

**THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

OFFICIAL REPORT

[VOLUME 3]

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

43rd Sitting

2.00 p.m.

Wednesday, 15th October, 1969

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair

Present

His Honour the Deputy Speaker, Mr. O.E. Clarke

Members of the Government

Ministers (9)

The Honourable L.F.S. Burnham, Q.C.,
Prime Minister

Dr. the Honourable P. A. Reid,
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance

The Honourable M. Kasim,
Minister of Communications

The Honourable H.D. Hoyte,
Minister of Home Affairs

The Honourable C. M. L. John,
Minister of Local Government

Mrs. the Honourable S. M. Patterson,
Minister of Education

The Honourable B. Ramsaroop,
Minister of Housing and Reconstruction

The Honourable M. W. Carter,
Minister of Information

Dr. the Honourable S. E. Talbot,
Minister of Health

Parliamentary Secretaries (4)

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

Mr. W. Haynes,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Works and Hydraulics

Mr. A. Salim,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources

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

Other Members (12)

Mr. J. N. Aaron
Miss M. M. Ackman
Mr. K. Bancroft
Mr. E. F. Correia
Mr. M. Corrica

Mr. E. H. A, Fowler
Mrs. P. A. Limerick
Mr. S. M. Saffee
Mr. D. A. Singh
Mr. R. C. Van Sluytman
Mr. C. E. Wrights
Mr. M. Zaheeruddeen, J.P.

Members of the Opposition (17)

Dr. C. B. Jagan, Leader of the Opposition
Mr. Ram Karran
Mr. R. Chandisingh
Dr. F. H. W. Ramsahoye
Mr. B. M. G. Wilson
Mr. G. H. Lall
Mr. M. Y. Ally
Mr. R. D. Persaud, J.P.
Mr. R. Ally
Mr. E. L. Ambrose
Mrs. L. M. Branco
Mr. Balchand Persaud
Mr. Bholu Persaud
Mr. I. Remington, J.P.
Mrs. E. DaSilva
Mr. M. F. Singh
Mr. J. A. Sutton

OFFICERS

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

Absent

His Honour the Speaker, Mr. R. B. Gajraj, C.B.E., J.P. - on leave

The Honourable R. J. Jordan,
Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources - on leave

The Honourable N. J. Bissember, Minister of Trade and Parliamentary Affairs	- on leave
The Honourable W. G. Carrington, Minister of Labour and Social Security	- on leave
The Honourable S.S. Ramphal, C.M.G., Q.C., Attorney-General and Minister of State	
The Honourable H. Green, Minister of Works and Hydraulics	
The Honourable H. O. Jack, Minister without Portfolio	- on leave
Dr. the Honourable S. E. Talbot, Minister of Health	- on leave
Mr. P. Duncan, Parliamentary Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister	
Mr. J. Budhoo, J.P.	- on leave
Mr. L. I. Chan-A-Sue	- on leave
Mr. E. F. Correia	- on leave
Mr. D. C. Jagan	- on leave
Mr. A. M. Hamid, J.P.	- on leave
Mr. E. M. Stoby	- on leave
Mr. V. Teekah	- on leave

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER**LEAVE TO MEMBERS**

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, I have to announce that leave has been granted to the hon. Members Mr. E. F. Correia and Mr. L. I. Chan-A-Sue from today's Sitting.

**FORM OF DRESS FOR PUBLIC OFFICERS ATTENDING
SITTINGS OF THE ASSEMBLY AS ADVISERS**

I should also like to draw your attention to something which has been occurring from time to time in this Assembly since I have been presiding and which, I think, I ought to make a statement about. I notice that, from time to time, members of the staff of various Ministries and Departments, as well as members of the Press have been attending Sittings of the National Assembly in what I consider to be improper dress.

Hon. Members are aware that the decision to change our dress in this Assembly was related both to hon. Members of this Assembly and to members of the Press. I recall that Mr. Speaker made it very clear that members of the Press and hon. Members of this House can, if they so wish, wear shirt-jacs with long sleeves. I have been noticing, however, that advisers who accompany Ministers, as well as other members of the public who have been coming into this Chamber, have been coming from time to time without being in a shirt-jac with long sleeves. I will allow the shirt-jac because the Public Service has now decided to adopt the shirt-jac, but I want to make it clear that while the Public Service Ministry has decided that shirt-jacs with either long or short sleeves may be worn by public officers, for Parliament, we have decided that the shirt-jac must be worn with long sleeves only, and if advisers from Government Ministries and Departments want to attend Sittings of Parliament they should clad themselves at least in the attire which hon. Members are required to wear.

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I have, therefore, asked the Clerk to circularise Heads of Departments pointing out to them what the situation is so as not to cause embarrassment in the future and to ensure that all of us are aware of the attire that is expected to be worn in Parliament.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

BILL – SECOND HEADING

LOCAL AUTHORITIES (ELECTIONS) BILL

Assembly resumed consideration of a Bill intituled:

“An Act to make provision for the election of members of local authorities, for the preparation of electoral registers for the purposes of such elections, for the determination of disputes in connection with such elections and of disputes in connection with elections to certain offices in local authorities and for matters incidental to and connected with the aforesaid purpose. [**The Minister of Local Government**]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: When the Adjournment was taken last night the hon. Member Mrs. Sahoye had concluded her speech. The hon. Member Mr. Harry Lall.

Mr. Lall: Your Honour, I should like to speak on Part II of Bill No. 23 which deals with registration of voters and preparation of registers of voters. The hon. Minister of Local Government in his speech has indicated that the same list which was used for national elections will be used for the local government elections, and any other person who is of voting age will be added to that list. We feel that the voters list which was used for the national elections should be scrapped since it was proved that there was rigging without compassion. [*Laughter*]

This was bare-faced and indiscriminate rigging. That is why we are saying that the list should be scrapped. As I have said, it was disclosed that mass rigging was carried out in this country. Therefore we say that the electoral list of 1968, which was used at the national election, should be scrapped (1) because the whole registration machinery was under the command of the ruling party, the P.N.C. and (2) because thousands of P.P.P. supporters who had counterfoils of identification cards were omitted from the list.

For example, at Enterprise, the voters eligible to vote in 1964 numbered 1,470, but in 1968, instead of an increase in the number of voters in that district there was a decrease. The number of voters was reduced to 1,281. It is obvious that young people came of age during the period of four years from 1964 to 1968.

Why was this done? It is clear that the P.N.C. had command of the registration machinery. From scrutiny it was found that the P.N.C. supporters were added to the 1968 list; their names were added or the lists were padded. The dead were registered; people under age were registered; non-existent people were registered and people were registered in more than one district. In one place a man voted with his identification card. In the next place he applied for a proxy. Sometimes he registered – [Dr. Reid: “All over the country.”] Sure, because the rigging was without compassion. One person registered in more than one area. He used his identification card in one place and proxies were used in the other places. At 53 Russell Street, Georgetown, 58 proxies were issued for 84 persons who were registered, but scrutiny disclosed that only 18 persons were living at that address. Where were the remainder of persons? Could those people who are in charge of registration, the agents of this fraud, answer where were these people?

I do not want to deal with the other aspects of the Bill, I am only dealing with Part II. In Grant Kingelly district, West Coast Berbice, a survey disclosed that there were 190 fictitious names out of a total of 596 registered. Would these 190 phantom voters remain on the list? It was also disclosed that large numbers of fake Indian names were added to the list in the P.P.P. sub-districts and ballots for these phantom voters were cast by proxies.

I was the appointed candidate for No. 9 district at Bath and at No. 3 Settlement. At Blairmont it was found that there were 56 non-existent voters. I reported this to the Police Station at Fort Wellington. A man by the name of Euston Fraser was appointed as proxy for three Indian ladies. I went with a loud speaker in front of Euston Fraser's house and I said, **"Cous', do you know these ladies? This is jail."** "Cous" came out and said, "My God, these people want to put me in jail. I know nothing about these ladies, about proxies." And Euston Fraser's name was there to vote for three ladies!

A teacher by the name of Alleyne and his sister were there to vote for six persons – three persons each. Will this fraud be repeated? This is why we are saying that the list that was used in the 1968 national elections should be scrapped and an impartial body should re-register valid voters in our country, not non-existent voters.

Then we come to the magnanimous rigging in the Mackenzie area. It was argued that migration was responsible for the great increase in voters in the Mackenzie area. Let us examine why the people migrated to the Mackenzie area. There were no new land settlement schemes and no new industries. In October 1967 DEMBA announced a retrenchment schedule of 1,500 workers within a period of eighteen months. How then was there this steep increase in voters if there was not wholesale rigging in that area? Persons who were under age were registered, non-existent persons were registered, dead persons were registered. If it is true that people migrated to the Mackenzie area, where did these 9,270 voters find additional houses to live in? Where? Let them answer!

They rigged without compassion and we are asking them for God's sake, to let us be a little fair to ourselves and have fair and free elections as far as the local authorities are concerned. At the national elections, they wanted to be in office and they are in office now. But before we can have fair and free elections, we have to get rid of the list and have a proper list with which to work.

Let us take Georgetown. For the eight seats in Georgetown and environs in 1964, there were 64,638 voters. In 1968, this number was increased to 76,442, nearly 18 per cent more. Let us take Abary. The number was increased by an overall of 49 per cent. This is a P.N.C. stronghold. Nearly 50 per cent. But where the P.P.P. was strong at Bush Lot, a part of the Abary constituency, there was an increase of only 5 to 6 per cent. How is it that the whole of the Abary area was increased by 49 per cent and in Bush Lot which has almost one-third of the voters in that constituency there was an increase of only about 5 or 6 per cent? This shows clearly what was going on and we should not allow this to continue.

