of the project and that those items represent the total assets of the Company in Guyana;

And whereas, among the first casualties of the collapse of the project have been Guyanese workers, who have not, it is understood, been paid overtime due to them in dock-side unloading of the abovementioned machinery and equipment:

Be it resolved that this National Assembly agrees that a Committee comprising Members of both sides of this House be set up to inquire into all the circumstances of the operations of Global-Agri up to the date of the announcement of the take-over of the assets by Government.” [Mr. R.D. Persaud]

**Mr. Ram Karran:** With the leave of the House, I beg to move the Motion standing in the name of the hon. Member Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud, who is out of the country. I wish first

of all to lodge a protest against the Government's refusal to defer this matter, which deferment was sought by us, and against having at this unearthly hour to move this Motion. The main spokesman on agriculture on this side of the House had lodged this Motion for some considerable time. It is significant that the Government sought to bring it before the Chamber only now in his absence. We notice too that the record of this Government in debating Opposition Motions is notorious, as is its record of railroading Government's business particularly with reference to the suspension of Standing Orders.

**10.50 p.m.**

We are grateful, nevertheless. However we see this as the Government's attitude, that is, to take one Wednesday right through to Thursday morning, if necessary, to deal with the Motions from the Opposition. It is like the old woman with her children. She makes a bad day of it and doses them all with castor oil. But something worse than castor oil is coming.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, Mr. Ram Karran, I think you may now proceed with the Motion.

**Mr. Ram Karran:** With this background to the Motion and with the debate of the corny story at Kibilibiri before us, we sincerely hope that the Government will do something to investigate the loss of Government funds and the activities of those members of the Government who have been prevailed to go into this venture.

You will recall, sir, that this Global-Agri affair was never debated in this House. Kibilibiri was mentioned only when an application was made for additional funds when the whole venture had failed. I recall attending a seminar which was addressed by one of these

American birds of passage who came here to tell us about poultry feed. The then Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Jordan), who is not in his seat today, was particularly interested in it. He said we should reduce the cost of poultry feed and this American was telling us that corn was a good substance for the carbohydrate base of poultry feed since it had more protein than the protein concentrate that is imported, which would have been lessened.

There was a good point in that, but the point was also made at the seminar that we were a country producing a tremendous quantity of rice, and even though it might mean putting in additional concentrates to balance the higher carbohydrate content of rice, it might have been better in the interest of the country's development and in the interest of the rice industry to use that formula.

Earlier today we dealt with the hybrid varieties of rice and was not brought out at all that these hybrid varieties contain a higher protein content, nearly as high as corn.

I was attempting to say that perhaps this is a suitable time for the Government, after a thorough assessment at Kibilibiri, to decide on one of the new types as the carbohydrate base for

poultry feed. That is only incidental.

It will be recalled by hon. Members that this Chamber reverberated, if I may use that word again, with the voice of the then hon. Minister of Education about the "green" revolution. Whether he copied the idea from India or from Ceylon, it appears to me that the "green" revolution referred not to the colour of the foliage of our plants but perhaps to the name of someone. I cannot be certain – and I so not think the House will be certain – whether the name refers to the hon. Minister of Works, Hydraulics and Supply (Mr. Green) or the name of the head of that firm, Global-Agri. It does appear also that this Mr. Green made certain members of the Government into some sort of creature. It did not reflect good sense on the part of the Guyana

Government when it allowed Mr. Green to take the Members of the Government on a very long ride.

The Government seemed reluctant to accept the advice of technical officers in the Ministry. In fact, these officers were not called in. That is my information. It was only at a very late stage, when the then hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance (Dr. Reid) was told by one of the members of the staff – not a technical officer in the hydraulics section but a technical officer (finance) – that the drain was too heavy, that he decided to call one of the officers to find out whether the sum used in draining and irrigating the Kibilibiri holding was reasonable.

The then Minister of Finance was involved in some way. If “involved” is too strong a word, I would say “caught in a net”, because a house in Bel Air Park, belonging to the Minister, was rented to Mr. Green, the head of Global-Agri. [*Dr. Reid*] “*What was wrong with that?*”. The hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture asks: “What was wrong with that?” A Government Minister rented his house to the head of Global-Agri. Money given by the Government for the development of Kibilibiri was used to develop the hon. Minister’s house by the erection of a swimming pool, by putting in very expensive and sophisticated furniture and carpets. I understand they want to implicate the Leader of the Opposition by taking some of those discarded carpets and putting them in his office. Perhaps the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture should have asked “What was wrong with that?” when he tendered his resignation which was refused by the hon. Prime Minister. [*Laughter.*] Thousands of dollars went into that house. I understand that the swimming pool alone cost \$25,000. He that been handed over to the Government for the losses incurred at Kabilibiri? No.

I understand that the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture has moved up since Mr. Green was escorted out of the country. The whole story reveals that several

Ministers were involved in this matter and it is only one petty angel that has fallen so far, We want to see the Lucifer in this whole affair brought down. What is the Government doing? If they were all indicated – I do not mean that in the parliamentary sense; I mean “criminally” – then there would be sufficient evidence to bring them all to justice.

11 p.m.

