

THE  
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

[VOLUME 2]

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE FIRST SESSION OF THE  
FIRST PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE  
CONSTITUTION OF GUYANA.

32nd Sitting

Friday, 30th December, 1966

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

*The Assembly met at 2 p.m.*

*Prayers*

[*Mr. Speaker in the Chair*]

*Present:*

*His Honour the Speaker, Mr. A. P. Alleyne*

*Members of the Government*

*Ministers*

	<i>F. S. Burnham, Q.C.</i>	<i>- Prime Minister</i>
<i>Mr. the Honourable P. A. Reid</i>		<i>- Minister of Home Affairs</i>
<i>The Honourable P. S. d'Aguiar</i>		<i>- Minister of Finance</i>
<i>The Honourable N. J. Bissember</i>		<i>- Minister of Housing and Reconstruction (Leader of the House)</i>
		<i>- Minister of Local Government</i>
		<i>- Minister of Communications</i>
		<i>- Minister of Education and Race Relations</i>
<i>The Honourable L. John</i>		<i>- Minister of Agriculture</i>
<i>The Honourable R. J. Jordan</i>		<i>- Minister of Forests, Lands and Mines</i>
<i>The Honourable M. Kasin</i>		<i>- Minister of Works and Hydraulics</i>
<i>The Honourable C. A. Merriman</i>		<i>Minister of Labour</i>
<i>The Honourable J. H. Thomas</i>		<i>Minister of Economic</i>

**Parliamentary Secretaries**

Mr. D. B. deGroot	- Parliamentary Secretary, Prime Minister's Office
Mr. G. Bowman	- Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Labour
Mr. O. E. Clarke	- Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Education and Race Relations
Mr. P. Duncan	- Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Local Government
Mr. J. G. Jouquin, O.B.E., J.P.,	Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Works and Hydraulics
Mr. C. V. Lee-Chang	- Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Finance

**Other Members**

Mr. W.A. Blair	Mr. I.A. Sancho
Mr. J. Pashoo	Mr. M.F. Singh
Mr. W. Carrington	Rev. A.B. Trotman
Mr. R.G.B. Field-Ridley	Mr. H.M.S. Wharton, J.P.

**Members of the Opposition**

Dr. C.B. Jagan, Leader of the Opposition	Mr. M. Hamid, J.P.
Mr. A. Chase	Mr. J.R.S. Luck
Mr. B.H. Bean	Mr. H. Lall
Mr. Rao Karrao	Mr. N. Khan, J.P.
Mr. H.J.M. Hubbard	Mr. Y. Ally
Dr. Charles Jacob, Jr.	Mr. L. Linde
Mr. C.V. Nunes	Mr. R.D. Persaud
Dr. F.H.W. Ransaboye	Dr. S.A. Ramjain
Mr. E.M.G. Wilson	Mr. S.M. Saffee

Clerk of the National Assembly	- Mr. F. A. Narain,
Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly (Acting)	- Mr. M. B. Henry

**Absent:**

The Honourable W. C. R. Kendall, C.B.E., Minister of Trade, Shipping and Civil Aviation	
The Honourable D. Mahraj, Minister of Health	- on leave
The Honourable S. S. Ramphal, C.M.G., Q.C., Attorney-General and Minister of State	
Mr. H. Prashad	
Mr. R. Tello, Deputy Speaker	- on leave
Mr. R. Chandisingh	
Mr. D. C. Jagan	
Mr. M. N. Poonai	
Mr. E. M. Stoby	
Mr. M. Bhagwan	- on leave

## ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

## LEAVE TO MEMBERS

**Mr. Speaker:** Leave of absence has been granted to the Honourable Deoroop Mahraj, Minister of Health, from today's sitting, and to the hon. Member Mr. Linde from the 1st to the 31st January, 1967.

## PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS, ETC.

The following Paper was laid:

Financial Paper No. 6/1966 - Schedule of Additional Provision on the Current and Capital Estimates for the period ending December, 1966, totalling \$1,516,400. [The Minister of Finance.]

## Suspension of Standing Order

**The Minister of Finance (Mr. d'Aguiar):** I beg to move the suspension of Standing Order No. 69 to enable this Financial Paper to be proceeded with at this sitting, after the other item has been completed. [Mr. Chase: "You cannot move that Motion now."]

**Mr. Speaker:** Does the Opposition object to it?

**Mr. Chase:** The hon. Minister of Finance has referred to the Motion prematurely. The members of the Opposition have a great deal to say on this matter. Is it proposed that we take the

Motion now, or when we come to it later? Under Public Business there is a Motion the debate on which has not yet been completed and which should be dealt with before any consideration is given to the Motion on the Supplementary Order Paper. I think Your Honour had ruled some time previously that the order of business, as it appears on the Order Paper, should be proceeded with in that sequence. If that Ruling still holds good for today it would seem that the business on the Order Paper for the 30th December, 1966, should be proceeded with, that is, the Motion in respect of the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Ordinance.

After the Motion in respect of the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Ordinance has been completed and the Minister of Finance still proposes to put the Standing Orders of this House in the waste-paper basket, then we can deal with the second Motion. But we have not yet reached that stage, in my respectful submission. The Minister must name the day on which he proposes to proceed with the second Motion. He has not yet named a day.

**Mr. Speaker:** I want to know why the Standing Order should not be suspended.

**Mr. Chase:** Are you referring to the Order of Business, or the Standing Order to permit Financial Paper No. 6/1966 to be dealt with? I am not quite clear which item Your Honour is dealing with.

**Mr. Speaker:** Mr. d'Aguiar asking that the Standing Order

suspended to enable him to deal with the Financial Paper at this sitting at a later stage today, not now.

**Mr. Chase:** He has not yet moved the Motion, and Your Honour has not yet put it before the House.

**Mr. Speaker:** In normal circumstances, he lays the Paper and names a day. He is now asking for the suspension of the Standing Order on this occasion.

**Mr. Chase:** The day ought to be named and when the time comes, then the Motion for the suspension of the Standing Order should be moved.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is it allowable for the whole Standing Order to be suspended?

**Mr. Chase:** With Your Honour's leave any Standing Order can be suspended. The exercise of that discretion must be one that should be done with great caution and care.

**Mr. Speaker:** Then I exercise my discretion.

**Mr. Chase:** You, sir, have to hear the views which may be put forward by both sides of the House.

**Mr. Speaker:** I am going to exercise my discretion without hearing any further argument in this matter.

**Mr. d'Aguiar:** On Wednesday I made this Statement:

"... Accordingly, I intend to recommend to Cabinet that a Statement of Excesses be brought before the House in accordance with the Constitution as quickly as possible so as to provide authority to pay Suppliers for materials delivered to the Ministry of Works and Hydraulics in good faith."

As quickly as possible has been achieved, because only two days ago I made that statement. It is necessary to pay the suppliers who have delivered goods in good faith to the Department of Works and Hydraulics: cement, bitumen, and a whole list of goods. If today lapses, then the authority to pay lapses and we cannot pay the suppliers. It may make some considerable time again before a special Resolution can be brought before this House to enable the suppliers to be paid out of next year's funds. It is for these reasons that three members of the Opposition spoke about the misuse of public funds. I mentioned the amount involved, and they started to debate the matter two days ago. They cannot now complain that they did not have some prior knowledge of the matter. The fact that the end of the year is so close has made it necessary to adopt this procedure and to ask that the Standing Order be suspended because of prime urgency.

**Mr. Chase:** There is a constitutional point which is involved in this matter. The hon. Member Dr. Ramsahoye will

seek Your Honour's leave to address you on that. The Minister of Finance has not been frank with us when he stated that three members started to speak on this supplementary provision which he seeks to debate this afternoon. Nothing could be further from the truth than that. Incidentally, two Members did comment on the Minister's statement, but there was no debate on this Financial Paper which is before us this afternoon.

2.30 p.m.

The Minister adverted to a statement which he made a few days ago. He read only the final paragraph of that statement. May I, in order to draw your attention to the seriousness of this matter, refer to other parts of the Minister's statement. He said this:

"I want to inform this House that a request from the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Works and Hydraulics, for a Supplementary Provision of \$1.5 million has been refused since it was clear that the money had already been unlawfully spent or committed."

He went on to say -

"Furthermore, I suspected there was much wasteful expenditure going on. I wrote a minute to the Secretary to the Treasury requesting immediate investigation and such disciplinary measures as might be necessary.

I have had a report from the Director of Audit."  
[Interruptions.]

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member is reading something which was presented by a Minister. How can I follow him if all that noise is made?

Mr. Chase: I continue:

"This confirms both that the money has been spent or committed without authority, and that there is administrative confusion and lack of control in the Ministry."

We were apprised of the fact that over a million dollars had been either unlawfully spent or committed by this Ministry and the hon. Minister took such a serious view of the matter that he required a report to be made to him by the Director of Audit. He went on to say, and I quote:

"I am of the opinion that unauthorised excesses such as these should be specially dealt with, as is indicated in Article 112 (2) of the Constitution. Just to bring these excesses before the House as an Estimate of Supplementary Provision seems to me to make nonsense of the Financial Regulations."

My hon. Friend, Dr. Ramvohoye, will deal with that point, but may I say that in presenting to us a Financial Paper in the normal way in which Estimates of Supplementary Provision are presented, is, as he himself said if I may quote his words - "to make nonsense of the Financial Regulations". The Minister made this statement only two or three

[MR. CHASE]

days ago, and the only analogy that I can see to this is that of a dog which vomits and licks up its very vomit. The Minister is licking his own vomit here this afternoon in asking us to agree to a suspension of the Standing Order to enable the matter to be dealt with this afternoon.

The Minister himself said this matter should be specially dealt with; it should be dealt with as unauthorised excesses under Article 112 (2) of the Constitution. The Minister, having alerted this House to the fact that this was a grave and weighty matter, cannot come this afternoon with four lines in the legend and no further details, and ask us to approve of this because some people have supplied cement and sand in good faith. If people have supplied Government with materials, there is no regulation or law which says we cannot vote this money next year. There is nothing to prevent us from doing that.

Last night the Minister said that the Assembly had to approve of the Regulations under the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Ordinance because he wanted people to pay the correct licences on the first January. Some people have been to the Inland Revenue Department to pay their car licences and they have been told that they cannot get licences for another two weeks because they have not been printed. I have checked this myself and found that this is so. So what the Minister said last

night about the urgency in passing the Motion to approve the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic (Amendment) Regulations falls to the ground.

With regard to this matter, there is no law to prevent us from considering it after the receipt of the Auditor's report. This Assembly is entitled to see the Auditor's report. The Assembly is entitled to know who are the officers who are guilty of expending Government funds in this manner, and who are responsible for this financial crisis. I am respectfully saying that we are entitled to have at least the notice which is required by the Standing Orders. The Supplementary Order Paper was handed to me this afternoon at 2.09 p.m. This Paper, Financial Paper No. 6 of 1966, was handed to me at 2.13 p.m., and we are being asked to consider this matter immediately, without regard to the time which we are entitled to have under the Standing Orders.