This is why I am appealing in the name of justice that the 1968 voters' list should be scrapped. A further breakdown of the various rural districts showed small percentage increases in the number of P.P.P. supporters in the sub-districts and large increases in the P.N.C. sub-districts. How did this happen? The Jamaicans have not come in the thousands. This could only have happened because of the padding of the voters' list. It is shameful to know the glaring robbery that went on.

There was a 10 per cent increase in the whole of the Corentyne, 9 per cent in Mahaica, a P.P.P. district, 49 per cent in Abary, a sub-district of the P.N.C., 58 per cent in Mazaruni, a P.N.C. district, 109 per cent in Mackenzie. Where did these people come from? It is quite obvious that the padding of the voters' list was the order of the day.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Your time is up.

Mr. Y. Ally: I beg to move that the hon. Member be given 15 minutes more to complete his speech.

Mr. Wilson *seconded.*

Mr. Lall: Thank you, sir. The members of the P.N.C. claimed that they had crossed the racial frontier and had breached the P.P.P. stronghold in the Corentyne. Let us examine this statement. To my mind, this statement is utter nonsense. The only breach that took place was the breach of the ballot boxes. Let those who were responsible for the administration of the elections answer.

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How were four rolls of marked ballot papers wrapped in Rubber-band present in the box? [**An hon. Member** (Government): “Ask Feilden!”] Let those who are responsible for the administration of the election answer that question. [**An hon. Member** (Government): “Ask the U. F.!”] I will term this to be robbery with violence.

Why was it that in the No. 2 district and in other areas the ballot papers inside the ballot boxes did not tally with the stub? Why? Let those responsible for the election answer! Is this justice? Justice in the reverse! This is not rigging; this is another kind of “ing”. [*Interruptions*] What went on at the last election clearly shows that the P.N.C. got a little over one-third of the votes cast in this country. [*Interruption by hon. Member*] That is my reading. If they want to be in Government by rigging in a wholesale manner, we can understand this; but why do they want to do this with the local authority elections? Why? Do they want to show that their strength is growing?

Let us consider the following statistics for the Corentyne where the P.N.C. claimed a gain! Here five districts were made into six districts. Nos. 2 and 3 districts were split into Nos.

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2, 3 and 4 districts. For the purpose of analysis, let us combine the votes cast in Nos. 2, 3 and 4 districts. Let us see the result!

No. 1 district – in 1964 the P.P.P. obtained 5,803 votes, in 1968 they obtained 6,850 votes. The P.N.C. obtained, in that same district, 1,042 votes in 1964 and in 1968 they obtained 1,240 votes. In Nos. 2, 3 and 4 districts – Your Honour, if you remember I told you that Nos. 2 and 3 were split into Nos. 2, 3 and 4 districts – in 1964 13,307 votes were cast and in 1968 this number was reduced to 11,451 votes. In these districts in 1964 the P.N.C. received 2,755 votes and in 1968 they received 6,685 votes. In No. 5 district the P.P.P. received 6,054 votes – this is for 1964 – and in 1968 they received 6,637 votes. The P.N.C. in 1964, in the same district, received 1,455 votes and in 1968 they received 1,515 votes. No. 6 district – in 1964 the P.P.P. received 5,331 votes and in 1968 they received 5,068 votes. The P.N.C. received 1,405 votes in 1964 and in 1968 they received 1,509 votes.

If you observe these figures you will see that, in areas where the districts were not split, the P.N.C. did not receive much gain, but in areas where they split the districts into three districts, districts Nos. 2, 3 and 4, one can see that there was a substantial increase. In 1964 the P.N.C. had 2,755 votes and in 1968 they had 6,685 votes. My God, this is nearly 4,000 votes more. Your Honour, if this is not rigging, what is it?

3 p.m.

Nothing but fraud can explain the votes gained in the Nos. 2, 3 and 4 districts as compared with the others which I have already mentioned. Since Corentyne is the stronghold of the P.P.P., it is impossible for the P.N.C. to make such an in-road. This is why I am telling you to scrap the list.

In conclusion, I am appealing to the Government, since it is supposed to be the Government of the whole country, and now we will be embarking on local government elections,

to let us have fair and free elections. To have this, then we have to scrap the padded voters list of 1968. Then and only then, we can ensure free and fair elections in Guyana. I thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member Dr. Ramsahoye.

Dr. Ramsahoye: Your Honour, sir, a tragic example is being set by this Government in holding elections which are an absolute fraud upon this nation. In 1968, the P.N.C. government held an election in which a total of approximately 60,000 false votes were cast which enabled this Government to command the majority of seats in the Legislature. According to this legislation that fraudulent list is going to be used as the basis for making a new list for local government elections; so that the fraud once begun is to be perpetuated right on to the end. Repeated protests on this chicanery are only projecting repeated insults. The Government feels that it is an offence to the P.P.P., as a political party, that this is being indulged in, but it is not an offence to the P.P.P. as such, but it is an offence to the people of Guyana and to all those who have to participate in this rascality. It is an offence to those public officers who have been drawn into it, who had had their consciences besieged, those who have been made part of the machinery – *[Interruption]* - to cheat the nation.

Your Honour, this denigration of the population in Guyana is the worst example of the operation of capitalism in Latin America. This country is setting an example which is bad not only for its own people but it is an awful example for Latin America, and degrading for the entire world. Where do we get? We are not in the position where demographically the party which commands the support of 33 per cent of the population is boasting 50 per cent in the elections of this country. How does the difference come? The difference is made up because of the electoral list which the hon. Minister now wishes to use for the purpose of local government elections. There are people who did not exist; there are people who are dead, and there are people who are phantoms. These three sets of people make up the great number that is expected to give the P.N.C. its majority.

The Bill contains a provision which adds further insult to all this injury. At the last elections there was a provision under which proxy lists had to be shown. Up to this day, these lists have not been shown. This provision was violated by elections officers on the 16th December, 1968. In no country in the world must one man vote for himself and then vote for three others. Why must it be in Guyana? If we are talking about one man, one vote, why is it that a P.N.C. activist be allowed to vote for four other persons. This is the result of the legislation and a deliberate of a form of electoral padding which does no good for the people of this country.

The Government exhibits both impatience and arrogance. This Government exhibits impatience in these elections when it does not feel that it can speak with its brethren and get a common consensus as to how the country must be governed and how its people will face up to its political and economic struggle. This is not a matter of intellectual refinement; this is a crude attempt of denigrating people by distorting their consciences and reducing them to robots. This is making the consciences of the people to be in political torment and they must necessarily be in conflict with those in authority. In other words, this is a war – it is cold at the moment – between the Government on the one side and the people on the other side. All those people who have been made to participate in this fraud whether because they have to earn their bread by it or whether circumstances force them - - - of what is going on because they feel it would inure for their benefit.

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What this country needs is not another massive dose of this electoral fraud. What this country needs is not legislation to make ourselves an example to the rest of Latin America. What this country needs is an honest government and institutions honestly created. Men who have this sort of diabolic attitude which is displayed in this Bill could not conceivably govern with justice. They could not believe in the principle of equality before the law because the very nature of the system allows one set of people to throw four votes when other people have only one and, indeed, in the 1968 Elections, there were instances in which people entitled to vote were turned

away because of some technicality or other. One woman in Buxton voted nine times. At the Canals Polder, there were at least three dead people who voted. That I know of personally.

This is what the Government means by democracy. It is a sordid episode in the history of this country. This Government does not believe that a country has a history and that its institutions, its culture, and its national integrity are all matters which are equally related. This Government believes in a temporary victory and in temporary advantages. It wishes to create a local government system which is heavily weighted in favour of a Government which uses men and materials and public funds to put the governing party in a position of advantage.

It is but a temporary success, for all over this country people will be living under a considerable grouse. There is no thinking man in this country who does not realise that under the present Government – and I do not leave out the United force which aided and abetted it in what it has been doing – our institutions are being destroyed by the insidious prediction of men in authority who feel that because they have at their command the oppressive machinery and apparatus of the State the voice of dissent must always be silenced and men who do not accept must be punished in violation of the rule of law.

There is in this country national security legislation. That legislation is there to stifle the voice of dissent in cases like this. Throughout our history we have had one man, one vote; throughout our history no man has had more than one opportunity to vote by proxy for somebody else. Why did the P.N.C. Government enact legislation to allow a man to throw five votes and then, after protests, amended it to three and then continued it in this piece of legislation? What grave change has been made in the course of this country's history to necessitate legislation of this nature? There has been no change. Indeed, the struggle for liberty has intensified. Formal independence may have come and some of us may feel that the struggle, or a substantial part of the struggle, for social and economic emancipation is ended, but this shows we have very far to go.

This legislation, when taken with the legislation enacted in breach of the Constitution for the Central Government, surely shows that universal adult suffrage which was fought for at such a great price by people of this country is now completely destroyed.

It is written here that one man has one vote, but the machinery created in that same breath shows it is not a case of one man having one vote, for one man may have four votes depending on who he is.

It is a misfortune which the people of this country must examine very carefully. We hear all over the world of armies taking power, of people taking office by *coup d'etat*, of a general saying he is taking over. Well, if you command an army, it is better to do that; it is better to tell the army to take over Guyana and let the army put you to rule than to denigrate the consciences of the people by perpetual indulgence in fraud.

If you must take power, if you feel that you have your oppressive machinery of the State and you wish to use it to hold power, do it that way, but for heaven's sake do not indulge in these continuous bits of fraud and denigrate the lives and consciences of your people. Let us not make ourselves an example to the rest of the world in this manner or in this form!