Sir, whenever this question of Kibilibiri is raised we often hear that the Government wishes to investigate the contract dealing with the Parika/Makouria road. I wish to anticipate the hon. Minister today and to say that as far as the Peoples Progressive Party is concerned we have no objection whatever to a thorough investigation of the Parika/Makouria road contract. Indeed, I wish to assure my friends on the other side that all the documents are at the Ministry of Works and Hydraulics, and that all the documents are with the Ministry of Finance. In fact, I will volunteer to give evidence to any impartial commission to establish that it was the United Force and the Peoples National Congress who worked hand in glove to destroy the efforts to build the interior road – the Parika/Makouria, Bartica to Potaro on to Lethem. It is a well-known fact; I think all Guyanese are aware of the fact.

I do not want to go into the details or irrelevancies of the Parika/Makouria contract but I merely sound a note of warning that it will be no excuse for the Members of the Government to get up as they want to do, as this Government so often does, to point to the mote in the eyes of its neighbours and fail to take note of the beam in their own. That has been the attitude of this Government since 1965. But it is now seven years since it has been in office and these hon. Members ought to stop singing that song and stand on their own feet. In fact, its term of office has been as long as the PPP and it is time hon. Members become original. So if the Government wishes to raise the Del Conte affair let it be known in advance that it will be no defence in this debate.

Sir, I want to go back to Kibilibiri and to observe that when I went into the Berbice River I asked the people to let me see how they are throwing fertilizers on mud to get corn to grown without throwing corn seeds. But like everything else as a Member of this House I was prevented from going to Kibilibiri. *[Interruption by the hon. Minister of Agriculture.]* The people who you have there, the terrorists you have in training there.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran I recall and I think you too, when the hon. Deputy Prime Minister made the offer to the entire House that anyone willing to go there could do so and he will arrange transportation. Am I to understand that transportation was refused?

**Mr. Ram Karran:** I am not aware of the offer by the Deputy Prime Minister. It might have been made when I was absent from the House or I may not have heard. But I was in the Berbice River several months ago and I had no idea that I would have been passing or had the time to go to Kibilibiri. But as I passed there and I had some time to spare I thought that the courtesy would have been shown to me as a Member of this House, as a person interested in the welfare of the country of being allowed to go on the walk to look around. But even that - -

**Mr. Speaker:** I understand also that the hon. Member Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud was permitted to go.

**Mr. Ram Karran:** I understand that he was taken there by the ex-Minister of Agriculture just before his fall. Maybe the ex-Minister wishes to get evidence.

I was talking about investigation and having regard to what has been said in the newspapers by spokesmen of the Government and what has been said on the radio by spokesmen on the Government I wonder why an investigation has not so far been held in the affairs of Global-Agri. What is the position now? What is the situation now? The Government had been spending large sums of money to assist Mr. Green. The Government, as we all know, has had to escort Mr. Green out of this country. May we be told why is it, if this man was a criminal



as is alleged, he was not taken to the courts? Why was he hidden away and escorted out of the country? He was taken to the United States of America where allegedly he had to answer some other charge. How is it that this Government has allowed such a confidence trickster to come into Guyana and to fool so many of them? That is why I said he (Mr. Green) has made monkeys or tomcats out of Members of this Government. How is it that that was possible? Did this Government not check with his record in the United States of America before he was allowed to come here to steal our money? The U.S.A. has very up to date records where every single citizen is branded, he has got a number. One is inclined to believe that the Members of this Government knew. One is inclined to think that there is more than that, and some of the people who had encouraged Mr. Green to come here knew about his past and were prepared to take a bite of the cherry.

When the hon. Minister replies perhaps he will tell us. The situation in so far as Global-Agri I understand is not rosy at all. The system of cultivation in that part of the country as we all know is different. The hon. Minister was telling us this afternoon about the need for research, research in rice, research in everything but the Government has been doing no research. I am at a loss to know how the Government expects after reaping the first and second crop of corn on this settlement to be able to go-head further. Because it appears to me and to all right-thinking people who know about agriculture in Guyana that the whole settlement will be left abandoned probably to grow cattle or to treat it as they have treated the lower part of the Berbice; I refer to Brandwagt Sari.

While at Ebini and in other places where research has been going on the officers know something about the type of fertilizers required for the type of cultivation. But we know that corn is new except as is done on a catch basis in the Amerindian districts in the Pomeroon, Essequibo and these places where they burn a field, plant corn, abandon it and go to another section. The little ash that is left there is a fertilizer. Has the Government given any thought and could the hon. Minister tell us how the Government proposes to continue and at what cost to the taxpayers/

**Mr. Speaker:** May I remind hon. Members that the Motion before the House is, "That this National Assembly agrees that a Committee comprising Members of both sides of this House be set up to inquire into all the circumstances of the operations of Global-Agri up to the date of the announcement of the take-over of the assets by Government."

**Mr. Ram Karran:** Yes, sir. That, of course, limits us to the point where that investigation is going to come about, and we would like at a later stage to urge a fuller investigation in so far as the continuation of the scheme is concerned. Earlier this evening, in another debate, a reference was made to the Ombudsman. The hon. Prime Minister said that of dishonesty should be reported to the Ombudsman. My friend Mr. Teekah dealt with the Ombudsman in so far as one complaint is concerned.

I have another case where one Mr. Ferreira in the Pomeroon paid \$100 to a certain lawyer to have his transport passed and his appeals to the Ombudsman, the Chief Justice, and to several Government officers have not brought relief. The hon. Prime Minister's request<sup>6</sup> that complaints of dishonesty should be made to the Ombudsman is a pious one. I am making reference to this case of dishonesty to show that it will yield no results and this Opposition has been forced to bring this Motion before this Chamber knowing full well that my friends on the opposite side have never accepted that the Opposition is correct. In spite of that, we have been forced to come here even though the hon. Prime Minister advises us to go to the Ombudsman in cases of dishonesty because even there, there is no redress.