I say this: If every time we come to debate something in this Assembly, the Standing Orders are going to be suspended - as has been the rule rather than the exception - we are making an absolute shambles of the Standing Orders, a complete farce of them. It would be better if we tore them up, and put them in the wastepaper basket, and have no Standing Orders at all. Standing Orders were made to be respected and to be observed. To be coming to this Assembly so regularly to tell us that the Standing Orders should be suspended is making a mockery of them.

The Minister is guilty of a great deal of incompetence to wait until today to table this measure which he says must be passed today. I do not agree that it must be passed today, and I ask you, sir, not to accept it. There is a great deal of administrative bungling and incompetence in this matter. The Minister must have been advised at the time he made this statement two days ago, that the passing of this provision would have to be done by the 31st December, 1966. It is clear, however, that he was not so advised and there is no real urgency. The people involved will not be paid tomorrow if we passed this today. Some of them, I understand, have been paid already. According to the Minister's statement the Government is committed and all persons will have to be paid whether this is passed today, next month or the month after, because certain commitments were made.

Since this amount is already committed, let us have our due and proper time and notice. Although yesterday you, sir, exercised your discretion in favour of the Government because you were of the view that it was necessary to collect revenue from people in time, that is, from the first day of next year, there is no similar haste in this connection. In this connection what is required is money which has already been committed or spent. The urgency does not arise. Consequently, I ask you, sir, to see that the Standing Orders are upheld. I do not think it is necessary to refer you to the Standing Order dealing with money matters as regards the notice which is required to be given.

2.40 p.m.

The relevant Standing Order in this matter appears to be Standing Order 69. Standing Order 69 (1) states - it is long, but I shall not read the whole thing, just the final clause:

x " . . . on a day to be named by the Minister presenting the Paper but not earlier than one clear day after that on which the Paper was presented."

The Paper was presented at 2.13 this afternoon. Your Honour has already ruled in another matter, on a point taken by the hon. and learned Member Mr. Jagau some time ago, what is to be understood by "one clear day", so we do not have to go back to that. I would now ask my hon. and learned Friend Dr. Ramsahoye — Mr. Merriman: "With the approval of the Speaker." — with Your Honour's approval, to deal with the constitutional point which is involved in this matter.

Dr. Ramsahoye: Your Honour --

Mr. Speaker: I do not want to hear any more. I just want the hon. Minister of Finance to explain the statement that the money was unlawfully spent by the Ministry of Works and Hydraulics.

Mr. d'Aguilar: Under the key-words "was committed", some money was spent and some was committed without the authority of this House, but the officers of the department - at least the members of the Government - are responsible for the deeds of

[MR. D'AGUIAR]

their officers. Those people have committed money, they have purchased cement, bitumen and other things, and the Government is morally and properly bound to pay for them. But the Government cannot legally pay unless it brings to the House a statement of excess - as it has done in accordance with Article 112 (2) of the Constitution which states:

"(2) Where a supplementary estimate or statement of excess is laid before the National Assembly . . ."

We have laid it not as a supplementary provision or estimate but as a statement of excess.

The reason for the urgency is that there has been considerable delay in paying because when the investigation started some time ago, payments to the suppliers were held up. Some of them are suffering serious losses because of this and, in order that we may legalize the payment now and honour our commitments as a Government responsible for the acts of our servants, just like anyone else, we have to pass this statement of excess so that the money committed can be paid before the end of the year.

It is true enough that it could be passed next year, but only as a special Motion which might even take some months to get through. I am advised by the Director of Audit and the law officers that this is the proper procedure, and I am putting it through. I regret that I cannot give one day's notice because of the time of the year, but I

repeat that Members have had two days' notice in accordance with what I said on Wednesday, two days ago. The law officers advised me that I could have moved it in on Wednesday as an Amendment. There is nothing to stop you, once you have a supplementary provision before the House, to move in any new Amendment. I could have done so, but I thought it better, more in accordance with proper procedure, to bring it before the House as a separate item, and this is being done.

**Mr. Speaker:** Does this amount include wages and salaries to workers?

**Mr. d'Aguiar:** It really includes, according to our method of accounting, money spent, money committed. This includes money spent on wages, money already spent; therefore, we are really legalizing; there is no other way.

The hon. Member Mr. Chase spoke about bringing it before the Opposition. The normal procedure is that it will be included in the Director of Audit's Report which will be put before the Public Accounts Committee. The Public Accounts Committee should be chaired by a member of the Opposition, but the members of the Opposition have not been doing their job. They refuse to sit on the Public Accounts Committee which should advise on what action should be taken. It is not for the members of the Opposition to discuss that now, or to see the Director of Audit's Report now. That will come in due course.



**Baling by the Speaker**

**Mr. Speaker:** I have consulted the Leader of the Opposition on this matter and he has bluntly refused to have this Paper taken today. After listening to the arguments on both sides, I am of the opinion that the Government must fulfil its obligations. The business of the State must not be made to suffer and, notwithstanding the fact that the Opposition claims that it has not had sufficient time to study this Paper, I am of the view that I am going to allow this Motion. I will, therefore, put the Question.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

**Dr. Ramsahoye:** Division!

*Assembly divided: Ayes 25,  
Noes 15, as follows:*

<i>Ayes</i>	<i>Noes</i>
Mr. Wharton	Mr. Persaud
Rev. Freeman	Mr. Linde
Mr. Singh	Mr. Ally
Mr. Sancho	Mr. Khan
Mr. Field-Ridley	Mr. Lall
Mr. Carrington	Mr. Hamid
Mr. Budhoo	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Blair	Dr. Ramsahoye
Mr. Too-Chung	Mr. Nunes
Mr. Joaquin	Dr. Jacob
Mr. Duncan	Mr. Hubbard
Mr. Clarke	Mr. Ram Karran
Mr. Bowman	Mr. Benn
Mr. deGroot	Mr. Chase
Mr. Thomas	Dr. Ja gan - 15
Mr. Merriman	
Mr. Kasim	
Mr. Jordan	
Mr. John	
Mrs. Gaskin	
Mr. Correia	
Mr. Cheeks	
Mr. Bissember	
Mr. d'Aguiar	
Dr. Reid	

-25

2.50 p.m.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

*Motion carried.*

*Relevant Standing Order suspended.*

**PUBLIC BUSINESS  
MOTION**

**MOTOR VEHICLES AND ROAD  
TRAFFIC**

**(AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS**

*The Assembly resumed debate on the following motion:*

"Be it resolved that in terms of section 98(3) of the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Ordinance, Chapter 280, this National Assembly approve of the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic (Amendment) Regulations, 1966, which were made on the 29th of December, 1966."

**Mr. Speaker:** When we took the Adjournment last evening the hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran had just concluded his speech. He spoke for half an hour according to my notes.

**Mr. Persaud:** I beg to move that the hon. Member be given an extra fifteen minutes.

**Mr. Benn seconded.**

*Question put, and negatived.*

**Mr. Lall rose —**

**Mr. Persaud:** This Paper before the House appears unsuitable

**Mr. Speaker:** I have given the Floor to Mr. Harry Lall.

**Mr. Lall:** Thank you very much, sir. This Motion, which is before the House, discriminates against those people who cannot afford to pay. Let us assume, as you said, and rightly so, that the Government has an obligation to carry out its business. I completely agree with you on that point. But if we were to look back to the early and middle parts of 1966, we would observe that measures were introduced in this House to withdraw taxation from those who can afford to pay. Measures were introduced in this House whereby the Government, in no uncertain terms, opened the gateway for money to flow out of this country. By that I mean that the hon. Minister of Finance revoked the Exchange Control Ordinance. He did not consider then that money would be going out of this country - the same money that could have been used in Guyana to open avenues for employment whereby revenues could have been generated.

Many other measures were withdrawn so as to allow those who can afford to pay to get away with "murder." But today the hon. Minister held up car licences from the public. I also heard my hon. Friend Mr. Chase referring to this fact. I went there today and was told that licences would not be available for the next two or three weeks.

The argument was adduced in this House that this Government took eight months to bring a measure of this nature to be

debated. But it is either incompetence or dishonesty that caused the Minister to bring it two days before the year ends. If the Government were in such need for money, it could have brought this measure to this House before now. We wanted time to go out and consult the public because, judging from this measure here, there is a lot of dishonesty in practice. You have done an injustice to your good office, sir, by allowing this measure to be so put, and if I have insulted your office, I beg in advance to make an apology.

3 p.m.

I have a very high regard for you, Your Honour, but I know that you did this with good grace in order to help the incompetence of the Government. [Mr. Thomas: "Do not add insult to injury."] When one examines this measure one finds that the owner of a motor-cycle with 2 wheels and not exceeding 200 pounds will have to pay \$5 more for a licence; for a motor-cycle with 2 wheels and exceeding 200 pounds he will have to pay \$5 more; for a motor-cycle with 3 wheels he will have to pay \$8 more.

The owner of a motor vehicle other than a motor cycle used solely for private purposes will have to pay \$18 more for a licence, if the vehicle does not exceed 2240 pounds. Of course, it is said that if a man can afford to purchase a car, he can also afford to pay an additional licence fee of \$18. I agree with that. However, a lot of poor people are using hire cars in this country, and it is obvious that this increase will fall on the poor man.

Let us take into consideration the lorries which carry goods. The licence fee has been increased immensely. It means that if a lorry transported goods from Georgetown to Rosignol or Hopetown and the driver charged 25¢ for a crate of potatoes, as a result of this increase in the licence fee, the charge for transportation would be increased to 40¢ a crate. This increase will obviously fall on the poor workers who are now being retrenched. This Government does not care what happens to the poor people.

The fares as well as the freight rates for carrying goods on the trains have also been increased. On whom will this increase be passed? The poor working people cannot afford to pay more. What do we observe from this vicious measure? The sugar companies that are making millions of dollars have been allowed to get away without any increase; in fact, they do not pay anything at all. [Mr. Thomas: "They have been given a bonus."] My hon. Friend says that they have been given a bonus. Those who have the capacity and the ability to pay are not asked to pay more. Why should we not collect revenue from those People? Why are we collecting revenues? To build the roads broken up by the vehicles owned by the sugar companies and others.

The hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran said that the roads were made with certain specifications to carry a certain amount of load by one vehicle. Let us look at these sugar trucks and we will see the damage they are doing to

our roads. According to column 3585 of Volume V of the laws of this country, it is clearly stated that the licence for a goods vehicle for trade purposes has to be paid according to its payload. I understand that what is meant by the term "payload" is the amount of load the vehicle can carry.

What do we see in this country? Just across the street Your Honour will see some vehicles with big iron bars on top, packed very high with drinks and covered with tarpaulins, but the owners will now have to pay a licence fee in accordance with the unladen weight of the vehicles. Is this not injustice?