For myself, I freely concede that people have conquered other people. This very country capitulated to the British after their warships took Essequibo and Demerara and then Berbice. Our very history is a history of power assumed by force. Then assume it! In this case it would be bloodless. But let us not pass this type of legislation purporting to show to the world that democratic institutions are functioning here when in truth and in fact the institutions of the nation are being built on foundations of fraud.

There is no need for this Government to establish a local government system to load the dice against freedom of choice of representatives. The Government must remember that in creating new institutions of local government at this period of our history the financial burdens

upon those to whom the institutions pertain must necessarily become greater. There will be increased rating, there will be increased financial obligations, and when people are being made to face new burdens, at least they should have some consolation that whatever new burdens they are made to bear should result in the collection and distribution of proceeds in accordance with their honest wishes.

Rigged elections, loaded elections, could only mean that the people will be taxed further while not having a fair or adequate voice in determining the expenditure of the taxes imposed by this new form of taxation. This must be an awful grouse and it is in addition to the one which now exists in this country where people know that this Government, which is a minority Government, has rigged the 1968 Elections and is ruling the country without moral authority.

One man, one vote! The people of Guyana have lost it. Thanks to the People's National Congress. One would have thought that Independence in 1966 would have helped the people of Guyana to develop a psychology of liberation. Unfortunately, in a most important quarter this has not been the result of our efforts. We see that our people are doomed to constant struggle and that the political institutions which are being developed by the Government are leading them more than ever into a form of political and economic perdition. The social order remains the same. There have been no substantial changes. The only substantial changes which have taken place in this country in the last 20 years are constitutional changes which have been so restrained by our imperial masters that independence is just a matter of form.

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We have been unable to unite to work the institutions. We continue to be dedicated to partisan rule, to the development of partisan institutions, and to the cheating of the public. This would do us no good. Our success as a people depends upon our associations with the past and our involvements with the future, no less than with our struggles for the present. We are denying our history. Whatever it was under the British period, they at least held elections which were fair. They did not give their elected representatives power. They allowed fair elections but they

put in their governing documents what they called checks and balances to deny the representatives authority to rule. When they had divested themselves of that authority, they also gave instruments which would have enabled us to continue the system of free and fair elections but, instead of using those portions of the instruments with the objective with which they were given, we have now decided to operate on twists.

It is unfortunate for the future generations. Time is slipping us and it is unfortunate because many men in the highest positions in the state, in the service, owe their positions to this Government which, as we know, has been constituted in the manner I have described. Maybe they believe they owe a debt to it, and maybe this creates a more vicious circle than ever, for loyalties to the regime to which they owe their appointments may prevent them from seeing the light. But Guyana deserves better. Guyana needs men who will be prepared to give up their positions and to give up things which they may hold dear in order that they could sustain the first principles first, and the first principles are that the institutions of the country should develop having due regard to all the people who live in it and having regard to the interest of all of them who participate in the struggle.

It is as well for the British at this time to reflect that they have left this country with a most unfortunate legacy. They have left this country in conditions which have imperilled the so-called democratic rule which we know in the West. But when one looks at it, institutions created by this sort of elections legislation are productive of a tyranny, a tyranny in nature and in quality bad as the world has ever known. Only the free expression of conscience, the free casting of voices, and the fair calculator of those voices could produce sound institutions upon which we could found our future.

Perhaps we may feel that these things will never be necessary in our country, but if we reflect that other people all over the world are also in forms of struggle similar to our own, and that they are trying to develop honourable institutions and an honourable public administration, we will realise that if we do not do the same we will be left far behind.

There is much to be said for the case or the thesis that in Guyana today our economic strength is slipping. The last set of figures published earlier in this month by the *Times* of Great Britain show that the gross national product of this country today is US\$300 per year with a population of 660,000. In French Guiana the gross national product is \$500. In little Barbados it is \$360 and there is no reason why Guyana, with its resources and the personnel it has produced, should not be showing a better figure than \$300, but people in the country are suffering from a form of intellectual and political lethargy.

The rice production has dropped from about 160,000 tons in 1965 to 95,000 tons in 1969. Rice prices which were \$1.20 per bag of padi in 1939 and which were \$6.30 in 1955, are still \$6.30 per bag in 1969. Sixteen years after 1939 the price had gone up five times, but from 1955 to the present day it remains at \$6.30 per bag. The price is static despite all the rising costs and struggles in the course of production. This is a shame. This means that this Government, apart from tampering with the governing bodies of the rice industry, has created a climate in which workers are not being able to function.

I know that it has preparations for creating more hardships. I have seen the draft Bill in which they are going to provide that cattle cannot be sold by people unless they carry it to common markets all over the country. Every bit of legislation tending to create more hardships and to put obstructions in their way is being handled by this Government. Amidst all this, in a situation in which we owe \$30 million to the banks – if I am wrong the Minister will correct me – in a situation in which the public debt charges of this country are mounting—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If you are wrong the Minister will correct you at the proper time, but I do not think we are dealing with those matters which you have raised within the last few minutes. Please proceed.

Mr. Ramsahoye: When we consider the economic and social background of this country, a background in which hardly more than 5 per cent of the population can have one

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balanced meal per day, we must realise that there is much to be done in order to enable this country to move forward. I for one have always felt, and thought, and lent my support to progressive measures. I feel that this legislation is just another handmaiden of tyranny. This legislation is just another example of the bestial and politically cruel pretensions of men who feel that it is their divine right to govern over others roughshod and in any way they will.

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I oppose it. It can do this country no good. It is a lasting blot on Guyana. It is a lasting blot on Latin America. It is an evil example to Latin America. It is an evil example to the rest of the world. It puts us in a position where we cannot condemn tyranny anywhere because we are practising it right here in Guyana.

The provision that the list of voters for the new districts ought to be calculated and compiled on the basis of the electoral list used in the central elections of 1968 ought to be abrogated. The provision which allows one person to vote for three persons by proxy should be deleted and an honest electoral commission should be instituted, in which all the political parties are represented – even though the Government claims for itself the majority – to be responsible for the running of the electoral machinery. The electoral machinery should not be for the activists of the P.N.C. alone because they are not the only activists who live in this country.

Those who pay rates and those who are expected to pay rates under the new institutions ought to be given a say in any sort of electoral commission which will be responsible for the holding of the elections. Efforts should be made to ensure that only the names of people who are qualified should go on the electoral list and that the provision whereby a person must lodge \$3 before making an objection in which 30,000 false names appear on the central register is obviously disruptive of any opportunity which claimants might have to make genuine objections. Where will people be able to find \$90,000 with personnel, to check in a matter of days the lists all over this country? That is what the legislation provided in order to check on these things. If we had a computer into which this information could be fed and if we could compare it with

other statistics in this country, we would in less than an hour be able to see all the fraud which is going on here, but the state of our society continues to be primordial. But times are about to change.

The Government received 50 per cent of the votes in Guyana at the last elections and presumably its members intend to carry on the rigging on a much wider scale in order to get more. It is hard to understand because the Government has support in the more important areas of local government and yet it wants to deny people in other areas where it does not have the support, the right to the free choice of their councils. It is not that the Government has not got support but it wants to have support all over and to take it away by fraud in cases where it does not have it. It is legislation which no one who has an honest mind can support and with all my voice I oppose it.

Mr. D. Singh: This National Assembly has been in session very regularly for nearly 9 ½ months and during those 9 ½ months we have witnessed a demonstration of emptiness from the Opposition Benches and whether legislation has to do with rice or elections, whether it has to do with the Budget or the national insurance, whether it has to do with pensions, any matter whatsoever, we find stereotyped written speeches being handed out and read out by members of the Opposition.

The reason for this is clear. After their seven years in office and after the open admission by the hon. Leader of the Opposition of their inefficiency they are bewildered by the pace at which reform is moving through this government. Their speeches in this House demonstrated that they find it difficult to appreciate that in such a short time we could have achieved so much. This was demonstrated by the compliment made to the draftsmen by the hon. Member, Dr. Ramsahoye. The P.P.P. Government was so deficient that it could not start the draft legislation of this Bill.

15.10.69

National Assembly

3.30 – 3.40 p.m.

We have heard two speeches this afternoon purporting to deal with legislation before the House, and except for a cursory glance at what was written down, no attempt was made to examine the legislation. They have deliberately overlooked, they have refused to refer to two important Orders that we made for the purpose of revision and correction of the electoral register, and they hope that people will forget about it.

Order No. 9 of 1969 refers to a period of time during which those charges made by the hon. Member, Mr. Harry Lall, could have been reported. They were detailed charges that the sick and the dead supposedly living in Russell Street had voted at the elections. Why did he not go and make his representations at the time of the revision of the list? Why did they not go and make corrections to the list if as they say, during the national elections the dead and the non-existent voted? If this were so, they had an opportunity by virtue of these Orders, but it did not suit the purpose of the members of the Opposition to do this. It suits them, because of their frustration and bewilderment, to come here and shout to get publicity. They are satisfied because they know they were not able to get those votes at those elections or at any other election.
[Interruption]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Do not let us get too heated. I think the recorders would like to hear what the hon. Member is saying. While we allow a certain amount of cross talk, do not let us get too heated. Hon. Member, you may continue.

3.40 p.m.