We reluctantly brought this Motion to the House to see whether the Government proposes to change its views especially since there had been talk about investigating this case, to see whether the Government would wish to go along with the Opposition and to set up a Commission of Inquiry. I say so and reiterate and repeat what the hon. Leader of the Opposition said, that we want this Government to remove doubts and fears and all the ills that bedevil our society. We want the Government to accept a situation where Members of this House are selected to form a committee to investigate these cases of alleged fraud so that one does not have

to go to the Ombudsman or to appeal to this House when a case of dishonesty is suspected or proven. A Standing Committee will be there to investigate things of this kind and also Members of Parliament and public servants, many of whom are today indulging in practices that are not healthy for the Guyana Government.

**Mr. Hamid:** I second the Motion and reserve my right to speak at a later stage.

**Mr. Sutton:** Mr. Speaker, in taking the opportunity to contribute our quota to this Motion, I will not spend much time. In view of the various actions the Government is taking to persuade the people of Guyana that every effort is not only being made to make money go as far as it is possible to go, but everything is being done by every citizen to help save money for the benefit of all, it seems incumbent on the Government to take conscious steps, when things appear to go wrong, to satisfy its own supporters and the people of Guyana that it has done all it could do and in spite of that, particular situation got out of hand. Let the public be satisfied that no person within the Government was party to these situations which led to such great losses.

In such a case it would appear that, in the words of a very famous Governor in the colonial days, it is not sufficient for justice to be done but justice must appear to be done. It is necessary in these times that Governments particularly in undeveloped or third world countries, such as we are, where money is so difficult to come by, where we have to seek aid from other people, should be able to convince those people that we are conscious of our obligations, that we are doing all we can to protect the money we borrow, and hope by our actions to remove as early as possible the need to continue borrowing. We will find it necessary to prove to the world that everything is above board.

In these circumstances, we feel we should do all we can, this section of the Opposition, to commend this Motion to the Government. It is in the Government's own interest as well as anybody else's interest to let the people of Guyana have an opportunity of knowing that justice has been done in this Global-Agri matter, in which there are so many rumours, so many allegations, so many suggestions of fraud, both in high and low places, with people who should

have nothing to do with it. I think it is the Government's obligation to see that the reputations of its Ministers and supporters are kept free and untarnished in this matter.

It therefore seems that they are under an obligation to fall in with this Motion to appoint a Committee very broadly based to investigate this matter thoroughly. We all make mistakes. Nobody can be condemned for making a mistake in good faith, but the Government could be condemned for not taking every possible step to let everybody in this country know that nobody will be allowed to benefit from mistakes for which the people of Guyana suffer. As such, we hope that the Government will accept this Motion because it is clearly necessary to have a Committee appointed in cases like this. We hope, wherever possible, examining Committees will function so that the Government and the people will be satisfied that every one who has an opportunity to exercise control in these conditions is doing so to the best of his ability and for the benefit of the people as a whole.

**11.20 p.m.**

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture. (Dr. Reid): Mr. Speaker, it is good that we have put this Motion on the Order Paper so that there could be some debate on this issue that has been standing for a little while. Even though we discussed it before, when the Estimates were presented, it seems as if we will be in a position to hear in much more detail about Global-Agri, now Kibilibiri, tonight.

I want to say that mover of the Motion (Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud) knew in good time before he left this country that this Motion was on the Order Paper. It is not practicable to make all the arrangements and then to come to the House to hear that the mover of the Motion is absent and therefore we cannot proceed. If we do that then we will spend more time in this House than we should, especially since this day (Wednesday) is specially set aside for Members' business. However late we go tonight, hon. Members who have Motions on the Order Paper should feel very happy since, instead of getting two or three hours to debate their Motions, they

will be in a position to get twelve hours or, if possible, twenty hours. Therefore we can say all that we want to say, as long as we want to say it, tonight.

We now come to Global-Agri. For many years we have been talking in this country about diversification of agriculture. Several reports have been written of several things that can be grown in this country. My friend has said that no research has been done. I am certain that he is satisfied that research has been done not only by our local scientists but also by a visiting scientist by the name of Carl Hazenberg. This is a well-known name in Guyana. Mr. Hazenberg also did some work in this area. He referred to the intermediate savannahs and said that soils suitable for growing corn, soya beans, peanuts and sorghum are available in Guyana. He did not stop there; he said the intermediate savannahs are suitable and he went further and pin-pointed the districts.

The soils in the area between Ituni and Kwakwani are generally of the type that will make them suitable for growing these crops. They are sandy, well-drained loams and loamy sands in these intermediate savannahs. I do not want to spend too much time detailing the chemical nature of the soil, but Mr. Hazenberg has done this type of analysis and if we are to proceed to diversify, then attempts must be made to grow some of these newer crops that we need in this country on a large scale. Global-Agri was originally so planned to cultivate corn, soya beans, peanuts and sorghum in this area. Hazenberg's report and our research findings at Ebini were used to support a scheme to grow these crops. The desire has always been great to move into another large agricultural crop and this is what was put on the ground.