3.10 p.m.

This Government is bringing measure after measure to take the burden from those who can afford to pay and to put it on those who can ill afford to pay. Is this what we want in Guyana? Are the rich to get richer and the poor poorer? Let us look at the poor farmers who are merely eking out a living in the rural areas: the other day Government withdrew the subsidy on duty-free gasoline thereby putting a heavier burden on the farmers. Today, these same farmers, who are paying a licence duty of \$2.00 a year for tractors, will be asked to pay \$20 a year. Is this just?

The hon. Minister of Finance was allowed to get away with "murder". The terminology of the law has changed. Perhaps, the hon. Member, Mr. Feilden-Singh, changed it for him. Let the hon. Minister tell us about the dividends paid by Bank Breweries.

[MR. LALL]

The Minister of Finance is using his position to get away with discrimination. Let justice not only be done, but let it appear to be done.

Cars for hire are only licensed to take six persons. I am subject to correction, but a notice appears at the back of these cars to the effect that they can only take six persons. But look at the trucks that carry Pepsi-Cola and Banks Beer. Nothing appears about the number of boxes to which they are limited. They can carry as great a load as they like. These Regulations should be amended so that the hundreds of trucks could pay licences according to their payload and not according to unladen weight.

We are in this Assembly to protect the welfare of Guyanese. We have seen a flat rate introduced for trucks that cross by the ferry. We see these trucks, filled to capacity with drinks, crossing by the steamer day after day and weakening the stelling. They pay a special rate to cross. We have also seen that the freight for bicycles, which are used by poor persons, was raised. Is this not discrimination of the worst sort? Can we, as reasonable men, sit down in this Assembly and allow measures of this nature to pass, when they discriminate against persons and allow the rich to become richer and the poor to become poorer?

We look forward to you, sir, to give some protection, or to help the Opposition to give some protection to the inhabitants of Guyana.

Mr. Speaker: Time!

Mr. Persaud: Section 62 of Part VIII of the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Ordinance, Chapter 280, has been framed to achieve certain things, in particular, to control vehicles plying for hire and using the roads of our country.

3.20 p.m.

If this measure is allowed to pass, as printed, a mockery will be made of this particular part of the Ordinance dealing with the issuing of licences for motor vehicles. Later on, I shall draw hon. Members' attention to the particular part of the Ordinance that is affected by this measure.

This Government claims that it is working in the interest of the working man of this country. Bicycles are very popular in Guyana, but recently, a number of people, particularly those who have to travel from country areas outside of Central Georgetown, have been using auto-cycles to go to work. Right now, the licence fee in respect of an auto-cycle is \$7 for one year. This Government has seen it fit to increase the licence fee by \$3 - it will now be \$10 - so one can see that this particular tax will affect the small man at the bottom. The licence fee in respect of a motor cycle will also be increased by \$2.

I was looking at the various increases on the paper. A Morris or Mini Minor is a car used by an ordinary person earning a small salary. At the moment, the licence fee is \$32, but, after the passage of this Amendment to

the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Ordinance, a person who owns a Mini Minor or a Morris Minor and is using it for private purposes and nothing else, will have to pay \$45, an increase of \$13. It is my view that the Government ought to examine the revenue with a view to placing the burden of increases on those who can afford to pay.

The small man is trying not to stick to a bicycle, an auto-cycle or a motor cycle, but to buy a small car like a Mini Minor or a Morris Minor. Instead of giving the working man a chance to better himself, this Government is suppressing his aspirations to go forward. This Government does not want the small man to drive a car. He must either ride a bicycle or pay the increase of \$13 that a man who owns a Chevrolet will pay. The licence fee in respect of a motor vehicle exceeding 4,000 pounds and not exceeding 5,000 pounds is \$120, and it is \$200 in respect of a motor vehicle exceeding 5,000 pounds. There are few cars to which these licence fees will apply. Most of the cars are small cars like the Austin, Morris, Simca and so on.

Then we come to licence fees in respect of hire cars. The same thing applies here. For instance, a Morris Minor only takes five passengers, including the driver, and not six as in the case of an Austin, or a Morris Oxford: at the moment, the licence fee in respect of a Morris Minor for hire is \$47 per annum. This Government has seen it fit to increase it by \$13, carrying it up to \$60. In the case of the popular six-seater car, the licence fee is now \$75 per annum, an increase of \$15.

Let me tell Members of this House what it costs a poor man to operate a hire car. It is no exaggeration that the transport service in this country is very, very poor. The ordinary man often uses hire cars owned by the ordinary man to travel to and from work and even to make social visits because the ordinary hire car owner is able to charge much cheaper than the garages. They have to pay for offices and so on, and once you use a telephone and call Bookers, you have to pay a high sum. The insurance for one of these six-seater cars is \$652 per annum, and the licence fee will now be increased to \$75 per annum. The owner will now have to pay \$727 for insurance and licence. If he had purchased the car under a hire purchase agreement and he had paid one-third or a half of the cost as a down payment, he would have to pay a minimum of about \$140 per month, which would take him to \$1,680 per year.

There is no doubt that a large number of people in this country are using hire cars as a means of livelihood; so cheap transportation is being provided for the small man and, at the same time, the small man is earning his livelihood, his bread and butter. The owner of a hire car will now have to raise \$2,407 to clear off his instalments and his insurance and licence expenses. I am not taking into account expenses for oil, gasolene, servicing, tyres, wear and tear, etc. Can an ordinary man continue to ply his car for hire when he has to face all these heavy commitments from both the insurance companies and the Government?

[MR. PERSAUD]

3.30 p.m.

The Minister of Communications is not here and he has very little knowledge, if any at all, about this Ordinance. He has certain specific functions under the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Ordinance. As a matter of fact, under a particular section of this Ordinance, he is compelled to appoint an Advisory Licence Board. This Board will be able to advise the Minister as to the number of vehicles operating on the East Bank and throughout the country.

The hon. Minister is acting contrary to the Ordinance in a number of matters dealing with licences, and in particular with the issuing of hire car drivers' licences. Under this Ordinance he has the right to decide who is a fit and proper person to drive a hire car, but now he has absolutely no right to challenge the competency of the driver because the driver would have obtained a licence to drive a vehicle after passing a test which is given by the police. A number of people who have applied for hire car licences have not got them and the Minister does absolutely nothing about the matter.

I have been talking about hire cars and private cars. I want to say in one sentence that this Government is pushing poor hire car owners out of business by increasing the cost of their licences. Already people are complaining about poor transportation on the East Bank and on the East Coast. Many civil

servants depend solely on hire cars to bring them to work, but, with the increase in licences, the hire car owners will be forced to increase their fares. Therefore, the burden will fall heavily on the shoulders of the ordinary workers.

I want the Minister of Communications to tell us what is Government's policy in relation to transport generally in this country, because I see here that certain changes have been made with respect to goods vehicles. At the moment, a person who wishes to operate a motor lorry for hire is compelled under the Ordinance to apply to the prescribed authority for a road service licence. The prescribed authority decides whether the person making such application will be permitted to ply for trade in Georgetown.

With this Amendment, section 84 - I think that is the correct section - will fall to pieces because no difference is stipulated for the cost of a licence for a hire truck and the cost of a licence for a private truck. I challenge any Member on that side of the House to show me any difference! With this Amendment a person who owns an ordinary car and wants to move around with his goods - perhaps he might be a "little" tailor - will have to pay an increase of \$30 per annum. But a man who is now operating a motor-truck from Georgetown to Rosignol, for instance, will enjoy a reduction of \$100.

I make that point because I really want to know what is Government's policy with respect to the transport service. The

Minister of Communications was shouting across the Table just now. I want him to be present now because this Amendment is in conflict with what he was saying. Perhaps there is conflict between the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Works and Hydraulics, but it appears to me that there is a conflict of policy between the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Communications.

**Mr. Speaker:** I have been hearing that argument all the time.

**Mr. Persaud:** It is important.

**Mr. Speaker:** I do not want any repetition.

**Mr. Persaud:** I am not repeating myself.

**Mr. Speaker:** Say something new or sit down.

**Mr. Persaud:** I was dealing with trucks. There is no difference between hire trucks and private trucks at the moment.

**Mr. Speaker:** I do not want to hear anything about trucks. I have heard that before. You are repeating what other speakers have said.

**Mr. Persaud:** The Amendment covers various types of vehicles, and the only way I can make my contribution is by --

**Mr. Speaker:** If you repeat the arguments I am going to ask you to sit down.

**Mr. Persaud:** This Amendment --

**Mr. Speaker:** I consider it a waste of time. You are repeating and repeating what has been said before.

**Mr. Persaud:** This Amendment, with all due respect to you, sir, affects the Motor Vehicle and Road Traffic Ordinance generally, and in particular the transport service which is a Government institution. I am making this point with respect to this service. Buses on the East Bank pay --

**Mr. Speaker:** Mr. Luck developed that point yesterday. He developed the point of buses.

**Mr. Persaud:** I want you to listen to the point I am trying to make. I want to say that licences for buses plying in Berbice will cost less than buses on the East Bank, while buses in Georgetown will pay \$120. The point I am trying to make is that where Government has transport service the licences are cheaper, and where there is no Government transport service the licences are more expensive. I want the Government to give us reasons for this.

3.40 p.m.

This is the point I am trying to make. There is no doubt in my mind that the rice industry is suffering at the moment. If I were to compare the rice industry with the operation of funeral parlours, I would say that funeral parlours are making more money than the rice farmers. When I examine this measure, I find that tractors in the rice industry will have to pay an increase of \$18, while a hearse

[MR. PERSAUD]

used by a funeral parlour would pay the same licence that was paid before 1953 - \$20. No increase has been made in the licence fee for a hearse!

The members of the Opposition feel that where Ministers are involved there is no increase in the licence fee, but where they are not involved there is an increase. If you examine the matter carefully you will find that Schedules A and B of the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Regulations have been left out, and there will be no change in the licence of many vehicles. When we look at the bottom of this paper we see that vehicles operating on sugar plantations will pay no increase at all. These people have been enjoying this exemption since the Colonial days. The members of this Government say that this country needs money in order to provide employment for the workers, so I see no reason why these vehicles should be exempted from the payment of licences. The Government should call upon all plantations to pay licence fees for their vehicles.

**Mr. Speaker:** You are repeating that all the time.

**Mr. Persaud:** In Clause 5(e) it is stated that goods vehicles exceeding 11,200 pounds unladen weight will pay the sum of \$400. There is no limitation in this, whereas in other cases there is specific limitation. This provision was made in order to give the sugar companies a chance to send their trucks on the road with any amount of weight. No

one can deny that the bulk-sugar trucks operating on the East Coast are creating serious traffic hazards, but this Government has drafted legislation to protect the sugar companies' interests. These people should be made to pay a little more for licences for all of their motor vehicles.