Mr. David Singh: Mr. Speaker, we have had specific reference made to certain areas in this country and I am sure that the hon. Member Mr. Harry Lall, and let me be generous to him, in some cases would have been giving second-hand information, but he particularly mentioned Ithaca in the Corentyne where he claimed that there were fictitious names. I shall ask this question: Why was it necessary? Why? The same place where the P.P.P. organised terrorists to terrorise people that their houses would be burnt! If they were fictitious, one cannot burn fictitious houses and they know it! *[Interruptions]*

There have been shouts of fraud, of colossal fraud! Shouts that frauds will be perpetrated! If the P.N.C. is so expert in rigging the elections, what would have stopped the party from rigging the elections without compassion, as the hon. Member says, to ensure the two-thirds majority in this House to deal with the entrenched articles in the Constitution? It gives the lie to the charge of fraud and rigging. I hear shouts of miscalculation, but what the Opposition wants to tell the public is that the P.N.C. is so expert that it cannot miscalculate to achieve what it wants. What the Opposition wants is this: The Opposition in all its affairs and dealings in past years – and they are so transparent in their inferiority complex to foreigners that they would like to see here today somebody from abroad appointed Chief Elections Officer to compile the list in this country and, even if that person were to rig the list to fit the other parties, they would be satisfied. The thing is simple. Whenever there is difficulty, someone flies abroad, visits a country, gets everything right and then, according to a recent report, there is a return visit to see if there is progress being made and to see how much more he can do. All this talk about rigging shows that the P.P.P. Opposition is not prepared to trust Guyanese. This is what it is because, even among themselves, the party's structure, they do not trust each other. They have to get advice from Russia.

My learned and hon. Friend says that this Bill No. 23 of 1969 is for its purpose, to silence the voice of dissent. If we read this legislation we will see that, at every point, there are provisions for appeals, provisions at every point for a person to try to ensure that his rights are preserved. But my hon. and learned Friend speaks as a member of the P.P.P. I ask: where more than in the P.P.P. can we find that the voice of dissent is always silent? We must not just speak, we must back up whatever we speak about. If my hon. and learned Friend, as he does, speaks for the Opposition, he must speak for an Opposition that has principles which will support what he suggests. But we know that if one dissents within the P.P.P., one is silenced once and for all.

There are some other points which I must make and I must speak like this because I really believe that there would have been a serious examination of the principles of this legislation. What I found was the old usual charges being made. I heard, to my amazement, that

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National Assembly

3.40 – 3.50 p.m.

the hon. Member Mr. Harry was appealing in the name of justice. This is a very strange thing. Coupled with that, my learned and hon. Friend Dr. Ramsahoye criticised the state of the Gross National Product. But how could they when they are all over the country telling people to boycott sugar and rice, telling them to burn canes and plant only so much rice and then asking for an increase in the Gross National Products!

The bewilderment and frustration of this party is based on two facts: (1) an admission by the hon. Leader of the Opposition that “if I win, I cannot rule”, and (2) a fact which they themselves believe, that because of their policy, because of the recent commitment without an electoral list, and without a vote cast, the P.P.P. was committed to a World Communist Party. They know that they cannot win anymore. *[Interruptions.]* If I am irrelevant, Mr. Speaker, you will stop me. It is difficult for those who do not appreciate or find difficulty in appreciating a single sentence to follow a stream of logic! Is it not a fact that, since the 1968 election, members of the P.P.P. Opposition party have been touring the countryside and preaching race openly? Is it not a fact that the Opposition was prepared to stoop so low and start a rumour of kidnapping in the country in order to start a certain amount of racial violence? The records are where they should be; it is known what was said and from what level it was said. These are the people who are prepared to come to this House and make statements in the Press and hope to get publicity that this Government has committed fraud. *[Interruption]*

3.50 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, we talk about electoral list and we talk about tyranny. Let us examine what was said: it is necessary to do this, because by your friends you shall be known. Let us examine the countries that are regarded as the greatest countries in the world by the Opposition. Let us find out about Czechoslovakia. *[Interruption]* I make a statement here, and I challenge any serious thinker to say that in the Caribbean, and to spread as far as my hon. and learned Friend, in Latin America, there is no country where there is more democracy than in this county. *[Applause]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member Mr. Roshan Ally.

Mr. R. Ally: Mr. Speaker, this Government intends to hold local government elections by November/December this year. It is very clear at this time that this Government intends to rig the local government elections as it has done with the general elections. Since 1968, this Government was supposed to have distributed the ID cards to every person registered to vote in the 1968 general elections, and unto this day people have not received their ID cards. The reason why this Government did not give people their ID cards is because its aim was to have the under-aged, the non-existent and the dead voting, also to have false proxies.

Again this is an example of the Government trying to be fraudulent. Everyone who is suppose to vote at the coming local government elections should have his or her ID card before the elections because the law states that a person should have an ID card before being allowed to vote. If we take a look at Part III, page 486, Section 78(1), it will be seen that it is clearly stated that:

“Each applicant to vote shall, upon entering the room where the poll is held, state to the poll clerk his name, address and occupation and hand to him—

(a) His identification card (if any);

Now, sir, note the words in brackets “(if any)”. When we go a little further we see that it is stated that voters must produce their ID cards before they could be issued with ballot papers. Just imagine, in some parts of the country people will be allowed to vote without their ID cards, but without an ID card they would not be issued with a ballot paper to vote. This is a serious thing to do and that is why we have no confidence in this Government. The ID card is very important. Why? It is important because when one goes to vote with proxies one will have to take the ID card along with the proxies. If this is done the number of false proxies will be reduced considerably.

We go on now to objections. We have seen that this Government is still asking persons to lodge \$3 if they wish to raise any objections. We were told at the last general elections that if persons wish to raise objections they may do so after lodging the sum of \$5; immediately after they can prove the case this money will be refunded to them. Mr. Speaker, quite a number of objections was raised. I have receipts to show where I raised objections and unto this day I cannot be refunded. I have a list of names of persons whose names were omitted from the List. There again, we were told that the sum of \$2 will have to be lodged and when the name is placed on the List the \$2 will be refunded. I approached the Prime Minister in this connection and he told me to see the Minister of Home Affairs whom I met and he asked me to produce the receipts. He told me that he will not accept the receipts, he wanted the number of the ID cards; I have done so. Finally he asked me to get the list typed. Now, sir, this is the type of thing that goes on all the time. These people do not intend to give people their money. Village fathers and rate payers are asking that they should not be asked to pay this money once they could give reasonable cause why they are raising these objections. Another thing is this: When you raise objections against anyone, say for instance, you are claiming that this person is under-aged, you will have to prove that that is so. It might be a case where the person may be living in South Georgetown when this complaint was made and the person's place of birth is Wismar. How would you know this? You are asked at the registration centre when that person was born, date and month, his whereabouts and so on. We have raised objections and we have proved them. We have proved non-existents. These people did not only do these things but they used brutal force upon us. At No. 55 where I live they sent a jeep to kill me right in my house. *[Laughter]* These people have no shame; they come in here and skin their teeth.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Before we rise, I should like to say that when reference is being made to hon. Members, that reference should be made as such. When the hon. Member was speaking I think he was carried away. I would urge him to address hon. Members of the House as "hon. Members". Please rise.

Sitting suspended at 4 p.m.

On resumption --

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER

The Minister of Local Government (Mr. John): Before we begin, I beg to move that Standing Order No. 9 (1) be suspended so that the sitting may continue to midnight.

Question put, and agreed to.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES (ELECTIONS) BILL

Mr. Deputy Speaker: At the suspension of the sitting the hon. Member Mr. Roshan Ally had spoken for eight minutes and he may continue.

Mr. Roshan Ally: I was then talking about this objection. I was saying that if anyone wants to raise an objection against the voters' list for the local government elections he should be able to do it free and the sum of \$3 should not be required.

I should also like to say that after the elections the polling agents should be allowed to follow the boxes from the polling stations to the counting stations. When I say "counting stations" I mean the places where the counts will take place. At the last General Election we experienced a great deal of difficulty where the returning officer agreed with us that the agents at each of the polling stations should have the right to accompany the boxes to the office of the returning officers, but when the agents got there automatically the gates were closed and the agents were left on the road. When the boxes arrived at the station, instead of being left at the legal place, which was the returning officer's office, they were placed in the 51 lock up.

We experienced something else. At two or three polling stations there was a delaying tactic. The returning officers along with presiding officers at these polling stations made complaints and sent a lot of persons to delay us. By so doing they had ample opportunity to take

these boxes to the lock-up instead of to the returning officer's office. To my surprise, when we got to the office and inquired where the boxes were, they said they had placed them in the lock-up and the riot squad was in front of the door. I said that I wished to have a look at the lock-up; they refused but, when the lock-up door was opened for the boxes to be taken out and placed in a van which would convey them to New Amsterdam, somebody was there in the lock-up. It is for that reason we are asking that provision be made in this Local Authorities (Elections) Bill that when the boxes move from the polling stations to the offices of the returning officers, the agents should have the right to accompany them.

There is another point. I notice that this Bill makes it very clear that when the returning officer opens these boxes he will just simply count the ballot papers without opening them and counting the votes. After counting the ballot papers he will shuffle all the ballot papers together from all the boxes and then count the votes. We noticed at the last General Election that some boxes had nothing but P.P.P. votes and some had votes only for the P.N.C. We could not tell this, but on counting the votes we could see clearly this was so and there was no doubt about it. By shuffling the ballot papers together the Government was trying to hide from us the way people voted.

There is another point which is very important. At the last General Election, ballot boxes moved all the way from Orealla to New Amsterdam. I notice, according to Part III of this Bill, clause 91 on page 492, that the Minister will have the right to determine where the ballot papers will be counted. This is another way of gerrymandering the whole thing. What we would like, and the village fathers and ratepayers indicated this to me and asked me to bring it to Parliament, is that the votes must be counted within the electoral district.