Hon. Members will ask why the programme was changed. My hon. Friend has asked why the Managing Chairman, Mr. Stanley Green – no relation of the Minister Green here – had to be asked to leave Guyana. It is very interesting that he was asked to leave Guyana because if the things that my friend said are true, then it would not have been possible to get the man out of the country when we wanted to get him out.

As my hon. Friend said, he hates us to refer to Del Conte. I know he hates that very much. I was hoping not to mention it because the two projects cannot be compared. There is no comparison between the two, but since he mentioned it, I just want to remind him that in the Del Conte affair – he said we must not mention it and I asked him from my seat to tell the House what was the financial loss. He did not dare to say because he hopes that this type of story will never come from his lips.

I do not wish to spend much time on this, except to say something from a statement made by the then Attorney-General Dr. Fenton H.W. Ramsahoye, at a meeting held and chaired by him. The meeting was held on Monday the 14<sup>th</sup> January, 1963. This first paragraph alone will tell the story of the losses. My hon. Friend says that there are tremendous losses in Global-Agri. We will go through Global-Agri in detail and I hope that one day we will be in a position to go through the Del Conte story in detail, even though he does not want to hear about it. I quote the first paragraph:

“The Attorney-General opened the meeting by stating that Government at the time had advanced to Del Conte approximately \$1.4 million in cash and \$2 million in bonds, making a total of \$3.4 million.” This is the type of money Del Conte received. I do not have to say anything more about except to mention that if hon. Members believe that this expenditure was justified, then they can show me where this money was usefully spent in this country. Guyana has 83,000 square miles. Hon Members can travel to any part of this country and show me that this type of expenditure, \$3.4 million, took place anywhere in Guyana. I leave Del Conte at that. Let the public decide.

I wish to tell hon. Members about Global-Agri; I do not wish to tell them about Del Conte. There is no comparison between the two things, so I do not want to put them together. Hon. Members say a Committee should be established to investigate the matter of Del Conte. What are they going to find? They cannot find the money in Swiss Bank. They will just spend human time and resources uselessly to investigate that type of thing.

Mr. Stanley Green came to this country and was promoting a scheme with contractor finance to grow corn, using as his base Hazenberg's Report and the research that was done at Ebini. The great difference was that he was going to put an area of some 7,000 acres under cultivation.

Originally the Board comprised the following persons: Mr. Oscar Hamilton, Mr. B.E. Commissiong, Mr. Y. Bhag Khan, Mr. Patrick Ng-A-Fook, Mr. L.R. Wharton, Dr. C. Miller, and Mr. S.A. Goring, with the representative of Thomas and Stoll, Mr. J. Henry Thomas.

This scheme was studied and there was a feasibility study of what would be done. Government thought that there was an opportunity to diversify and to grow at least one more crop.

From 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1970. To 7<sup>th</sup> July, 1970, the following expenditure was noted. Hon. Members will have to bear with me because I want to go through this in detail:

Salaries, wages, allowances	-	83,000
Fuel and lubricants	-	17,000
Transportation	-	58,000
Land and buildings	-	77,000
Telecommunications	-	3,000
Rations	-	11,000
Wharf	-	94,000
Subsistence and travelling	-	12,000

I am calling round figures for the time being.

Machinery, equipment and spare parts	-	180,000
Rental of premises	-	7,000

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National Assembly

11.20 – 11.30 p.m.

Secretarial expenses	-	7,000
Miscellaneous	-	10,000
Hotel expenses	-	23,000
Consultation fees	-	20,000
Audit fees	-	200
Land clearing	-	17,000
General supply	-	22,000
Furniture and fittings	-	9,000
Office equipment and expenses	-	5,000

The total was \$662,094

*[Interruption by Mr. Hamid.]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Mr. Hamid, you have been doing this frequently. I shall have to deal more seriously with you.

11.30 p.m.

**Dr. Reid:** We can do that right on to 31<sup>st</sup> July, 1971, but our business is up to 1970. That was according to the Motion, that is where we should lay emphasis. Then we have the items of equipment purchased; some were locally purchased and some were purchased overseas. Those purchased locally are as follows:

- 3 Metal body grain trailer
- 1 Hobart Welding Plant
- 1 Kelvinator Deep Freeze
- 1 Concrete Mixer
- 3 Jeeps/Land Rovers



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1 Fibre Glass Boat  
1 T-Level Rod and Target Tripod  
Dunlop Hose  
Welding Equipment  
Outboard Motor and Propeller

Equipment purchased from the United States of America:

1 Water Filtration System  
1 Blender Delumper and Conveyor  
Total Hammermill Equipment  
1 Conveyor System  
1 Fuel Unloading System  
Tanks  
Piping  
Office Equipment  
Kitchen Items

Items purchased from International Harvester:

1 Model 3444-D Loader/Back Hoe:3121  
1 Model 8000 Forklift Tractor  
4 Model 400 Trailer  
3 Model 770 16 Row High-Clear Self-propelled Sprayer  
2 Model 500 Wheeled-Controlled Disc Harrow  
4 Model 711 Rotary Cutters  
2 Model 800 International Scouts  
1 Model 800 International Scout  
5 Boxes) Parts for Motor Trucks