I have been trying to point out the various conflicts between the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic (Amendment) Regulations, 1966, and the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Ordinance. I should like the hon. Minister of Communications to tell us what is Government's policy with respect to transport. We must be told whether it is Government's intention to retain its transport services in this country. If the licences for motor vehicles competing against Government transport are to be reduced, then we must be told whether it is Government's intention to close down the railways.

**Mr. Speaker:** I am going to invoke the relevant Standing Order. I am going to ask the Clerk to read Standing Order No. 41(1).

*The Clerk of the National Assembly (Mr. Narain) read the following Standing Order:*

"The Speaker or Chairman, after having called the attention of the Assembly, or of the Committee, to the conduct of a Member who persists in irrelevance, or tedious repetition either of his own arguments, or of the arguments used by other



Members in debate, may direct him to discontinue his speech and to resume his seat."

Mr. Speaker: I am going to invoke this Standing Order. Unless you have new matter to contribute to this debate, please take your seat rather than be asked to take it. I am warning you, Mr. Persaud.

Mr. Persaud: I have no intention of being disrespectful to your Ruling or observation, but, with all due respect to you, I have been making new points that have not been made so far in this debate dealing with the Amendments to the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Ordinance.

I want to say, in conclusion, that Government must stop fooling the people in this country and let us know its policies. If the Government has no concrete policies, then the members of the Opposition are prepared to give the Government time to sit down and work out something reasonable before bringing measures before this House. A detailed examination of this measure will show how many important aspects dealing with motor vehicles are left out as well as a number of contradictions to the various sections of the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Ordinance. Finally, the members of the Government appear to be confused over this measure before the House.

Mr. Benn: I rise to speak with some trepidation, because I was not in my seat during the entire debate and I do not know what previous speakers have said. Hon. Members on the other side of

the House have been so quiet that the debate has not been as interesting as it should have been. I want to refer to the Government's treatment of the agricultural section in this country by putting forward these Regulations. Agriculture in this country has suffered very many scourges. A few hours before I came here I was reading Owen Smith's book called *The Deserted Village*, and I cannot help thinking of many villages on the East Coast which have been populated for years.

Some of the villages which the hon. Prime Minister visited over the last week are today deserted. We know that this has been due to the past administrative policy whereby sufficient attention was not given to drainage and irrigation. Right now in this very serious rainy weather - it has been raining very heavily on the coastlands - the water, in spite of the efforts which have been made over the last ten or fifteen years to irrigate and drain the land, has done a lot of damage to crops and properties.

We have been told by the members of this Government, prior to their taking office, that they would do a great deal for agriculture.

3.50 p.m.

If one looks at this document called *Highways to Happiness* one will read a great deal about circle roads. I read it to expose the dishonesty of the hon. Member who now calls himself Minister of Finance. It sets out in great detail to make a lot of promises to agriculture.

[MR. BENN]

In his speech on the Budget of 1964 the hon. Minister in opposition, said - and I am reading from the speech printed, I presume, by the Daily Chronicle, on page 3:

"The Minister fails to understand the simple fact that it is not taxation that makes revenue. It is the ability of people to pay and if people do not have the ability to pay the revenue drops, no matter what the taxes are."

If we apply these principles that the hon. Minister of Finance, then in the Opposition, was advocating we would be surprised at the proposition he is now making, especially with regard to agriculture.

Everyone knows about the promises made by the Minister of Finance when he was in the Opposition. He said that rice farmers would get \$10 more per bag of rice. What has happened over the past years since the Minister has been in office? The rice farmers have received less money for their rice and now, to top it all, the Government is increasing taxation on the rice farmer.

What has happened to rice has appened in other sectors of the agricultural industry. In pig-rearing the problem is very serious. None of the promises made by the hon. Minister of Finance, when in the Opposition, about circle roads and \$10 a day and all these things seem to be

coming to pass. Now that he is sitting in the seat of a Minister he seems to be facing the very serious problem of finding money.

If we examine what the Government has done in relation to agriculture during the year, we note that it promised a great expansion of cane farming, and then subsequently we heard very little about cane farming. Indeed, an Ordinance was passed in what the Government thought was an attempt to put cane farming on its feet. Then we heard a great deal about banana cultivation and the like, but now we hear nothing about bananas. We heard about the Agricultural Loans Bill and the Rice Marketing (Amendment) Bill.

All these things have happened, but what has the Government done in the meanwhile? Nothing, and to top it the Government has come at the end of the year to increase from \$2 to \$20 - ten times the amount - the licences fees.-

"for each motor tractor used solely in, or between, cultivated plantations, lots or farms in connection with the transfer of any agricultural machinery or appliance or produce from one plantation, lot or farm to another."

The Government is, therefore, taking another swipe at the agriculture industry. Having reduced rice prices and removed over the past year, the duty-free concessions given to tractors, the Government is now taking another swipe - which is perhaps not the final swipe - by increasing the licence duty on tractors from \$2 to \$20.

The Government cannot say that over the past year agriculture has had a good time. It cannot admit that. It has made plans, and we have looked and noticed that these plans are not coming to fruition. It has run into a great deal of difficulty on the problem of rice. It is facing the problem of not having sufficient officers to service the various farms that are in the country. Right now, certain areas in the country which used to produce certain types of agricultural products, that previously were imported, are now abandoned.

A day or two ago I referred to the abandonment of plots for the production of cabbage in the Black Bush Polder. For the past year or two the members of the Government have sat and spoken, and have made many declarations about their good intentions toward agriculture, but all that has happened is that agriculture has suffered greatly at the hands of those who now sit on the seats of Government. And, as I said, they are topping it off with this great swipe.

I think that those who made these Regulations must recognize that agriculture needs more assistance than is at present being given. It is inconceivable if the prices of agricultural produce have dropped, for the Government to consider increasing licence duties on the implements used by persons who deal in agriculture, but that is just what has happened, and it is because the Government is so taxed for money that it is trying to skin a flea in order to get hold of some money.

The Government's policy will not help in the acceleration of agricultural production. How can the members of the Government expect us to visualise the use of locally produced agricultural products in place of imported ones when they are not giving any encouragement to local agricultural produce? For instance, the hon. Prime Minister has been saying that next Christmas we will have no apples, cabbages and so on. One would expect that the Government would bring into operation the Agricultural Loans Bill, which it claimed would give some incentive to people engaged in agriculture.

This is not what the Government is doing. It is doing the complete opposite. It is giving disincentives to agriculture. It is increasing duties on agriculture and agricultural production. This is a very bad policy, and I have already warned the Government, when speaking on the Agricultural Loans Bill and when speaking on the Rice Marketing (Amendment) Bill, that it is running agriculture to ruin. That is what we are seeing at this very moment. The country is going to suffer very greatly because those persons who now sit on the seats of Government, with their great incompetence are tinkering - or, as one hon. Member said, are "fingling" - with agriculture.

*Sitting suspended at 4 p.m.*

*4.35 p.m.*

*On resumption --*

Mr. Bena: As I was pointing out, the Government has been tinkering and "fingling", as one

[MR. BENN]

hon. Member said, with the future of the agricultural industry of this country, after making a great deal of promises to the farmers. A few days ago I read in the Guyana Graphic that the hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Burnham) promised the people living on the West Coast of Berbice that the whole of West Coast Berbice would be drained and irrigated in 1967. Now this would be a fantastic feat of engineering skill and ability, and we are looking forward to seeing this accomplishment. Not only has the Prime Minister made promises, but the hon. Minister of Finance (Mr. d'Aguiar) also painted a very rosy picture - "Magic Circle" road development. This appears on page 57 of his book *Highways to Happiness*:

"The fault of the development programme of many countries has often been an attempt to industrialise at the expense of agriculture.

This has often led to a wild rush to the cities and to city plenty amidst rural poverty.

We can learn from others' mistakes.

In a developing country agriculture has three major roles to play. They are:

1) Agriculture must supply the increased food necessary to meet population increases.

2) Agricultural expansion is required to create

capital, to earn foreign exchange, and to generate raw materials for new industries.

3) The development of agriculture provides an important direct stimulus to overall prosperity. No country is prosperous unless its farmers are prosperous."

The policy of the Government, over the past year or two, has brought great ruin to agriculture and the Minister of Finance who had made all these promises cannot go to the farmers and tell them that he has carried out his promise of trying to make them prosperous persons. The hon. Minister said that agricultural expansion must create capital, and in another speech he said that you cannot tax these people if they have no money. During the year the Government reduced the rice prices and, having done that, it is now increasing the taxation.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture (Mr. John) does not admit it, but the truth is that there is not enough planting materials for persons who are cultivating coconuts, citrus and the like. That is why the Government came here a few days ago to ask for some more money. The farmers really cannot produce the things that they are expected to produce. What the Government is doing now is not helping the farmers, in spite of its oft-repeated promises, but it is spiting the farmers by putting on these additional taxes.

4.40 p.m.

If one goes on the East Bank, one sees that the only things that have survived the ravages of this Government are the chicken

farms and the citrus cultivation. But the cabbage cultivations have all gone. I do not think there is any on the East Bank any more. One Minister, I think it was the Minister of Economic Development - I do not know what he is going to be now - asked: "Why are you going to produce, if you do not have the means to sell?" Right now cabbage is being sold at 60¢ or 70¢ a pound. This country can produce cabbage.

What does the Government expect to happen when it carries through all these increases? It sets up a Committee under Mr. Sidney King to investigate the increased cost of living and make recommendations. But while this is done, it is doing things which will send up the cost of living. Everything will go up. Licences for hire cars, buses and lorries will go up. Agricultural machinery will also go up. This is not a sensible policy. It seems to me that the Government thinks the Guyanese people are a group of stupid children.

I hope that the hon. Minister of Finance and the whole Government will reconsider their decision not to increase the cost of licences for tractors which are used in cultivating plots and farms. In another part of the Schedule it is stated that:

"(b) no licence shall be required for any motor vehicle, or trailer, if used only within the bounds of any sugar cane plantation, wood-cutting grant, cattle farm, lot or farm under cultivation cocoa estate, rubber estate, private grant, mining or placer claim;"

Now, this is wrong. It seems to suggest that because these vehicles will not be using the public roads they will have to pay no licence fees. That is a wrong way to look at it because most of the equipment used on sugar estates, cattle farms and so-called private mines also use the facilities which are provided at public expense.

Let the Minister tell us, if an accident occurs on a private farm, a wood-cutting grant, or a rubber or cocoa estate, if the public has to go to any expense in investigating this. If the police have to go to investigate this, and if death results, does a *post mortem* examination have to be performed? Since public funds will have to be expended for the maintenance of this farm, wood-cutting grant, etc., it is wrong not to require licences for these vehicles.