According to the Bill, Members of Parliament will be debarred from contesting the local government elections. I can remember when the hon. Member Mr. Balchand Persaud was making a point on this very issue the Minister and hon. Members from the Government side shouted, "Oh, all you want double salaries." The P.N.C. Government has placed people on the

Rice Marketing Board and Rice Corporation Board. Did the Government place them there to look at the interests of the people or were they placed there for salaries? It appears to us that these people were put on the Boards because the Government wanted them to get something more since there is bickering among them. That is the reason why the hon. Member raised the point about salaries.

I think that Members of Parliament should be free to contest the local government elections and I feel that the P.N.C.'s side of this House is afraid to go out to the villages and to face the people because, if they become councillors and go among the people and practise maladministration there, the people would surely soften their bones. Therefore they feel the best thing is to debar all parliamentarians from taking part in local government elections. This will allow them to hide themselves in the towns.

5.10 p.m.

Clause 34 states:

“The expenses of the registration of voters (including the payment of emoluments of registration officers and their staffs) shall be paid out of funds provided by the local authority of the area for which the registration is ordered.”

Village fathers and ratepayers are asking this question, “Why should we pay when our staff will not be involved in the registration?” Formerly when there was a village election, the local authorities used their staff – the village overseers, etc. – to do this type of work and saved the taxpayers from paying for registration. In this instance the villages will have nothing to do with registration, therefore, the village fathers and ratepayers are saying that the Central Government, and not the local authorities, should pay the expenses incurred.

Expenses incurred by candidates at village elections should be borne by candidates and not the local authority but, according to the provisions of this Bill, they will have a right to submit their accounts. Again, village fathers and ratepayers are thoroughly against this.

Personally, I think the village fathers were right when they said that candidates must pay their own expenses. If we check carefully, we will find that this Government is trying its utmost at these coming village elections to prove that it was right at the last general election. This Government wants to prove to the public that it can secure more votes at these local government elections. I think that there will be greater rigging at these elections.

The Lord Mayor of the town and many other leading citizens of this country are very worried about choke and rob incidents and other crimes in this country, but do these people know that their present Government is a choke and rob Government? If the leaders of the Government are choking and robbing to earn their bread, what is wrong if the ordinary people choke and rob to secure a little food?

I should like to say that all those people who participated in the rigging at the last elections have become big boys today. According to the law, if a man wants to become a policeman he has to apply; if his application is approved he has to sit an examination, and if he passes the examination he has to undergo training. But this was not the case with the particular person to whom I referred before who was with the ballot-boxes in the lock-up at No. 51 village. That man cannot read and write; he cannot even spell his name, but today he wears a police uniform. How did he become a policeman? He did not apply to be a policeman. [Mr. Haynes: "Call his name.] I am not afraid to call his name. His name is Veenice Douglas and he is from No. 53 village. He is there today.

The returning officer of that district who played a very great part in the national elections was removed as an agricultural officer from No. 63 village immediately after the elections. He has been promoted and is now in town. He has been compensated for what he has done. Today, as long as you can thief properly, you are the best boy in this country. I think Magistrates and Judges should prepare medals for those persons who can do the best choke and rob business in this country. We should not penalise the poor people and allow those persons who got into office by force to get away with it.

Mr. M. F. Singh: The legislation before us today has all the hallmarks of a repetition of the fiasco which took place in December last year at what is now known as the infamous 1968 general elections. It has all the signs of fraud and further rigging which took place at the last elections, but on this occasion with a difference. There are some very subtle embellishments. If I may put it this way – I know because I was the election agent for my party at the last elections – the actors have now become a little less crude. They have become more efficient, more proficient, as a result of the experience which they gained at the last general elections and so we find that, by a series of insertions and subtle omissions, they have sought to clothe with respectability those things which were a source of embarrassment to them at the last elections. The signs are really very ominous. There is really cause for alarm in Guyana for, having gone through what we did in December 1968, it would appear as though we are all set for a repetition of this.

We have before us this Bill, but up to now we do not know what are the areas which would come under these local government elections. We have had told to us two municipalities in respect of Georgetown and New Amsterdam. We have in the Municipal and District Councils Bill the boundaries set out, but what we do not have is how the Minister proposes to subdivide Georgetown and New Amsterdam under clause 38(2) in order to provide these separate lists for the subdivided areas. We do not know also what the district councils will be.

Why is this so? I will say that this is so because the Government does not intend to let the public know, until the very last minute, exactly how it intends to very subtly and smoothly rig these local government elections.

5.20 p.m.

This is the reason why. It is political expediency which has caused them, even though they have told us what the boundaries of New Amsterdam and Georgetown are, not to tell us how they will use section 38(2) in order to demarcate boundaries.

This Bill has not really been analysed in a constructive manner. Let us look at the objectionable parts of this Bill. Let us perhaps start with section 12. Section 12(2) states:

“Every objection made under this section shall be submitted with a deposit of three dollars.”

This refers to an objection to registration on the list of electors. Now, Mr. Speaker, a person must lodge three dollars before he can object to a name on a list which we all know. Unless we are all fooling ourselves, unless those of us who do not know refuse to know was padded.

Let us take the Mackenzie-Wismar-Christianburg area. The 1968 preliminary list of voters showed 10,000 voters more than in 1964. Where did they come from? Have the housing facilities been increased in the area? Are the employment opportunities in the area enough to serve 10,000 persons, in fact it means more than 10,000, because the 10,000 voters will carry families? Where are the people to support this increase in the list of 10,000 people? Obviously, the list was padded.

If we are going to have to pay three dollars for every objection made, how can we possibly have a restructuring of that fraudulent list? Mr. Speaker, obviously, this charge of three dollars is most oppressive and as such we must object to this fee in order to permit a person to make an objection. To what I say about the last elections, there will be those on the other side of the House who will object because it is a well-known fact that the truth hurts and this is why we hear the voices on the opposite side of the House. Nevertheless, I will continue to believe that the truth must be told and we in this section of the House will always tell this honourable House and the world at large what we know to be the unassailable and inalterable facts of the matter.

If we look at section 23 of the Bill, it states:

“Upon completion of the correction of the preliminary list and of the supplementary lists, the electoral registrar shall certify them in the prescribed form and shall publish a copy thereof so certified and shall send to the Chief Elections Officer a copy thereof so certified.”

From the experience gained at the last elections, I would like to exhort this Government not to do what it did at the last elections and send us a supplementary list at the very last moment, just a couple of days before the actual date of the election. Let us have it on this occasion long before that, because it is unfair to hand us a supplementary list the day before the actual day of voting.

If we proceed and look at section 23, again as a result of experience gained, let me say that in terms of the provision here, forms should be readily available free of charge. It is my experience that forms were not readily available free of charge at the last elections. When I say this let me say that the Chief Electoral Officer did his best and indeed I compliment him. On every occasion that I spoke with him he was helpful and when he did not help, it was because he just could not make it. Our experience has been to print our own forms but this created other obstacles. Some election officers said that since it was not the form supplied by the Government, it was unacceptable. Again I had to appeal to the Chief Elections Officer and he did in fact clarify it in respect of those people whom he contacted. There were still others who refused our forms even though the P.N.C. did the printing of their own proxy forms and they were acceptable.

We in this country should realize that the days for partisanship in respect of things like elections should cease to exist. Elections in the words of the legislation make us wonder about the intentions of the Government because we had some very nice and splendid words stated in section 3(b) of this Bill, that the Minister shall issue such instructions and take such action as appear to him necessary or expedient to ensure impartiality, fairness, and compliance with the Regulations. Are we not making nonsense of the Regulations when in such open terms we are talking of obvious partiality in respect of national elections? Where will it all end?

Let us deal with perhaps the biggest piece of rascality in this Bill. Section 38 (1) tells about the area of the local authority to which the councils are to be elected forming one electoral area for determining the result of the election and the votes cast in favour of lists of candidates published in accordance with section 51. But immediately after in subsection (2), we note that it nullifies everything that the Government says in subsection (1) because it states:

“Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (1) the Minister may, by order divide the area of a local authority into such number of electoral areas as he shall therein specify and voters resident in any such electoral area may vote for a list of candidates for such electoral area, and the Minister shall in such order, notwithstanding the provisions of any other law to the contrary, prescribe the number of registered voters for any such electoral area who may submit a list of candidates for such area and the provisions of sections 41 to 54 (except section 43) shall, in so far as they are not inapplicable thereto, apply to such lists of candidates; and the Minister shall, in such order, subject to the provisions of the Municipal and District Councils Act, 1969, further prescribe the number of councillors who shall be elected for every such electoral area, and the provisions of this Act shall, in so far as they are not inapplicable thereto, apply to such electoral area as they apply to the area of a local authority which forms one electoral area.”

5.30 p.m.

We see very nice, fancy language in Clause 38(1) to the effect that there will be one electoral area and, in Clause 38(2), the Minister has absolute power to subdivide – without any reference to village fathers – the areas; so that there would be pockets with their own lists allotting the number of seats to go to each pocket. Everything would be engineered in such a way that the Government will have a majority in any district council or municipality.

I gave a typical example of this yesterday and for Buxton, Annandale and Lusignan I shall leave my colleague to give examples. This will be the whole basis on which there will be a cover to some of the irregularities that went on at the last election. But let us understand that the Government says that they would like to emulate the things set at the very centre. At the centre there is P.R., there is adult suffrage, and, therefore, what would flow from that is that at local government elections there would be P.R. and adult suffrage. Fair enough! P.R., yes! Adult suffrage, yes! But this is a bastardisation of P.R., a nullification of the concepts of P.R. which

envisages one electoral area. In the same breath, they are saying that they will split up the areas. Is the Government going to go back to first-past-the-post? This seems to be the attitude,

One does not know where one is heading. We move on to Clause 41 of the Bill.