2 Bales  
2 Boxes Parts for Motor Trucks  
5 Boxes) Parts for Agriculture Machinery  
1 Bale)  
9 Boxes) Parts for Agriculture Machinery  
3 Drums)  
1 Piece)  
96 Ctns.) 1012 FMH Hopper and Applicators  
10 Crates  
9 Pieces  
7 Bdles) F-856 Tractors (Farmall)  
1 Unit)  
1 Bdle) 1 1456 Tractors (Farmall)  
1 Unit)  
1 Bdle) 1 1456 Tractor (Turbo)  
1 Box)  
1 Box 2. Model 3. Rearmounted Ditcher  
1 No. 30 Land Leveller  
1 Model 61 Tilt Bed Trailer  
1 No. 10 subsoil Chisel  
Elliot 500 – Gal. Tank  
1 Model TU-56 Deluxe Umbrella  
1 s-60 D-18 Engine Generator  
1 Model – 6273 Tecumaeh Compressor  
1 Model – 62690 Tecumaeh Compressor  
1 Model – 36669 Tecumaeh Compressor  
10 Wall Outlets  
1 apeco Roll-O-Matic Copier  
10 Air Conditioners (Wall Type)

1 10 inch Radial Arm Saw and Stand  
500 Feet – ¾ inch Manila Rope  
100 Feet – ¾ inch Steel Chain  
20 Clevis  
1 Carpenter Kit  
1 Mason Kit  
150 Wire Holders  
3 Model 800 – E OFD Grain Dryers  
3 model No. 1239028 – 35 Ft. Filling Augers complete and 10 H.P. Gasolene Engine  
1 Steinlite Automatic Moisture Tester  
2 Model 74 Wet Grain Storage Bins  
3 41 ft. inclined Augers Belt Drive and 5 H.P. Motor  
1 Bryant Poff Bucket Elevator  
3 Seed Cleaners and Baggers  
3 Model 18 Implement Carriers  
12 Model 4 Rotary Hoe Section  
6 Model 700 Semi Mounted 6 Furrow Plough  
6 Model 58.8 Row Trailing Corn Planter  
4 Model 85 8 Row Front Mounted Cultivator  
2 Model 130-D 18 130 K.W. Generator  
2 Model 705 G.A. 18 7½ K.W. Generator Cabinets with tools etc.  
250 Hexagon Nuts – 1 inch  
2 Model 815 Combines and Quick Attach Feeder.

All these things are things that were set out as being part of the equipment to cultivate corn. I mentioned them because anybody who would wish to identify them can make a journey to Kibilibiri and there for certain they will see the equipment. Some of them have already been used; there are some that have not yet been used. But as we proceeded to examine what was

being proposed the trouble came when things started to be mentioned that were not in the original projection. This is where my friend mentioned that we came in to examine very carefully why is it that certain items that were not mentioned in the original projection were now being talked about.

### 11.40 p.m.

And so we got down very carefully to look at the matter because Hazenburg in his Report, which was being followed only on a larger scale, did not suggest any irrigation system, so that what my friend has been saying that we bought some expensive irrigation system, that is not so. No money was ever spent on any irrigation system.

Around July a request was made to purchase the irrigation system. We said this will certainly change the picture, let us go back and get a new financial projection. We could have done this kind of examination because for us there was no irregular deal with Stanley Green. But if one goes through the same De. Conte exercise, one will find out that even though there was a pressure on to inform them that what they were doing was wrong, they did not dare to do anything about Del Conte. Even the officers, especially the Director of Public Works then they were nearly put into prison by Del Conte for writing letters to that company, so it is quite a different story. Nobody in that Government dare to terminate the contract with Del Conte.

*[Interruption.]* He asked me who terminated it. It is in the file here where the British Government had to get on them to tell them that no more developmental funds could be used on that, so it was finally terminated. All this is in that record. We had this projection:

Farm equipment	\$	764,400
Reaping and transport equipment	\$	1,708,982
Land clearing	\$	428,000
Buildings	\$	279,000

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Wharf	\$	70,000
Mess Hall Equipment	\$	53,000
Miscellaneous	\$	94,000
Other equipment	\$	552,376.

This was in the original plan but when the suggestion came that we must purchase the irrigation system which was \$5,236,378, then the conflict arose. The detailed investigation started; the new projections were made and there we found out that the exercise would not have been profitable if we had gone along in that direction. Forthwith, due to that examination, the services of Mr. Green were promptly terminated because we declared we could not have confidence in a man who put up a projection of what should be done and then suddenly coming in with a system costing over \$5 million of added expenditure to the scheme.

Moreover, we had checked with International Harvester and other people involved in the irrigation system and we found that for certain this was an inflated price. So our blood rose high and in the interest of this country, Greene was fired from the services of the Board. At the time, he was hoping to raise finances for his part of the exercise to the tune of some \$425,000. He had not completed raising this. Some of this he had raised for his share. Some of that he had spent doing all sorts of things. He had rented this property and he was in the process of making some changes. We were able to send him away and put our men in charge to carry on the scheme, following Hazenburg's plan, and this is what we have done at Kibilibiri.

All that I have mentioned in terms of equipment, in terms of facilities, are all things that people can go there and see. Plus, on the site, we have a wharf that is being used by the Berbice steamer. We have large bonds. There are living quarters for workers, a bungalow, two airstrips, roadway some seven miles long to get us to the cultivation site. All these are facilities that one can examine at Kibilibiri, so that we on our side see no reason why we should take up our time in establishing a committee to consider Del Conte and Kibilibiri. I suggest that if my

friends on the opposite side feel that they need minute and detailed examination, they can ask somebody to give it an objective look because we are not prepared to allow any malicious persons to destroy some of our workers, some of our agricultural officers who are giving overtime to carry this project.