How is it that a rice farmer with a plot, say, in Black Bush Polder will have to pay \$20 a year for his tractor, or a provision farmer at Naamryck will have to pay \$20 for his machine, but the sugar producers will not have to pay for new tractors because, presumably, they do not have to go on the public road? It is quite unfair because they go to the nuclear scheme, and on many occasions they come out on the public road. In many cases the police and Government officials have to go into the estate to investigate accidents as a result of the working of these vehicles, and it is quite wrong for the Government to continue the policy of not making the owners of these vehicles pay.

[MR. BENN]

I wish that the hon. Minister of Finance will review the steep increase on agriculture in this country by the imposition of \$20 a year for a licence. He should also review this decision in the sense that those people who can pay - the sugar plantation owners, the people who own the bauxite industry, and so on - should be made to pay. I hope that the Minister will do something about it rather than passing it in the manner in which it is before the House.

Mr. d'Aguiar (replying): Mr. Speaker, there are some people whose minds are so evil that they cannot - -

Mr. Hubbard: To a point of order, sir.

Mr. Speaker: What is the point of order?

Mr. Hubbard: The point of order is that the front bench Members on this side have not spoken and the Minister is "anticipating." We are being railroaded.

Mr. Speaker: I rule that the Minister is on the Floor.

Mr. d'Aguiar: There are some people whose minds are so evil that they cannot believe that anyone else's mind is not -

[*Interruption by the hon. Member Mr. Hubbard.*]

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Hubbard, if you continue to interrupt I will ask you to leave this Chamber.

Mr. d'Aguiar: I am reminded of the saying and the philosophy: "To the swine all things are swinish." The first speaker, the

hon. - I hesitate to use the word - Mr. Luck said that when a Minister of Government assumes his position, the American system should be followed, a system which he seems to think does not apply in England, that is, if a Minister holds shares in companies he should place them in the hands of trustees. It may be beyond the mind of Mr. Luck to believe that since I assumed the duties of Minister of Finance that is exactly what I did. All shares that I held in local companies were transferred to trustees.

The same speaker made the point that these Regulations would be of great benefit, that they would reduce the amount of licence duties payable by the firms with which I was formerly associated. It, therefore, becomes necessary for me, sir, to state the facts in some little detail in this House. One member of the United Force Party in this House wanted to take up this point so he got the officials of d'Aguiar Bros. Ltd., a company with which I was associated, to prepare full details of the present licence duties that they now pay, and what they will have to pay if these Regulations were passed.

4.50 p.m.

I am going to give these facts, which can be very easily checked and verified, to the House. First, there are 75 vehicles in that Company. Bank Brewries Limited do not use trucks, because everyone knows that d'Aguiar Bros. Limited do the trucking. The licence paid for the various vehicles are as follows:

	Present Rate	New Rate
6 Bantam carriers	\$ 50.00	\$300.00
5 Morris Vans	50.00	200.00
1 Morris Van marked "X" which can go on railway routes	300.00	\$200.00 (This is a reduction)
1 Bedford Pickup	50.00	200.00
1 Bedford Pickup marked "X" which can go on railway routes	120.00	200.00
1 Land Rover	62.50	200.00
24 5-ton lorries which are licensed for Georgetown	120.00	300.00
9 5-ton lorries marked "X" which can go on railway routes	300.00	300.00
.1 Bedford van	50.00	200.00
3 Station Wagons	47,50	200.00
1 Bedford Van marked "X" which can go on railway routes	300.00	300.00
5 Tractor trailers	120.00	300.00
9 Trailers	20.00	25.00
2 Vauxhall cars	32.00	42.00
5 Vauxhall cars	47.50	60.00
1 Chevrolet car	72.50	75.00

The total is \$8,491.00 per annum, but the total the company will have to pay if this Motion is passed is \$16,790.00 - which is nearly double the amount. This is the work of the Minister of Finance who, according to members of the Opposition, has amended the Regulations to help the firm with which he was formerly associated by causing them to increase to almost double the amount of \$8,491.00. These are the official figures, and they can be checked by the Licensing Officers of the Government. This belies the greater part of what was presented to this House by members of the Opposition. They wanted to make this House believe that the

owners of certain goods vehicles were going to receive preferential treatment.:

Now the officers of the Government have presented me with the statement which shows what the anticipated total revenue is going to be in each category and what it is now. At present the revenue collected on goods vehicles is \$197,000. With the new rates it is anticipated that the increase will be \$220,000 - a substantial increase.

The biggest increase has been placed on the type of goods vehicle mainly used by the firm which I have just mentioned, because the increased rate has not

[ R. D'AGUIAR ]

been applied as much to goods vehicles for hire as for private goods vehicles. The reason for this is that a goods vehicle for trade is a vehicle used in the pursuit of legitimate business and profit, and a private goods vehicle for hire is a vehicle used in the pursuit of legitimate profit or legitimate business. It does not seem logical that one should discriminate in favour of the goods vehicle for trade, so that in this case the owner of a goods vehicle for trade pays the same and does not receive preferential treatment in spite of the fact that I have been associated with companies whose main means of transport is goods vehicles for trade and privately owned.

The point was made that there was some sinister idea behind the decision to change the old system of fixing the duty on the payload instead of the unladen weight of the goods vehicle. All kinds of sinister and personal allegations were made regarding this change. What is the position? The Police and the Licensing Officers have requested that it would be easier for the collection of revenue if the duties were payable on the unladen weight of the vehicle, which could be measured by them. How can they measure the payload of a vehicle? They would have to take an imaginary figure, and they pointed out that payload is causing them some difficulty, because the only means of testing the payload was by verifying it according to the advertisements published regarding the maximum payload of a particular type of truck. The manufacturers advertised a particular type of truck

as a 5-ton truck, and it was assumed that that was its payload. It is not a precise means that you can measure; it was merely an assumption that the manufacturers knew the capacity of their trucks. It has been found that some manufacturers produce different estimates for the same type of truck, and some trucks have been unable to carry the payload advertised - some of them carry a lower payload.

This anomaly can best be remedied if you base it on the unladen weight which nobody can dispute. The vehicle can be taken to a scale, weighed and tested, and nobody can argue about the weight. Therefore it was a very reasonable and proper request; it is in conformity with the law, and contrary to what the former Minister, the hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran, has said the system is the one used throughout the world.

5. p.m.

One can hardly find any country where the system of taxing by "payload" is used. Basically the system of paying licence fees on "unladen weight" is used, because tax officers can weigh vehicles and check the weight. They cannot check the "payload"; that is impossible.

The increase in revenue is estimated at \$400,000 to be derived as follows: The increase in goods vehicles licences will produce \$220,000, which is more than half of the total. The argument has been adduced that, because I am interested in goods vehicles, I deliberately reduced



the duty. The members of the Opposition have had time to study these proposals; they have not criticised us for not giving them time. Perhaps they have deliberately not studied them.

The fact of the matter is that a great number of goods vehicles are not operating on the railway routes, that is, on the East and West Coasts. The non-railway routes, the East Bank, West Bank, Corentyne and New Amsterdam, where very low rates of duties are paid - from \$30 for a van operating in Georgetown where the majority of the vehicles are - contain more than ten times the total of all vehicles in the other areas put together. Consequently, when the rates are raised on the non-railway routes the revenue is raised considerably. [Interruption.]

The answer to the hon. Member is: Why do they not read what is before them? Why is the hon. Member's mind so evil that he must impute evil. The next highest raise in duty is on motor cars, including hire cars. That is expected to produce an additional \$125,000. The increase in the licence duty on motor-cycles is estimated to produce only \$15,000. The increase on special service and other vehicles is expected to produce \$40,000. Altogether they make the total of \$400,000 which is estimated as the increase in revenue.

Much was made of the fact that, by and large, the duties on buses have not been changed. The reason is obvious, because, if that had been changed, the argument would have been held against us that we were going to raise

the cost of transportation for the poor man. Contrary to what the members of the Opposition tried to make out, the bus companies do not make lavish fortunes. Unlike the goods vehicles they are limited to the fares they can charge; the bus fares are fixed and cannot be exceeded. It is not desirable that they should be given an opportunity to approach Government to ask for transportation charges to be raised. For this reason, that is, to protect those who cannot afford to use other means of transportation, the licence duty on buses was not increased. I think that is reasonable.

A point was made by the hon. Member, Mr. Benn - I must admit that he was one of the few speakers who spoke in a really parliamentary manner, and such a speaker deserves some attention. I think he was the only Member who did not find evil motives in this measure and impute the motives to a particular individual. He has drawn attention to the increase on the licence duty on tractors from \$2 per annum to \$20 per annum. Now, the owner of a bicycle pays \$2 per annum and the bicycle costs him about \$100. The duty then is 2 per cent of the cost. He pays an import duty on the bicycle of 20 and 40 per cent. Compare him with the owner of a tractor, a man who pays out \$2,000 to buy a tractor. Must he also pay \$2 per annum as licence duty on the tractor? In the first instance, he obtains the tractor free of duty. Must we say that a man who can afford \$2,000 cannot afford to pay more than the owner of a bicycle as licence duty?

[MR. D'AGUIAR]

It seems reasonable that raising the licence duty on a tractor to \$20 is removing an old anomaly, an anomaly which began when there were, perhaps, only two to five tractors in this country. There were three ways of dealing with tractors. First, they were exempt from licence duty. Tractors run freely on estates of any kind - sugar, rice and so on - provided they remain on the estates and are not used outside. I do not see any reason why that provision should not remain. The question is asked: Why do they not pay? Why did not the Opposition make them pay? This has been happening for seven years. It is nothing new that we are introducing; it is the rule that we found and it remains. It is a fair and reasonable rule. If a man is buying a vehicle and is not going to run it outside of his estate, if it is basically for agricultural use, he pays nothing. If he runs it outside, it becomes liable to tax.

In the second case, there is a rate of \$20 if a man is transporting from one plantation to another. In the third case, the full duty is paid if the tractor is to be used freely on the public road. The duty there is at least \$120. The farmer who is confining the use of his tractor to farming and use between estates is well protected from the user of a vehicle on the road for trade and other purposes.

I pointed out that there were twenty-seven different rates and they were reduced to five for the benefit of all concerned. Contrary to what the hon. Member,

Mr. Ram Karran, has said, I know of no other country which differentiates in licence duties between the users of different roads. There are differences in some countries which relate basically to franchises for buses and things like that, but trade vehicles pay one rate of licence duty. In most countries it is normal and proper practice. We are introducing it now.

The members of the Opposition seem in one breath to desire change and in another breath they want to stick to the antiquated colonial past. I think we must not be afraid to modernise and bring about changes. [Interruptions.] No matter how much hon. Members speak about big shots, the fact is that the duty falls hardest on owners of goods vehicles for trade and, according to members of the Opposition, these are the big shots. I now commend this Motion to the Assembly.

*Question put.*

**Mr. Speaker:** The Ayes have it.

**Mr. Persaud:** Division!

5.10 p.m.