“The Chief Election Officer shall by notice appoint the day being a day not later than the 21st day before Election Day, on which lists of candidates may be submitted...”

For the National Elections we were given 39 days. Why this indecent haste giving us only 21 days? Why not some more time within which to be able to know exactly when things are to be done as happened at the last elections? Will the government announce the date of elections, giving us only a few days to submit the list? Will it be a repetition? [**An hon. Member** (Govt.): “You can prepare your list now!”] It is said that we can prepare our list now, but each list will be subjected to what the hon. Minister stipulates in the order: in that particular area a list must be submitted according to the sub-division as the hon. Minister says in his order to be promulgated. How can we possibly appoint anyone? We must have time! [*Interruption by the hon. Prime Minister*] I know that the hon. Prime Minister was very solicitous on the last occasion. I thank him for his personal help but let us not have to rely on the generosity of the hon. Prime Minister!

Let us have enough time whereby we can submit our lists realistically! These lists have to be substantiated by the signature and backed by each one of these candidates. If it is to be done properly, on a consultative basis, we want time to consult the people. When the hon. Minister demarcates the boundaries, we must have time for the signatures; time to consult the people and to present it to the hon. Prime Minister, whether it will make a difference or not. Let us have time to put it forward!

We do not want the Government to put clause 54 into operation, even though we see the pattern of the legislation. We note the provisions of Clause 54:

“If only one list of candidates has been approved, the persons whose names appear on the list shall be deemed to have been elected as councillors; and the returning officer shall publicly declare their election and cause notice thereof to be published.”

We would not want to arrive at the stage where only the P.N.C’s list and no other list is received and where it is approved and publicly declared to be the official list. So let us not talk in terms of the generosity that we have to get from the other side! Give us enough time!

The timing has been arranged in such a way from beginning to end, that it leaves us with very little time to do anything and if – we will talk in detail in Committee stage of the time – we take one small example, under Clause 49(3):

“Not later than the 20th day before election day, the returning officer shall notify the representative and deputy representative of each list that the list is or is not approved and shall publicly declare the titles of the approved lists and the names of candidates thereon.”

And then in Section 50(1):

“Where the returning officer has refused to approve a list of candidates, the representative and deputy representative of the list, or either of them, may, not later than the 20th day before election day appeal against such refusal to the magistrate of the judicial district in which are situated the offices of the council.”

Here we have the terribly ludicrous situation where the returning officer will state that the list is not approved and on the same day one has to get in his appeal before the magistrate. How can it be done? If the non-approval is done in the evening, where will one find a Magistrate?

The National Elections regulations provided that it should be the 32nd day before the election and the appeal the 30th day so that there was a 3-day gap. But this gives one no time at all. What rascality is this which provides no time at all to appeal to a Magistrate? I hope that, in all honesty, the Government will revise its timing here and give us a realistic time to appeal against a refusal to accept our lists because, again, we have in mind the provision that if only one list is submitted only that one list will be accepted.

We go now to Clause 59(1). It says – and there must be some mistake on the part of the government, it is probably a wrong Clause quoted – that:

“A registered voter for the local authority area shall be entitled to vote at an election if he complies with the provisions of this Part and with requirements made and directions given thereunder and if the presiding officer of the polling place at which he applied for a ballot paper is satisfied as to the matters specified in subsection (1) of section 40.”

5.40 p.m.

I shall go back and read Section 40 which deals really with the qualifications of councillors. It is stated:

“(1) Subject to the provisions of subsection (2) a person shall be qualified to be elected as a councillor if, and shall not be so qualified unless, he is a registered voter for the local authority area to which he seeks election.”

So we cannot possibly have entitlement to vote based on qualifications as councillor. There must be something wrong here. I would expect that the hon. Minister will deal with this, I merely point this out.

Then we go on to Section 62. This is a section in this Bill to make the local government elections a mere farce as was done at the last national elections. This section deals with the registered voters who shall be entitled to apply to vote by proxy. It is stated that:

“62. (1) (g) persons for whom it is likely to be impracticable or seriously inconvenient, by reason of the general nature of their occupation, service or employment or for other good cause,”

This is entirely subjective in the mind of the election officer dealing with this. Mr. Speaker, from bitter experience I know what happened at the last elections. So far as we on this

side are concerned those words “other good cause,” are highly objectionable and unacceptable to us.

Section 64, and this is where I was talking about embellishment and omissions. Section 64(3) reads as follows:

“The returning officer shall keep a list of proxies which shall be in the prescribed form and which shall set out the names, addresses and the serial numbers of the identification cards of the registered voters for whom proxies have been appointed and of the registered voters who have been appointed to vote as proxies on their behalf.”

But this is what is added in the Election Regulations, 1964. I quote:

“. . . and the returning officer shall on the request of an election agent allow him, on the 4th day before Election Day, to inspect and copy the list.”

Why has this been omitted? The reason I think is quite obvious, at least to this section of the House, and to those who want to be fair and impartial. At the last elections, by and large, the list of proxies were unavailable to the representatives of this party, and as I am told also, to the representatives of the other side of the Opposition. All that we are doing on this occasion is white-washing the situation by leaving this part out altogether so that there could be no allegations that this Government is contravening the legislation as it has done in the last general elections.

I wish to deal now with Section 66(1) which deals with the preparation for the poll. It states:

“66. (1) Whenever two or more lists are published under section 51 the returning officer shall, not later than the 10th day before Election Day, cause to be published –

(a) (ii) the situation of each polling place;”

This is what I am dealing with specifically. We feel that ten days is far too short a time to tell us. By now the Government must know the polling places it will use. Why wait until the tenth day before elections day to tell us? We are entitled to know earlier so that the necessary arrangements can be made for our people to represent us in that particular area.

We deal, *en passant*, with Section 86. It stipulates that people who are entitled to enter the polling places shall maintain the secrecy of the voting. This is an exhortation to the authorities to instruct the elections officer that the people who are listed as candidates, polling agents, election agents and assistant agents, these people are entitled to go into the polling stations. My colleague on my left, as a duly appointed candidate was refused entry into a polling station by a presiding officer who said that only a polling clerk was permitted to be at the station. Let us instruct the election officers, and I ask that this be done.

Section 90 is also an exhortation of the Minister to make the provisions of the Act known to the election officers. Because again this section provides for anyone of the parties' representatives being allowed to put his seal on the ballot boxes, and in so many cases the election officers put the Government seal and nobody else's. We have a numerous number of complaints and if the hon. Minister wants proof I will willingly supply same.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Your time is up.

Mr. Sutton: I beg to move that the hon. Member be given five minutes to complete his speech.

Mr. R. Ally *seconded.*

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. M. F. Singh: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the Minister tell us long beforehand, or at least a reasonable time before, the places where the votes will be counted. At the last elections, we

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were seriously handicapped. This is one section which I should like the hon. Minister to refresh his memory on. I wish also to draw to the attention of the House Section 90(1).

I recall what happened at the last elections at the counting of the Mackenzie votes. *[Interruption]* Turning to Section 94(1) Method of Counting – provision is made for certain persons to attend the counting of votes and in Section 96(1) (b) provision is made for such persons to

“verify the ballot papers account given by each presiding officer by comparing it with the number of ballot papers.” *[Interruption by the hon. Member Mr. Aaron.]*

When I, on that occasion, said that this must be done, I was told that it was not necessary to be done. And here, in black and white, it is stated that the counting officer must compare not only the counting of the votes but it must be compared with the ballot papers accounts. *[Interruption by the hon. Member Mr. Aaron.]* It was the same hon. Member who is so vociferous who told me this.

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The legislation here speaks for itself. I recommend that the hon. Member should read the legislation and be wiser in future. I suppose the hon. Member will be able to understand what he reads. This was a very painful and hurtful case at the last election.

Let me tell the Minister that clause 129 (a) (i) does not create an offence. I would recommend that he looks at this clause. If you separate part of (ii) and let it apply to (i) and (ii), it would then be an offence. It could be done by means of rearrangement of punctuation.

Let me say that in the final analysis it is the spirit in which the Government will carry out this piece of legislation which will count. There are some parts of the Bill which are obviously

aimed at impartiality. It is written that the Minister must give decisions which will enhance the fairness with which elections are run, but our experience in the past has been most painful. Here I now appeal to the Government. If it persists in passing this Bill, at least play it clean on this occasion!

Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member Mr. Wilson.

Mr. Wilson: When the hon. Minister of Local Government (Mr. John) was removed from the position of Minister of Home Affairs, one of the thoughts which came to me was that the Minister must have acted so crudely in rigging the elections that the Prime Minister was disappointed at his action and thought he was no good. Not that the Prime Minister was against the rigging and the fraud committed, but it was done in such a crude manner that even a little child could have seen the fraud.

When driving on the East Coast road, if I have time, I would sometimes stop and pick up persons who are waiting for taxis. [**Hon. Members:** “Oh!”]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Let the hon. Member speak.

Mr. Wilson: On one occasion, a Saturday, I picked up some men who were working with the contracting company at the University of Guyana. One of them did not recognise me and we were chatting. The conversation turned to elections and one of them was saying that it was right for them – the P.N.C. – to carry out a fraud, but the other recognising who I was said,

“The P.P.P. did tief a little bit, but ah we” – he meant the P.N.C. – “overdo the ting.”

I can now see that when the ministerial change was made it was not a matter of lack of confidence, but a matter of the P.N.C. being disappointed in the present Minister of Local Government. Later the Prime Minister felt that this was the man who must be put to conduct the

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rigging and the fraud in local government elections since he had so much experience in connection with the general election.