We have the Public Accounts Committee. I suggest they ask the Ombudsman to take all the files away and report because their vision is already clouded. I do not see what good will come out of it. A few from that side and a few from our side to go through an analysis where from their side they dare not look at anything objectively because they are sworn to the destruction of this economy of Guyana. This is no secret. It has been shouted loudly in this country. We go back to what is being done in Kibilibiri.

The future of the project. We have already reaped one crop of corn, sorghum, peanuts, soya bean. We had for that first crop, 350 acres of corn; 202 acres of soya bean; 200 acres of peanuts; and 650 acres of sorghum. The corn, we have reaped 655,300 pounds; from the sorghum, 169,600 pounds; soya beans, 6,389 pounds; 3,000 pounds of peanuts. That was the first but in this business of diversification of agriculture, even though you do the research on a small site, you must get out there and do larger plots so you do real commercial trials, because notwithstanding what you find on a small plot, you will never be sure that this is what it will be when you do extensive cultivation.

### 11.50 p.m.

And even though there was no profit as such on that first crop, the experience that the men gained is now carried into the second crop which is a present in the field. I believe they have started to reap it and the total acreage is 1,450 – 350 acres in corn, 700 in sorghum, 200 in soya beans and 200 in peanuts.

This is the way this exercise will continue until November, 1972, by which time we hope to have more acreage under cultivation and to reap not less than 2,000 acres. This scheme, therefore, is not a scheme that has failed. This is a project that is going on and will continue to go on. The experience that our men have gained from this is worth many times the problems that we have encountered in trying to extend a new agricultural crop.

What is important is the behavior of persons when something happens. People must be able to analyse for themselves and to make a judgment. If we are to run after every rumour that we hear, every little fear, every little doubt, especially when other people in some places are trying to create these doubts and fears for us to keep running, then we will not know where we are going. We now where we are going in this and the doubts and fears will certainly be removed as people get a chance to visit this area.

People from abroad have come in and have visited this area. Probably people in this country have been able to read some of their impressions about what is going on. If we could not intervene when something was going wrong, then the people in this country would be in a position to pass adverse judgment. They would be able to do so if we were behaving as the members of the Opposition did in the days of Del Conte. Notwithstanding what was going on, they could not tell Del Conte anything. People had a right to be suspicious in that case, but in this case Government took prompt action to terminate the services of the Manager and not to leave the equipment to deteriorate. Government had the good sense to man the equipment and put it to use. When hon. Members visit there, they are not going to find derelict equipment. They are going to find equipment that is serviceable; equipment that is useful.

This is the story of Global-Agri. We invite people to go and see the project. One pilot, I think his name is Grandsoult, is offering the members of the Opposition a free trip whenever they want to go. They have no excuse for not going if they want to see what is going on there. The public is invited. That is not a hiding place because it can be reached by road. You need not go by boat through the Berbice River. You can leave Georgetown in a jeep and get to the

place in 4 to 5 hours. You can go by way of Ituni, go across the savannahs and get to the place. So there is no problem about this.

We therefore refuse to accept the Motion. But we throw out the proposal, not only to members of the Opposition, but to any other person in the community who would like to draw the attention of the Ombudsman to this to do so, so that he, too, can have an objective examination.

As far as allowing members of the Opposition to sit in a group and take up the time of the officers that can be better spent, to pass long days and long nights questioning all sorts of things, to destroy their initiative and break their morale and so finally achieve their own objective of destroying this economy, this Government will not be a part of that exercise. *[Applause.]*

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

**Mr. Ram Karran:** (replying) Sir, I have never before in this House seen the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture feeling for something to say as he did during this debate.

I had anticipated the usual attack that is made when the Government is accused of some error, that is, the members of the Government rush to Del Conte. The hon. Minister told us that it was not his intention to do so but because I had raised it he brought it in. Perhaps he will explain, at some suitable time, how it is that he had the file dealing with Del Conte to refer to the statistics. I had anticipated him correctly. The attitude of the Government in all these matters is like that of the child who says, "Mama, tell she about she big foot before she tell you about yours." That is the attitude of the Government in all these matters. Six years ago this Government came into office and the members of the Government do not remember that they form the Government but act as the Opposition and refer to what was done by the P.P.P. in the years 1960, 1962 or 1962.



Let me take some little time, if I may, to explain briefly once again what was the cause of the failure of the Del Conte proposal. Her Majesty's Britannic Government, as you will recall, sir, had at that time been under severe pressure from the Government of the United States, as is recorded by Schlessinger in his book "A Thousand Days", to change the Constitution of Guyana in order to allow a change in the electoral system so that my friends on the other side could win with their rigging.

One Mr. Jacobs came down here to tell the British Guiana Government, which was an internally self-governing territory, that it did not have money. More than that: when the contract was signed – and the contract was not a hidden arrangement left in some pokey corner as in the case of the contract with Global-Agri. The contract saw the light of day in this Chamber. Several measures passed before this Chamber when the mace was here. The three officials of the Colonial Office – the Attorney-General, the Financial Secretary and the Chief Secretary – along with the Governor who presided at meetings of Executive Council – were all aware of the signing of the Del Conte contract.

It was only after pressure came from the Government of the United States that Her Majesty's Government began to see differently and began to criticize what was called "contractor finance". The agreement was signed. The Royal Bank of Canada in Georgetown had agreed to act as our agents to the bankers in the United States.