**Mr. Speaker:** Do you want a division, Mr. Luck?

**Mr. Luck:** I think my hon. Friend Mr. Persaud has called for a Division.

**Mr. Speaker:** Do you want a Division, Mr. Persaud?

**Mr. Persaud:** Yes.

Assembly divided: Ayes 24,  
Noes 18, as follows:

Ayes	Noes
Mr. Wharton	Mr. Saffee
Rev. Trotman	Dr. Ramjohn
Mr. Singh	Mr. Persaud
Mr. Sancho	Mr. Linde
Mr. Field-Ridley	Mr. Ally
Mr. Carrington	Mr. Khan
Mr. Budhoo	Mr. Lall
Mr. Blair	Mr. Luck
Mr. Too-Chung	Mr. Hamid
Mr. Joaquin	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Duncan	Dr. Ramsahoye
Mr. Clarke	Mr. Nunes
Mr. Bowman	Dr. Jacob
Mr. deGroot	Mr. Hubbard
Mr. Merriman	Mr. Ram Karran
Mr. Kasim	Mr. Benn
Mr. Jordon	Mr. Chase
Mr. John	Dr. Jagan - 18
Mrs. Gaskin	
Mr. Correia	
Mr. Cheeks	
Mr. Bissember	
Mr. d'Aguiar	
Dr. Reid - 24.	

*Motion carried.*

#### APPROVAL OF

#### FINANCIAL PAPER NO. 6 OF 1966

"Be it resolved that the Committee of Supply approve of the proposal set out in Financial Paper No. 6 of 1966 - Schedule of Additional Provision on the Current and Capital Estimates for the period ending December, 1966, totalling \$1,516,400." [The Minister of Finance.]

Dr. Ramsahoye: I wish to rise on a point of order. My

point is that the hon. Minister stated, in this House, that the sum of --

Mr. Speaker: Are you rising on a point of order?

Dr. Ramsahoye: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: On what?

Dr. Ramsahoye: On this Motion. I wish to say that this Paper cannot be considered in its present form because it does not distinguish between what monies have been already spent and what monies are now to be spent. I refer to Article 111(3) of the Constitution which states:

" (3) If in respect of any financial year it is found -

(a) that the amount appropriated by the Appropriation Act for any purpose is insufficient or that a need has arisen for expenditure for a purpose for which no amount has been appropriated by that Act; or

(b) that any moneys have been expended for any purpose in excess of the amount appropriated for that purpose by the Appropriation Act or for a purpose for which no amount has been appropriated by that Act, a supplementary estimate or, as the case may be, a statement of excess showing the sums required or spent shall be laid before the Assembly."

I understand this to mean that if the money has already been spent in excess, the Minister

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should come with a statement of excess. If the Minister sees that the amount he has voted is inadequate, he can come for a supplementary provision, but so long as he has spent over the amount voted, he must lay a statement of excess. In this case, the hon. Minister has said to us that some of the money has been spent and some has been committed. The hon. Minister should tell us what monies have been spent for those will go in a statement of excess. The monies that are committed but not spent will go on a supplementary estimate because that part has not yet been spent.

The Minister must divide this money. In so far as monies have been expended, the Minister should lay a statement of excess in which he shows that the expenditure has exceeded the voted provision by such amount. In so far as the Minister needs money to pay outstanding accounts then he requires to produce to this House a supplementary estimate which is different from a statement of excess. A statement of excess is where he has already exceeded the expenditure. A supplementary estimate is where he wishes authority to spend in the future.

The hon. Minister has told us that some of this money has been illegally spent or committed. In so far as it is illegally spent, he should have a statement of excess before the House. In so far as it is committed - "committed" means that it is committed but not yet paid and he wishes to pay - he must, therefore, put that in the form of a supplementary estimate and the

two Papers can then be laid in this House in pursuance of Article 112(2) which states:

" (2) Where a supplementary estimate or statement of excess is laid before the National Assembly under paragraph (3) of the preceding article or paragraph (2) of the next following article and is approved by the Assembly by resolution, that resolution shall be authority for the issue of the sums in question from the Consolidated Fund, but the aggregate sums the issue of which is so approved shall be included, under appropriate heads, in a supplementary Appropriation Bill."

I say that the Minister cannot, in one Paper, provide for amounts spent in excess as well as for amounts not yet paid. In so far as the amounts are not yet paid, he needs a supplementary estimate. In so far as the amounts have been paid beyond the voted provision, he needs a statement of excess. Having regard to his own statement, he cannot move a Motion for the approval of a Schedule of Additional Provision. That would be quite wrong and that would be beyond the powers which are conceded in the Constitution. The Minister has to lay a statement of excess, and he has to lay a supplementary estimate.

**Mr. Speaker:** Can this be regarded as a supplementary estimate?

**Dr. Ramsahoye:** Not having regard to his statement that some is already spent. In so far as

**Mr. Ram Karran:** He has already expressed fear for those who support the United Force, and a large number of them have already either resigned or have been demoted. The Government should give members of the Opposition an opportunity to discuss measures when they come before this House. We should have had a debate on Government's policy in relation to the change of subjects under the portfolios of Ministers and the question of putting Establishment under the control of the hon. Prime Minister. [An hon. Member (Government): "Is that relevant?"] It is relevant, because the people at Atkinson Field, who went on strike for their rights, should not be terrified or threatened by members of the Government, particularly the hon. Prime Minister.

I wish at this stage, before I take my seat, to sympathize with the hon. Minister of Finance in the difficulty which he faces in this matter. I hope that the decision, which seems to have been made, that consultative democracy be put into effect will be discussed not only between the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Minister of Finance, but that this House will have an opportunity of discussing everything before these changes take place - changes which are different from what obtain in any other part of the world. Even in the United Kingdom, Establishment comes under the control of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and I cannot see why this change should be made in this country without reference to this House, or in consultation with the hon. Minister of Finance.

**The Chairman:** Page 2.

**Mr. Luck:** What appears on this page is the biggest surprise I have had in this House. Only two days ago the hon. Minister of Finance intimated to this House that the sum of \$1.5 million had either been unlawfully spent, or had been unlawfully committed to be spent and that he Peter Stanislaus d'Aguiar would not permit himself to be so used as to bring a Schedule of Additional Provision to cover the \$1.5 million, because it was his view that that was not a right and proper thing to do. Two days after we see the same gentleman, without making a single word of apology, or excuse, or explanation, presenting a Financial Paper to this House for \$1.5 million!

I am sure that I am right in assuming that this sum of \$1.5 million is — [Interruption.] I must crave the protection of the Chair in order to develop a point of very great importance.

**The Chairman:** Order.

**Mr. Luck:** I was saying that one must assume that this request for \$1.5 million is in connection with the sum of money unlawfully spent or unlawfully committed to be spent. The Constitution of this country provides that there should be control over Government spending and that this control should be exercised by this House. The way this control is exercised is explained in the Budget Debate, and if more money is spent than is budgeted for, a statement of excess should be submitted to the House. If a

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particular vote is exhausted, the Government must come to this House by way of a statement of excess or a request for additional provisions.

All Members of this House must be disturbed when a responsible Minister of Finance - we must assume that he is responsible - informs this House in a prepared statement that there is the greatest doubt in relation to the spending of \$1.5 million, and two days later he returns to the House and asks us to vote the \$1.5 million which was illegally or unlawfully spent. The Director of Audit had been called into the matter. No mention was made of the Crime Chief, but, implicit in the calling in of the Director of Audit, we see all sorts of implications. Clearly the statement of the hon. Minister of Finance two days ago infers that there are serious irregularities, which demand clarification and a public inquiry so that we may all know how the money was spent. For this reason alone, I would vote against this appropriation.

I cannot help thinking that either the hon. Minister of Finance made a correct statement two days ago, by which he still stands, in which case it is inconceivable to ask us to vote this \$1.5 million, or he made an incorrect or irresponsible statement. Only two conclusions are possible. If his statement two days ago represents the true state of affairs, then clearly this Motion should not be brought before this House today. If, unfortunately, he made an irresponsible statement, then I will

say that he should resign. There are other considerations in this matter.

I should like to give the hon. Minister of Finance great credit. He has tried to give us proper details in this matter, and he should be congratulated for doing so. In the Current Estimates for 1966 we have under this Head a sum of \$2,225,000 for the East Coast roads, and we also have under this Head for the whole Development Programme for 1966 a total expenditure on roads in the sum of \$4.5 million. The total amount to be spent on the East Coast road between 1966 and 1970 is \$4.5 million. The money to be spent for the year 1966 was \$2,225,000.

Once more, particularly in view of the presence of the Prime Minister, I must crave the indulgence of the Chair so that I may develop my point. The total amount allocated for this year was \$2,225,000, but how much has been spent lawfully or unlawfully on this road? The sum of \$4,725,000. During the debate on the Estimates, both Capital and Current, we were told that the Development Programme was the result of serious work, but in one year \$4.7 million has been spent on a project that should cost \$4.5 million from 1966 to 1970.

It is perhaps on account of this fact and because of the talk of the irregularities connected with this project that the mind of the hon. Minister of Finance

it is already spent, he has to lay a statement of excess. In so far as he has not yet spent but he has committed, he needs a supplementary estimate. The Motion is only asking --

Mr Speaker: Your submission is that he has not had both.

Dr. Ransahoye: He has lumped all in one and that is unconstitutional. The terms of the Motion are:

"That the Committee of Supply approve of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 6 of 1966 - Schedule of Additional Provision on the Current and Capital Estimates for the period ending December, 1966, totalling \$1,516,400."

There should be two Motions: One for a statement of excess, and one for supplementary provision.

Mr. d'Aguier: I should like to reply. The hon. Member Dr. Ransahoye should be well aware that, according to the Financial Regulations and to the terms of the Constitution, "spent" means spent or committed. That is the rule in Government. The vote is exceeded not only when you spend the money, for instance, on wages, but from the moment you contract it out to purchase goods on credit. The whole of this sum of \$1½ million is spent in accordance with the terms of *The Constitution of Guyana*. There can only be one statement of excess; it is an excess of money spent and it means "committed and/or spent."

5.20 p.m.

Mr Speaker: Objection overruled. Proceed please.

Assembly in Committee of Supply.

Mr. d'Aguier: In terms of Article 80 (2) of the Constitution, I beg to lay on the Table the Cabinet's signification of approval that this Motion be proceeded with. I beg to move the Motion:

"Be it resolved that the Committee of Supply approve of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 6 of 1966 - Schedule of Additional Provision on the Current and Capital Estimates for the period ending December, 1966, totalling \$1,516,400."