Before I go further, I wish to remind hon. Members of what I said yesterday, namely, that no consultation was made with GALA. The Minister from his seat said that that was not so. When he rose he said he had full consultation with GALA, the union of local government authorities and the like.

I would like to read a statement which, only yesterday, was issued by GALA. The Minister will say whether GALA is telling the truth in this statement. This was issued by the secretary of the Association, Mr. H. P. Benn:

“The Executive of the Guyana Association of Local Authorities met at St. Andrews’s Presbyterian School at 9.30 a.m. on October 11, and agreed that it does not accept the Local Government Elections Bill in its present form.

The association had a look into the draft legislation and forwarded its views to the Minister more than a year ago. The White Paper now before Parliament was not circulated to the Association nor was the Association called in when the Minister held a discussion recently with the Chairmen and representatives of the area in the proposed Greater Georgetown Area.

The Association believes that the existing village authorities should be consulted and should determine the areas that are to be included in the new Local Authorities.

It also stresses that marriages of convenience between neighbouring areas should not necessarily result in the lowering of the status of the older Local Government units.

History has shown that these marriages have been most unsuccessful when outside authorities have forced mergers upon villages.

Not long ago, a medium looked upon the 1969 GALA conference as a last fling, but the Association knows that it has a proud record despite the attempts of many to smear its fair existence.

The Association has always stood up for the good of rural people and has been stating its views to the Government in no uncertain way. The consensus is that village peoples have

chosen their leaders by the number of individual votes they have given at local elections whenever these are held.

The Association strongly believes that it would take a long time to wean villagers from expressing their confidence in this way.

Proportional Representation in the form as is now suggested will not reflect the real views of the country men. It will name persons who are unworthy to the rustics and as is expected these persons will be named by an authority away from the grass roots.”

[**The Prime Minister:** “Are you not ashamed to read from a galley proof in Parliament?”] Whether it is a galley proof or a type-written copy you cannot deny –

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member must address his remarks to the Chair.

Mr. Wilson: The point is that I am supported in this statement by GALA that the people concerned in this matter have not had the kind of consultation which the Government is now giving to the trade union movement with regard to the Trade Disputes Bill. It shows that they have no respect, no regard, for the country-man. Because most of them live in Georgetown and New Amsterdam they think that the only people who count are the town people and the people in New Amsterdam and Mackenzie. As regards the rustics, they have no regard for them.

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Speaking on the Bill itself, the hon. Member Dr. Ramsahoye yesterday complimented the draftsmen and, though I am not a lawyer – [**The Prime Minister:** “That is on another Bill.”] He meant both Bills. I am speaking on the Local Authorities (Elections) Bill. Although I am not a lawyer, I myself think that this thing is very neatly done. The hon. Member Mr. Feilden Singh complained about the time limit not being enough for certain things to be done. I will not deny that, but I will go further and say that even if the time limit was adequate, we know from experience that these time limits do not mean anything.

Let me refer to our experience at the last general elections. With regard to registration, persons were told that, within a certain day, they must state their objection with respect to the removal of names, etc., but when our supporters attempted to do this to the registration officers in the rural areas, they were turned away; they were simply frustrated. In fact, when the registration officers were supposed to be at their posts on certain days, within certain hours, they were not there. So this business of a time limit does not mean anything. In the end it meant that a large number of P.P.P. supporters were left disenfranchised, although there was a lot of talk about a time limit, that we should not go later than such and such a date to do certain things.

Let us look at some of these time limits and see what the interpretations are on the basis of what really took place at the last general elections. Clause 12(1) states:

“(1) The electoral registrar shall, not later than such day as may be prescribed by the registration order, publish a copy of the preliminary list, together with a notice in the prescribed form . . .”

This does not mean anything because if he does it after that day there will be no remedy. There is such a phrase in clause 12(5):

“(5) Not later than three days after the latest day allowed for the lodging of objections.”

This too will have no meaning on the basis that if the electoral registrar does not comply with this he would not even find himself at the place to carry out the duties prescribed. Even if you complain to the Minister or to the Chief Election Officer there will be no remedy and later on I am going to show where the Government anticipates that the same kind of thing is going to be done and it has made provision in another clause so that the Minister can put right any wrong.

I am just making reference to some of these time limits, date-lines and the like. Clause 13 states:

“An assistant electoral registrar shall attend on the days and between the hours and at the place or places specified in the notice given under section 12 to receive applications made and objections lodged pursuant to that notice.”

If the assistant electoral registrar does not do this, there is nothing in the Bill to show if any penalty will follow, and what persons who feel aggrieved may do to have this matter remedied. I repeat clause 12(1):

“(1) The electoral registrar shall, not later than such day as may be prescribed . . .”

If he is not there on that day to determine objections, there is no remedy in the Bill for the breach of failure of duty.

If we turn to clause 208 we would see where the Bill envisages that these officers would not necessarily carry out the duties, they would rush everything like cowboys. It is stated in the Bill that they must be there on certain days to do certain things but if they fail to carry out their duties I will show the Minister how he can protect them even before they go to court. Clause 208(1) states:

“(1) If at any time any difficulty arises in connection with the application of this Act or in bringing into operation any of the provisions, the Minister may by order make any provision that appears to him necessary or expedient for removing the difficulty.”

[**Mr. John:** “Read clause 25.”] If the officers fail to carry out their duties, clause 208(1) gives the Minister power to remove any difficulties. Clause 208(2) states:

“(2) Any such order may modify the provisions of this Act in respect of any particular matter or occasion so far as may appear to the Minister to be necessary or expedient for removing the difficulty.”

The Minister can amend the Act – just think of it – by an order. So all we are doing here is wasting time.

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The Minister was telling me to read clause 25 but he can correct their wrong under clause 208. I will admit that you have it here, but there is this saving clause which I think is brutal and criminal. It shows that these people are out to perpetuate the fraud which they carried out.

During the course of his speech, the hon. Member Mr. David Singh tried to answer the charges made by the hon. Member Mr. Lall by just saying,

“Look, you are talking about injustice, but where can you find more injustice than in the P.P.P.? You are talking about suppression of views, but where can you find more suppression than in the P.P.P.?”

Then he said that that was logic.

“O judgement! Thou art fled to brutish beasts, and men have lost their reason!”

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The only valid point raised by the hon. Member, Mr. David Singh, was why did we not, when the time for revising the list came, take the opportunity of putting in an objection and making representation for those names to be taken out, but as I said before, we tried to do this but the registration officers were not in their places. I do not want to involve the Chief Elections Officer in our politics but complaints were made. Up to today, I received complaints where at Meten-Meerzorg, Mr. Exeter, I call his name, should have been at his post but he was not there to hand out the people's identification cards. He is never at his post. I understand that 300 persons turned up there and except for a few P.N.C. supporters, who were called forward as comrades and handed their identification cards, the people were sent away.

Do you know what happened at election time at Mackenzie? Voting was not done by secret ballot. When voters attempted to go into the booth, the presiding officer said, “Don't go in there. All ahwee ah one. Come write it here.” *[Interruption]* How can you have any confidence in this Government? In order to give a feeling of confidence, there should be a body on which

will be represented the various parties participating in the elections to supervise the elections and to have the right to see that all these provisions which are very nicely put are carried out. It is only under these conditions that some measure of confidence can be restored, otherwise we will be going through the same kind of fraud and we do not know where we will end up in this country.

I think this Government is sowing the seeds of a situation which will destroy the social fabric of the community. This Government, as some people have rightly said, has been described as a choke and rob government but it is not satisfied with this at ministerial level. It brings it down to the public. At the elections, the youngsters who were to count the votes were told, "Look here, this is your life-blood. You must assist and participate in this fraud, otherwise you are going to pull punts like your forefathers." These youngsters are defiled, beginning with all the election officers. They were there to see that the P.N.C. won by hook or crook.

You go to the registration officers and they act in a strange way. You tell them the regulations require that on such a date they must do such a thing. They will tell you this is not so. You offer to show them and they say they do not want to see and if you make a noise, they tell you they will call the police. The law says a man may vote by proxy for three persons but the poll clerk is going to allow three more because he sees nothing wrong with that. If you object too much, he threatens to get a policeman to put you out.

In the district where the hon. Member, Mr. Roshan Ally, was the agent, the Government said that the count would not take place at the usual place and the ballot boxes would be brought to Georgetown in the interest of security. Security for fraud to be perpetrated, for the P.P.P. votes to be taken out: The boxes were put in the lock-up but they were still opened. There were ballot boxes with four parcels tied with rubber bands. When objections were made, nothing happened.

At the counting places, it was the same. The Government put twenty young people at a long table. The Government wants speed but there can be only one counting agent in the office. Many returning officers refused to allow some candidates to go in to the count. There are about thirty girls counting there at the same time but only one person is allowed to be present. They put the ballot papers in piles and we took a sample of P.N.C. bundles and found P.N.C. votes.

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On the 12th of December, the returning officers were supposed to show the proxy forms. When we went on the fourth day before elections to examine them, we were told that they were not ready, that we must return the next day. They were doing something against the regulations by saying that we could see the proxies on the following day. [**The Prime Minister:** “Did you go back?”] I could not go everywhere. We sent agents – [**The Prime Minister:** “Only the Queen can talk of “we”!] When I talk of “we” I mean myself and those assistant agents appointed by the party. When we went on the day suggested we were told that they were still not ready. Election Day came and we did not get to see them. We complained afterwards and were told by the Chief Elections Officer that, according to the law, he could not show us the forms, that only the Supreme Court could give permission to do that. Much as these conditions have the appearance of fair play, let us say, the time was inadequate.