The hon. Minister was quite correct when he referred to the amount of money which was paid to the Del Conte group.

## **12 midnight**

It will have often referred tot hat matter in this House – equipment was brought by the firm, equipment which had been examined by the Chief Mechanical Engineer, Works and

Hydraulics and by the Chief Mechanical Engineer of the Drainage and Irrigation Division. All of which had been countersigned by the then Acting Director of Public Works Mr. Adamson that the equipment was correct. After the equipment had been brought here the Government advanced the amount referred to by the hon. Minister. The Government signed the bonds, issued it to Del Conte Group, but the snag came about and the Company was unable to continue because even though the American Government had agreed to accept these bonds they changed their minds and they insisted that these bonds should go under the Security and Exchange Commission. That is after Del Conte had issued bonds to Texaco and to several other people in the United States of America for equipment, for oil and things like that, and work began. But the Security and Exchange Commission's approval would have taken months. Del Conte, therefore, came back to Guyana and the poor chap was not a politician he could not understand why the U.S.A. Government - - *[Interruption.]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members of the Government, permit the hon. Member to speak.

**Mr. Ram Karran:** This is something which occurred a long time ago and it needs some concentration to remember. Del Conte was unable to get these bonds exchanged or taken up and therefore he came back to Guyana after clarifying with the United States Government that if bonds were issued in smaller denominations that they would not require passing through the Exchange Control Commission. When he came back to Guyana, we naturally had to have a meeting of the Executive Council and there was some doubt as to whether Del Conte was finding it difficult to get equipment and to get personnel for the job and we, in order to safeguard the country's interest delayed somewhat and sought to get additional information re Del Conte and information from the United States Government. We were told that there was no difficulty at all about these bonds which were of high denominations to go through the Exchange Control Commission. So it went back and forth.

Meanwhile Del Conte had men paying here, he had equipment rotting here, and he could not hold on anymore, and he wanted to go on with the job. He had bridge engineers, civil engineers and all sorts of engineers. But it was as a result of the direct interference of the

United States Government aided and abetted by these so-called – I do not want to use a strong word, by our friends the former leader of the United Force Mr. Peter d'Aguiar and the leader of the People's National Congress Mr. Burnham who had been making frequent trips to the United States, who had in this House and outside of this House that the Del Conte arrangements must fail. Because, sir, if the road had been built as the Bank of Guyana was built by the P.P.P. as so many projects had been completed then the P.P.P. will have got more and more support, particularly from among their friends in Bartica, Parika and areas going up the River to Bartica. That is why the U.S. Government in their interest to destroy a progressive Government in Guyana with the support and connivance of Her Majesty's Britannic Government and with the knowing collusion and assistance from our friends on both sides, the People's National Congress and the United Force. Mr. Peter d'Aguiar did not deny in this House those charges of his being involved in the destruction of the Del Conte contract on the Parika/Makouria road.

But as I said sir, it does matter to them that millions have gone down the drain. All they were concerned about was seating themselves in this Chamber. Yet today anyone who attempts to make a mild criticism of the P.N.C. Government is regarded not only as anti-national but as a traitor. You cannot dare criticize anything they do, you become an anti-national enemy of the State.

I was referring to the "monkey" Motion of the hon. Minister. When I say "monkey" Motion I refer to the fact that he was jumping from limb to limb. I did not say it in any derogatory way. But he jumped from Del Conte, he jumped to this, he jumped to that and he has not told us (1) Why he tendered his resignation? And (2) was Mr. Green not apprehended and charged?

The hon. Minister in his commencement said that it is good that this Motion is taken and that the mover of the Motion knew about it well in time. I wish to categorically say that the hon. Member knew about this Motion a day before he left for Barbados. The hon. Leader of the House told me a week ago that the House was meeting on Wednesday, that Order Papers will be

sent out early enough so that Members will prepare themselves, but the Order Paper did not reach me or the Mover of the Motion until a day before he left.

My contention, sir, is that the Government wishes to dispose of all these at one Sitting even though it goes until tomorrow morning because the Government is afraid of adverse publicity, of giving it a little everyday so that the Graphic and the Sun and the papers in opposition to the Government will be able to dish out bit by bit in the far corners of the country.

He tells us about diversification and the hon. Minister knows that he has got the full support of this side of the House at least the P.P.P. side fully to the hilt in so far as diversification is concerned. Indeed, if the records were gone into it will be found that we are the people who have been talking from years gone by about diversification. When our friends on the Government side had been criticizing the P.P.P. about being a “coolie” Government, about being a rice Government, about being in support of industrialization we have been talking of diversification and progressive agriculture for years and years gone by. Therefore when they come and tell us about diversification it is something which they stumbled upon accidentally because my colleague and friend the hon. Leader of the Opposition said they started out on a foot of industrialization but their Yankee bosses will not permit them. I am sorry if you object to the word “Yankee” bosses”, sir. I apologise in advance. I do not wish to offend the sensitiveness of my friends on the Government side but they were told, “You cannot go on industrialization therefore you have to continue to plant rice”. The hon. Minister tells the nancy story about this research being done by Hazenburg.

**12.10 a.m.**

This visiting scientist who came to the Berbice River and looked at the intermediate savannahs, he is not the only scientist who came and looked at the intermediate savannahs. Many scientists have been there. There seems to be something sinister about it. Did Hazenburg

act as an agent to sell information to Greene or did any Minister of the Government or did someone associated with the Government get in contact with Mr. Greene? We want to know how Green got into the picture to go directly to carry out the scientific discoveries, to know that on this particular site we can grow corn, sorghum, soya bean and peanuts. That seems to be a little bit of a hiatus that the Minister did not fill in. Perhaps he will tell us later who met whom and where this meet took place.