#### MINISTRY OF TRADE, SHIPPING

#### AND CIVIL AVIATION

#### CIVIL AVIATION -

#### Personnel Emoluments

Mr. Sam Kerran: One does not know whether the hon. Minister is going to invite us tomorrow, Old Year's Day, to pass another Estimate! On page one of this Financial Paper, we are asked to provide the sum of \$16,400 for the payment of overtime allowances to the personnel of the Aerodrome Fire Service for the period 1st March, 1963 to 31st December, 1963. Since 1963

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honourable but callous men, who called out the people on strike in 1962, allegedly because of heavy taxation, who called out innocent people in 1963 and 1964 in the words of my hon. Friend, Mr. Peter d'Aguiar, "to fight communism" have withheld from these firemen the very small sum of \$16,400, and allowed them to go on strike. [Mr. Jordan: "Why did you not pay them?"] We will deal with the question of payment later on.

Some firemen had been working even before 1957 when the hon. Minister of Trade, Shipping and Civil Aviation, whose head is now rolled, was in charge of Atkinson Field in the days of the Interim Government. He had these firemen working not only 16 hours a day but they had to perform additional duties as telephone operators, and so on. Naturally, this was corrected by a sympathetic working-class Government. But those hard-hearted gentlemen on that side of the House who said at the street corners that they were the saviours of the working class, have withheld this money from the men. But that is not all. I should like Your Honour to read in the *Hansard* what these hon. Gentlemen were saying about the workers, and to consider their present attitude with respect to the firemen.

The hon. Prime Minister, who is absent from his seat, had the temerity, as he had in the case of Cendrecourt, to threaten workers who had been carrying out trade union principles. It was not a question of politics. He has been using threats against a

single individual because of his association with the P.P.P., and these are the things that we have been expressing fears about all these months. We cannot be assured that this Government, which is allegedly based on consultative democracy, is going to carry out the principles based on a democratic society.

The hon. Minister of Finance has expressed very grave concern about changes in the Ministry. I refer to what has been mentioned in the Press. I would appeal to you, sir, for your assistance. I am speaking on Head 32 for which the additional provision now sought is \$16,400. This is from Personal Emoluments, and it is relevant to say that the Minister who is in charge of finance is now afraid - he has so expressed himself - that that section is going to be transferred from his Ministry to that of the Prime Minister, the chief puppet, the chief terrorist in this country. His name heads the list. You know what 'list' I am referring to, sir.

The hon. Prime Minister has himself referred to the speech in relation to the Ministry of Economic Development. What is happening in this country at the moment is that people who seem to have leanings or are in sympathy with the U.F., or the P.P.P., or who seem to express no great admiration for the P.N.C., are being ditched. My hon. Friend, Mr. Peter d'Aguiar, cannot deny that he has himself expressed fear.

5.30 p.m.

The Chairman: Where is that leading us?



to state whether this \$1.5 million, which is either spent or committed, would be sufficient to complete the whole East Coast road now? Would he get up and make that statement this afternoon, so that we can have a clear position as to whether we are going?

It seems to me that the very request for this money, the way in which it is being presented as excess, is clearly evidence of lack of proper financial control by the Minister of Finance, and I blame the Ministry of Finance for what is taking place here today. I blame the Ministry of Finance for failing to exercise proper budgetary, administrative and financial control over the Ministry of Works and Hydraulics. It is impudence for the Minister to tell us that he rejected this request by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Works and Hydraulics because he felt that the expenditure was illegal or the commitment of the expenditure was illegal, and then, in the same breath, just shortly after, to be asking us, without even making a statement as to what is the true position, to pass this provision.

The sum of \$1½ million is requested, and only 3½ lines of explanation are given in the legend. It does not add anything to the fact that it is stated at the top of the page that this is a statement of excess and additional covering provision required. The 3½ lines of explanation in the legend do not give us any additional information, and I wanted to have taken the point that the way in which this Paper on excess was presented did not conform with the requirements of

a Paper dealing with excesses, but I know that, in view of the urgency which the Government faces in getting this over this afternoon, perhaps my hon. Friends on the opposite side might have thought that this might have been another delaying and stalling tactic, but this is not so.

If we are being asked to approve of \$1½ million, surely, we are entitled to details. On what is this money being spent? Is it on materials, sand? Is it in respect of bitumen? Is it with regard to electrical supplies? Is it with regard to substance? Where is this money going? Is it to fulfil certain contracts which were entered into? Earlier this year I told the Minister that there was a lot of corruption taking place in the Ministry of Works and Hydraulics, that people were passing money to get contracts for sand and other contracts in the department. Those accusations still remain.

6.00 p.m.

This is a serious matter because the extra million which was passed was passed to cover work which we know has already been done. What is this \$1.5 million now being requested for?

I understand that the Director of Audit was called in, and he made a Report which was given to the Minister. It would be very revealing to this House to know what the Director of Audit has had to say. Has the Director of Audit's Report raised some implications from which it became necessary to have criminal investigations in this matter, or

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has it revealed that some officials of the Ministry of Works and Hydraulics have exceeded their authority and have been spending money without the necessary approval from that Ministry or from the Ministry of Finance? Where does the Director of Audit's Report lay the blame? This is very important. We are entitled to hear from the Minister what the Director of Audit had to say in his Report. Even if he does not have time to lay it, because this is being done in a rush, we are entitled to be treated with the courtesy of being informed what the Director of Audit has had to say in respect of this expenditure.

I have said, and I repeat, that this House is being treated with contempt. It is contemptuous for the Government to ask this House to approve of another \$1½ million without attempting in any way to tell us what this money is in respect of. In any case the Minister has attempted to retract from a statement which he made a few days ago, and that is very unsatisfactory. If this is money already spent, could he not have read to us at the beginning of the debate the various Heads of expenditure which this sum covers? If this House is to be treated with some sense of responsibility, we are entitled to know, since it is money already spent, where it has been spent. If it is illegally spent, the Minister should also inform us how the illegality arose. He ought to have told us whether it was spent without authority or whether the Minister himself is involved.

It is a matter of some concern that the Minister of Works and Hydraulics just sits down in his seat and does not even offer an explanation in this matter. Perhaps it is, as my hon. Friend at this end of the Table shouted, that if he were to open his mouth he might well be implicated. If his hands are clean, I invite him to get up and let us know what this is all about. May I say that if he continues to keep his seat and say nothing, I am one who will be leaving here this afternoon firm in my view that this Minister is in some way implicated in the excesses which we have been asked to approve. I can repeat this any time. [Mr. Kasim: "Well, go out and say it."]

Let us not get into circles about slander. If the Minister wants to make a clean breast of it, let him get up here and now and tell us that he is in no way concerned with these excesses because we want to get at the bottom of this matter. This is an important Paper. It is the first Paper of this kind that has been brought to this House. All the other Papers are requests to meet expenditure. This is a statement of excess under Article 112 of our Constitution; therefore it is a matter which should be treated very, very seriously indeed, and I hope that the Minister concerned will feel some sense of obligation, some sense of duty to this House and to the public, and get up and make his position clear in this matter.

Now, let me finish with the Minister of Works and Hydraulics because he is not going to get up

bubbled over at the thought of the fraud involved and two days ago he decided to be honest and said, "Look here, I have been doing this thing too long". That is a paraphrase of what he said. His words were to this effect, "I have been Minister of Finance and I have been lumping excessive expenditure, unlawful expenditure with additional provisions, but today I shall stand up like a man and I shall not do so. I positively refuse to request this \$1.5 million". He was right, and he had the courage of his convictions.

I do not question the difficulties involved in establishing peace and prosperity in this country. I would hope that there are other countries where it is easier to build a new society based on justice, where prosperity will extend to all. Unfortunately, this country faces more difficulties than I have ever encountered, but surely we will be on the wrong road if we remove from the principle of Government spending any idea of proper financial control. This is a fundamental matter. The lack of proper financial control in this country, as far as I know, has been due more to incompetence than to malevolence.

This is a grave matter. Having budgeted \$4.5 million for five years, we cannot afford to spend \$4.7 million in a single year. If we allow this, it is clear that the financial position of this country will deteriorate very rapidly. In effect, what we are debating here is whether this country will observe its financial regulations - regulations designed to prevent improvidence

as well as rascality. I want to believe that both improvidence and rascality are involved in this matter before us. How can anyone, in all conscience, spend \$4.7 when there is an allocation of \$2.2 million?

I shall vote against this, and I invite thinking members of the Government to inquire, Whither are we drifting? Surely a matter of spending \$4.7 million instead of \$2.2 million must have been canvassed somewhere. It is common knowledge that no serious discussion takes place at Cabinet meetings. The Prime Minister faces his opposite number and says, "These are my decisions." [Laughter.] We also know that nothing is discussed at meetings of the majority party. At some place or other these matters must be discussed, and I deplore the inanities of senior members of the Cabinet during debate on such a serious matter.

In a poor country an amount of \$2.5 million is missing for that is what it is, and I think it amounts to over 10 per cent of our Development Programme for the year 1966. This money is missing and presumed lost and those gentlemen laugh.

In conclusion, I would call on the hon. Minister of Finance to give us a fuller explanation of the statement made in this Assembly two days ago in relation to this request. Is this sum of \$1.5 million the same amount which he said, two days ago, was unlawfully and illegally spent and which the Director of Audit, at his request, investigated? He recommended disciplinary proceedings against the Permanent

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Secretary. If this is the same matter, I would ask him to assert his manhood, which is grossly in question, in this matter and resign.

5. 50 p. m.

**Mr. Chase:** It seems that the Government is making every effort to reduce this Parliament to an utter farce. I am particularly disturbed at the way in which this Paper has been presented to us this afternoon. Two days ago we heard a very illuminating statement from the Minister of Finance in which he revealed that this sum of \$1.5 million, which we are being asked to pass now, was either illegally spent or illegally committed.

As it is sometimes difficult to get one's vote recorded in this House, I wish to make it abundantly clear that I am totally against the passage of this provision, and, if a vote were allowed, my vote would be recorded against it. I cannot be a party to an illegality. This is what, in effect, we in this House are being asked to do this afternoon.

I am also concerned at the contempt with which the Ministers of the Government are treating this House. The Minister of Finance (Mr. d'Aguiar) makes an important statement in this House and then comes today, two days after, presents this Paper and takes his seat. The Minister of Works and Hydraulics (Mr. Kasim), who is in the House, has not even got up to offer one word of

explanation as to why this provision is now necessary.

The figures are alarming. We were asked to vote, originally, \$2,225,000 for the East Coast road and this provision was voted. Later, less than five months ago - even shorter than that - we were asked to make an additional provision of \$1 million. That was given. I recall that when the additional \$1 million was requested for the East Coast road, the Minister of Works and Hydraulics was asked whether this extra \$1 million would have been sufficient to complete the operations on the East Coast road for this year, and his answer was that it would have been sufficient. [Mr. Kasim: "No, I did not say so."] [Mr. Merriman: "That is a dishonest statement."] Now he has come back in a very short space of time and a further \$1½ million is being requested in respect of the same road. So what is the position?