In the past, many people secured prospecting licences for diamonds and they used to go and sell the licences to people in the United States who came here and exploited our resources, in some cases they made big capital and went back sleeping. The hon. Minister tells us about this Genesis of Global-Agri. He mentioned a lot of names – a former Minister of the Government and a lot of people – so it is now confirmed in my mind and in the minds of most Members that Mr. Green did not only fool a lot of Ministers but he fooled a lot of influential PNC supporters, or, the supporters have fooled the Government. Why was this project not undertaken in the normal way? Why was it not done as a corporation or a co-operative? If it has been done in that way it might have been brought before this honourable House and we might have been in a position to advise the Government.

One figures I would like to refer to in referring to the hon. Minister's long escape from reality, when he read out that statement of equipment which was bought by the company, was the figure for hotel expenses, \$23,000. I just repeat for it to sink into his head, but the land clearing at Kibilibiri cost \$17,000. There was a lot of land cleared there; I saw it from the boat. These figures seem unreasonable in comparison. I said that the hon. Minister was hiding from reality and taking up the valuable time of this House by reading out a long list of equipment, but this is what registered in my mind, that he said that some of this equipment is in use, some of it is not yet in use.

Crops have been reaped but does it not appear to any reasonable person that for a project of this kind there has been over capitalization, if not over capitalization, the Government has

bought equipment which would not be required immediately and therefore it is a waste of taxpayers' money, because that equipment could have been bought at a later stage thereby saving hard-earned interest, not to mention the capital which was used to buy it.

As I said, I wish to compliment the Minister for dealing with irrelevancies in reading out that long list. He said trouble came when Mr. Greene tried to inflate the drainage and irrigation aspect of the scheme. He said that I was wrong and things were going smoothly all the time until Mr. Greene came to ask for additional funds for drainage and irrigation. That is when the hon. Minister woke up. He was Rip Van Winkle. When he inquired from experts – I know he has no confidence in the experts we have here; Mr. Narain, he is now being sent to the University of Guyana – from the United States and they told him that this was not a good thing.

According to the hon. Minister's nancy story, Green had not yet committed a breach of the contract; he had not yet committed a crime, but the hon. Minister bundled him off. He did not allow anybody to talk to Mr. Green to hear his side of the story. The hon. Minister did not allow anybody to institute charges against Mr. Greene but he was bundled out of the country. My feeling and the feeling of any normal person would be that if Greene did not go out of the country, he would have called other people's names. That is the reason why Greene was forced out of Guyana. That is why the Minister and his friends, those who sat on the Board, dared not see Mr. Greene talking with anybody. The secret would have leaked out, the secret which the Government fears will leak out if attempts to have a Commission or a Select Committee of this House go into the matter.

The Minister could read all sorts of figures; he could have gone on reading until tomorrow morning and nobody would have been wiser especially when he reads such innocent things like his list of equipment, but the real documents, some of which are probably to be found in another file, dare not see the light of day because we will all become aware of what is going on in the Ministry of Finance. If all the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture said is correct, I wish to congratulate him.

If all that he has said is accurate, then I think that the Government owes an apology to my hon. Friend Mr. Jordan and an early reinstatement on the front benches in this House. Why has that poor angel fallen from grace if not because of the Global-Agri fiasco?

I wish to reject most categorically the hon. Minister's assertion that we on this side of the house are sworn to the destruction of the economy of this country. We are sworn to the destruction of fraud; we are sworn to the destruction of privilege, but we stand full square behind any Government that seeks to run this country in the interest of the Guyanese people. We stand for honesty, for fair play, for an end to corruption and to all that the Government has been indulging in, particularly in the Global-Agri affair.

*Question put.*

*Assembly divided: Ayes 13, Noes 24, as follows:*

**Ayes**

Mr. Sutton  
Mrs. Da Silva  
Mr. Teekah  
Mr. Remington  
Mr. Balchand Persaud  
Mr. Branco  
Mr. Ambrose  
Mr. R. Ally  
Mr. M.Y. Ally  
Mr. Lall  
Mr. Hamid  
Mr. Chandisingh

**Noes**

Mrs. Willems  
Mr. Zaheeruddin  
Mr. Van Sluytman  
Mr. Safee  
Mr. Fowler  
Mr. Corrica  
Mr. Chan-A-Sue  
Mr. Budhoo  
Mr. Bancroft  
Miss Ackman  
Mr. Aaron  
Mr. Wrights

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12.25 a.m.

Mr. Ram Karran	- 13	Mr. Thomas	
		Mr. Salim	
		Mr. Duncan	
		Mr. Joaquin	
		Mr. Mingo	
		Mr. Clarke	
		Mr. D.A. Singh	
		Mr. Ramsaroop	
		Miss Field-Ridley	
		Mr. Carrington	
		Mr. Kasim	
		Dr. Reid	- 24

*Motion negative.*

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Resolved,** “That this Assembly do now adjourn until a date to be fixed.” --  
**[The Minister of Housing and Reconstruction (Leader of the House)]**

*Adjournment accordingly at 12.25 a.m. on Thursday, 23<sup>rd</sup> September, 1971.*

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