The position is that, originally, we voted \$2,225,000, and we are now being asked to vote an additional provision of \$2,500,000. In other words, in the course of the year, we are voting as supplementary and as excess more than we voted on the original Estimates which were presented to us. Where is this money? We were told that the Ministry was accelerating work on the road in order that the road might be completed this year. The road has not been completed and today is the 30th December. There are still several miles of road to be completed and \$4.7 million will have already been spent. Would the Minister care

and answer. Let me turn to the Minister of Finance. It is the duty of the Minister of Finance to raise money in order to meet expenses, but he must be careful to see that such money that he is able to realise is not wantonly spent by the various Ministries of the Government. It seems to me that the Minister of Finance has lost control somewhere along the line. Money which taxpayers have to pay by the sweat of their brows should not be wasted by various Ministries or by certain Ministries. When he intones that there is corruption and that some of this money is being wastefully expended, then it makes the position all the more serious.

There are lots of things which have to be done in this country if the living standards of the people are to be raised, and if we are to make progress in this country. May I, again, say that we expect greater financial and administrative control by the Minister of Finance, and if he finds that his ministerial colleagues are using devious means to get around such control, then he has a duty to tender his resignation — [Interruption.]

6.10 p.m.

The hon. Minister of Finance also has a very grave duty with regard to this matter. That he made a statement in this House is a matter for which he ought to be congratulated. He may very well have brought the provision forward as a Schedule for Additional Expenditure without disclosing the full implications of the matter to the House. But having congratulated him on that, I must say that it does not mean the end

of the statement which he made here two days ago. If he is man enough, he must stick, at least, to the spirit of his statement. He has not done so today. We have had to use some very coarse language this afternoon with regard to the hon. Minister of Finance's attitude in this matter.

The hon. Minister of Finance ought to have kept to the spirit of the statement which he made in this House. He spoke about taking disciplinary action against certain officers. What officers, what persons have been disciplined in respect of this matter? This House should be informed of what disciplinary action has been taken, or what disciplinary action is likely to be taken against the parties concerned. We expect to hear about this. He said that he went before the Cabinet with regard to the statement of excess. But the matter does not end there; the spirit of his statement does not end there. Clearly, arising from that was the suggestion that money had been illegally spent, or unlawfully committed. We ought to have been told whether the Government has already investigated the matter, and whether it is true or not.

Is the hon. Minister of Finance prepared to recoil and say that he made an error when he made the statement in this House, and that the money was neither illegally spent nor illegally committed? If he has made an error, he must get up and say so. He cannot make a serious, damaging and profound statement like that and leave it in the air. Having made the statement, he has

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a duty to perform in this House. He must tell us whether they have since made an investigation and it has turned out that he was in error when he suggested that certain officers had illegally spent or illegally committed this amount. If the money was not illegally spent or illegally committed and it was just an ordinary administrative arrangement which caused these excesses to be before this House for approval, he must also tell us. If, on the other hand, he still affirms the statement which he made two days ago that the money was either illegally spent or illegally committed, then he must take the House further into his confidence and let the members know more about this illegality. He cannot ask us to be party to the illegality and not inform us of the true facts as to how these excesses arose.

I have posed certain questions which I expect the hon. Minister of Works and Hydraulics will answer. As I spoke, he reclined even further back in his chair as an indication that he is not going to answer.

I have also posed certain questions which I expect the hon. Minister of Finance to answer and be frank with this House. I wish to know the true position as to whether an investigation has been made into the matter, and whether there is now no illegality with regard to the expenditure of this large sum of money.

The road can be completed in a short space of time, and we are prepared to give the hon. Minister any provision which he would

require to accelerate this road. There are parts of the road on the East Coast which need to be done, because the vehicles which the sugar companies are using between Enmore and Georgetown are making havoc of the road. This road was not constructed for heavy vehicles. Unfortunately, the licences have been reduced by the hon. Minister of Finance. We would not, in normal circumstances, begrudge the Minister the money he requires, but, in view of the manner in which these excesses have been brought to the House and having regard to the very serious statement which the hon. Minister of Finance himself made on this matter, we must reluctantly record our votes against it for the reasons given.

We are against the manner in which this matter was brought to this House; the lack of forthrightness, the lack of explanation, the lack of information related to this matter and so on. We have to record our votes against the Motion, but we are not in any way against the road being completed in the shortest possible time and in the best possible manner. What we are totally against is wasteful expenditure, corruption, bribery, mismanagement, administrative incompetence, and juggling which appear to be quite apparent from all that has been said by the hon. Minister of Finance in relation to this matter.

The Parliamentary Secretary, Prime Minister's Office (Mr. de-Groot): I beg to move that the Question be now put; it is in keeping with the Standing Orders.

The Chairman: Proceed.

**Dr. Jacob:** Ever since this Government came to office, we have been disturbed by its activities. There are charges of being corrupt, indulging in wasteful expenditure, improper public accounting, and various other sins which Governments of a certain type commit. A few days ago - we were not surprised - the hon. Minister of Finance confirmed these activities when he made a grave disclosure:

**The Chairman:** That statement has been made here about six times. What is the use of repeating it? It is mere repetition.

**Dr. Jacob:** If you do not wish me to speak, I shall sit down.

**The Chairman:** You can speak, but you must not repeat what has been said already.

**Dr. Jacob:** A large amount of money is involved. \$1½ million of the taxpayers' money has been squandered, but the members on that side are the enemies of the people and they do not care.

6.20 p.m.

**The Chairman:** I have to care that the debate is carried on in a proper manner.

**Dr. Jacob:** There are only a few lines of explanation in this paper. The people of this country want more explanation, and I shall stand up here and demand this explanation.

**The Chairman:** You have a right to stand up and demand an

explanation but you have no right to repeat what other speakers have said. If you repeat at all I am going to use the Standing Orders against you.

**Dr. Jacob:** I understand that very well. The Minister of Finance has certain duties and powers under the law. I shall read them. Under the Financial Administration and Audit Ordinance the Minister has power to issue instructions and make regulations respecting the management and administration of the finances of the country. He also has the power to make regulations and issue instructions with respect to the keeping of the financial records of the Government. If this Minister had been doing his duty he would have discovered, before the amount of unlawful expenditure reached the enormous total of \$1½ million, that there was grave irregularity going on.

The Minister does not do his duty. We never had anything like this during the time when the P.P.P. Government ran this country. I admit that excesses can take place, but look at the magnitude of this excess - \$1½ million. We are concerned about this, and we would like to know exactly how much of this has actually been paid out of the Contingencies Fund.

**The Chairman:** Mr. Chase made all those points.

**Dr. Jacob:** The Minister of Finance has informed us that the Director of Audit made a report to him. Section 24 of the Financial Administration and Audit Ordinance provides —

**Mr. de Groot:** I beg to move that the Question be now put.

**The Chairman:** You cannot move the Motion when a Member is on the Floor.

**Dr. Jacob:** Section 24 of the Financial Administration and Audit Ordinance provides that the Director of Audit shall immediately inform the Minister of Finance if at any time he discovers improper expenditure of public monies. [Interruptions.] Now that the Director of Audit has reported this matter to the Minister of Finance, we would like to know what action the Minister of Finance proposes to take on these grave charges.

**The Chairman:** When Mr. Chase ended his speech he called upon the Minister to act.

**Dr. Jacob:** What action does he propose to take? Has he made a report to the Criminal Investigation Department?

**The Chairman:** Dr. Jacob, you have run out of matter. [Laughter.] Please take your seat, as you have run completely out of matter.

**Mr. de Groot:** I should like to direct your attention, sir, to Standing Order 38 (1) which states:

"After a question has been proposed any Member may at any time during the course of debate rise in his place and claim to move 'That the question be now put.'"

In view of the repetition, I beg to move that the Question be now put. [Interruptions.]

**Mr. Ram Karran rose**

**The Chairman:** I have not ruled. You are going to force me to rule now. The Question is: That the question be now put.

Agreed to. [Interruptions.]

**The Chairman:** Mr. Ram Karran if you misbehave I shall ask the Leader of the House to move a Motion against you and name you. [Mr. Ram Karran bowed and left the Chamber.]

**Dr. Jagun:** The Government has been dealing with this question in a very irregular manner.

**The Chairman:** I have ruled.

**Dr. Jagun:** We will take our leave of this Assembly because this is becoming a farce. The Government is making it a farce and the Speaker also.

[Members of the Opposition in the P.P.P. Party bowed to the Speaker and left the Chamber.]

6.30 p.m.

Assembly resumed.

**Mr. d'Aguiar:** I beg to report that the Committee of Supply has come to a Resolution, and I now move that this Assembly do agree with the Committee in its Resolution.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

#### NEW YEAR CHEERINGS

**The Prime Minister (Mr. Burnham):** Before the House rises since this is the last occasion on which we will be meeting before the New Year, 1967, may I on behalf of the members of t



Government and all those on this side of the House, take the opportunity of extending to you our very best wishes for a successful and equally useful 1967 as your 1966 has been. In extending those wishes, I desire that you communicate similar wishes to your very charming lady and the rest of your family. It has been a pleasure working under you during 1966 and I have no doubt that that pleasure will be equally great when I come with my colleagues to work under you during the year 1967.

It is, indeed, at this stage, that good wishes should be extended through this medium to the members of your staff, the Clerk and the Assistant Clerk, the stenographers and our good friend the messenger who has been very helpful - all of them have been very helpful. They have sometimes worked under the most distressing conditions but have performed very well. I am quite sure that they deserve all the very best for 1967. I have left for the very last the most decorative of your staff, the Sergeant-at-Arms, who has served us well and long and I hope that he will get all that he wants and all that he deserves during 1967.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister, I must thank you for your kind wishes and I only wish that on the next occasion when we exchange New Year Greetings I will extend them to Mrs. Burnham as well.

We have had a very eventful year and those who comprise this House have reason to be justly proud. This year we saw the House entertain a reigning monarch; in May we had our first

independent Parliament; we said farewell to our dear friend Sir Richard Luyt; and then we welcomed a Guyanese Governor-General. I think we had a very fine year and even though certain Members of this House have not yet absorbed the pros and cons of parliamentary life, nevertheless, I think that we can justly appraise ourselves for what has been done.

It may be necessary to make a few changes which we might see taking place in the coming year for instance, a change in our seating arrangement and more space to accommodate strangers. On the whole, I want to thank Members for their co-operation and the members of the staff for their loyalty, devotion and sacrifice. We have had a change: Mr. Frank Narain has become Clerk of the National Assembly. I want to say here that he has proved himself a very capable and efficient Clerk. I want to wish the members of the Press more accurate reporting in 1967. I hope that they avoid those misleading and scoopy headlines, particularly in reference to debates and matters taking place in this House. I also want to express New Year wishes to the staff of Radio Demerara. To our Official Reporters who work through the day and night, and to all who have contributed to the well-being of this National Assembly, I say a happy New Year.

#### ADJOURNMENT

Resolved. "That this Assembly do now adjourn to a date to be fixed." (Mr. Bissenber.)

Adjourned accordingly at  
6.36 p.m.