We will not be able to obtain justice with people who now constitute the Government. The hon. Member Mr. Feilden Singh very rightly said that it is not the letter of the Constitution but the spirit of the people who have to administer. We would like to be assured that the hon. Minister of Local Government will, whether it is put in the Act or not, devise some means whereby the representatives of the parties taking part in the elections could have an opportunity to assist.

There is talk of a co-operative republic – let us co-operate from here to supervise the elections and see that all these different forms of irregularities are not carried out and this will give the people the ... of the rural areas. Some people hope that this Co-operative Republic of

which there is so much talk – last night I heard the hon. Prime Minister over the air – [**The Prime Minister:** “You listened to me?”] [*Interruption.*] -- but all that I gathered from what he said – one knows that he was just painting a nice picture, he is known for nice, flowery words but behind those words there was serious action to take place.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: While you reminisce over what the Prime Minister said on the air last night, your time is up.

Mr. Remington: I ask that the hon. Member be given five minutes more to conclude his speech.

The Prime Minister *seconded.*

Mr. Wilson: Mr. Speaker – [*Interruptions*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Give the hon. Member a chance to wind up!

Mr. Wilson: all over the country the people are in doubt especially with regard to what is happening; they feel that the institutions in this country are open to serious subversion by the government. [*Interruption by the hon. Prime Minister.*] Although the hon. Prime Minister says that there can only be one Government, that is a principle one cannot go against, if it can only be one government it cannot be much without an Opposition, and the Opposition should be taken into confidence, they should be given assurance that there is fair play; but they are openly saying “I am committing fraud against the people,” and expecting that we can just have a Co-operative Republic and will truly have the co-operation of all the people of Guyana. This Government will be doing a great service to Guyana and to the people if it will make a pact with us over these forthcoming elections by letting the people feel that we have fair play at every level. I hope that there will be justice in the future and that the country can go forward to one people working towards one destiny.

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Mr. Deputy Speaker: Perhaps the hon. Minister will want to suspend the sitting at this stage.

Mr. John: We can suspend until 8 p.m. and we will go up to midnight.

Sitting suspended at 6.27 p.m.

8.10 p.m.

On resumption --

Mr. Deputy Speaker: When the Suspension was taken the hon. Member Mr. Bhola Persaud was rising.

Mr. Bhola Persaud: Mr. Speaker, the Bill before this House convinces us that there will be another fraudulent elections in our country, one which will never be forgiven or forgotten in our land. This is so because of the system which is arranged for the forthcoming local government election. No one can deny this; it is well-known all over the world.

First of all, we are going to experience fraudulent elections for the second time although it is arranged to have the first local government elections with Adult Suffrage. We are going to notice that under the P.R. system one of the important sections of our community will be deprived of voting. These people are important in the sense that they are all Guyanese and we all know them very well. For some time now, we have been advocating that the voting age should be reduced to eighteen years.

I recall that it is only a few days ago the hon. Member Mr. Yacoob Ally mentioned about the youths and a certain hon. Member on the other side asked him what are the youths contributing to our land. Let us suppose that this hon. Member is not aware, perhaps he is ignorant of the fact that the youths are contributing as much as the grown-ups. Why is the Government depriving them the right of being involved in this great issue? Youths are

contributing in many ways. For instance, the youths are involved in self-help projects, farming, in the rice fields, in order to bring food for the many thousands of Guyanese.

There are a number of responsible youths in this country. Youths – men and women – who are over the age of eighteen are running their own affairs; many of them are married and are having children. These are some of the points which I feel the Government should have really taken into consideration. The youths will be the men and women of tomorrow and I feel that the Government must see to it that they are involved in these various issues. They will be the ones who will be sitting in Parliament.

In many parts of the world, youths over eighteen years are given the right to vote. Quite recently, I notice that the British Government is taking the initiative in order to have young men and women over the age of eighteen to be involved in voting at national elections. The Bahamas Government passed a resolution demanding that the voting age be reduced to eighteen years.

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We feel strongly that this is discrimination in the sense that we are holding back a section of our Guyanese people. We feel that it is an insult to the youth of our country because we are depriving them of their rights.

I want to remind our friends on that side of the House that in 1953 the hon. Prime Minister was then in charge of the Ministry of Education. He joined with us in advocating that the voting age be reduced to 18 years. We notice that the youth section is in the Prime Ministry's Office and although they are trying to involve certain sections of the community we have not seen any initiative or any encouragement for youth to be involved in this great venture of ours.

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Apart from the P.P.P. youth section we have not heard any other youth section, including the Y.S.M., mention anything involving the youth of our land. These persons have a right to be recognised as men and women of tomorrow and as responsible persons. I feel that the Government should have encouraged them and should have included them. It is not too late. Perhaps it can be done in some way or the other.

Coming back to the system of elections. It is not so strange to us nowadays; we have passed through it and we will pass through it again. Everyone knows about it and it is expected. Time and again in this same House – up to this afternoon – we were exposing it and I do not know how the members of the Government are still barefaced, although they know that they are so exposed that there is no running away from it.

I should like to mention a few incidents that took place on the Essequibo Coast. Apart from the number of proxies, which is a notable thing; apart from the votes – thousands of them; apart from the votes of dead persons of which we all know, and I think the hon. Member Mr. Van Sluytman will agree with me that there were other fraudulent acts because he was there when incidents happened, when boxes were tampered with and seals were opened. These were all indications of the fraud.

We know very well that the truth hurts. Presiding officers were not allowed to travel with the boxes so that when they delivered them to the returning officers for them to be put in the authorised places, this was not done. Our agents and the candidates were not allowed to travel with the boxes. We noticed that in some of the boxes there were bundles, which I am going to speak of later on; there were tendered ballot papers. When checking we questioned it and all that we heard from the returning officer was “*Noted*”. That was all.

Incidentally the tendered ballot papers were all counted as genuine votes. The members of the Government denied that bundles were found. They are now throwing the blame on the United Force. But these ballot papers have exposed them. They excuse themselves by saying

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that it was the fault of the United Force. I do not know whom they are going to blame for the bundles which were neatly packed with red rubber bands round them, and were four inches thick. They cannot deny it at this stage. At first they tried to deny it; the bundles entered the boxes miraculously because they were four inches thick and passed through a slot a quarter of an inch wide.

The recheck came after we objected. The hon. Minister can clarify it if he is honest enough. The boxes were closed again. One can throw the blame on someone else, either on the United Force or on members of the Police Force. If the Police have failed then I feel the persons in charge should have been disciplined.

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With regard to the point about making claims and objections, I should like to ask, Where are we going to go? Are we going to carry devil's case to be tried in hell? I remember very well – and perhaps this will happen again – that at the last general elections, when we asked the person in charge for claim forms, we were bluntly told that not only claim forms but also objection forms were unavailable. It was not until a later date, when it was impossible to have these claim forms filled, that a few were given.

When they talk about claims and objections we know all the tricks, some of which will be performed again. I remember that the names of the sons and daughters of some of these same lackeys, these enumerators, were included in the list. I remember also that in those days when one had to pay \$5 to make an objection, I made objections and, at the hearing, the objections were allowed but, surprisingly, the names still appeared on the supplementary list. Nothing could have been done at that late stage, so they all voted. Perhaps this will be the same position again.

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With respect to identification cards, this is a very shameful and miserable affair. I have been trying to get my identification card for over a year. I was told by an Afro-Guyanese that when he went for his card he noticed that, instead of his photograph, the photograph of an Indo-Guyanese was placed on his card. This shows inefficiency, misunderstanding, misdirection and mishandling on the part of the Government. We all know this. Perhaps later in the year we are going to come back right here and listen to some of us saying the same thing, how much fraud and rigging took place.

I want to advise that if the Government is really serious about having people involved and about having free and fair elections, it should be loyal to all sections of the Guyanese community.

Mr. Bancroft: Listening to the criticisms from the members of the Opposition, I am reminded of the once famous welter-weight boxing champion of the world – Kid Gavilan. When he was in his heyday, heaven was his home and earth was his footstool, but when he began to receive licks, when he was at the receiving end of things and the reporters asked him, “How did you lose?” he said, “I was robbed.” It would appear, therefore, that Kid Gavilan having emanated from Castro’s Cuba which they admire so much, the members of the P.P.P. have followed in the footsteps of Kid Gavilan, so that when they lost the elections they said, “Cheated but not defeated.” In other words, they were robbed.

Their criticisms remind me of a stuck gramophone record. All that we are hearing is rig, rig, rig. In other words, they are adopting the tactics of Hitler in Nazi Germany when he said that if you repeat the lie often enough persons would think that it is the truth. But they on the opposite side know that we have won elections.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Members on the opposite side.

Mr. Bancroft: Thank you. The hon. Members on the opposite side know that we have won elections. There was quite a lot of agitation on the part of villagers and local government councillors, village fathers who looked forward to the day when they would be able to make changes. One would have thought that the Opposition would have welcomed this measure but, instead of welcoming it, instead of welcoming progressive reform, it is indulging in childish play.

One would have thought that the Leader of the Opposition would have made a worthy contribution to this debate but, in his opening remarks, all that he spoke of was neo-colonialism, fascism, imperialism, and all the isms. One would have thought that, in this day and age, in an independent country like Guyana, in a developing country like Guyana, the Leader of the Opposition would have looked inside instead of looking outside.

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He stands up there and accuses us that we are colonialists but I wonder who is the greatest colonialist in Guyana today, when the Leader of the Opposition travels from Guyana all the way to Russia to pay his respects and homage to the departed soul of Karl Marx, then comes back here and aping his colonial masters, instead of taking his rightful place as Leader of the Opposition, he tells us he is the first secretary of the party. Listening to the Leader of the Opposition, he said he went and took a holiday by the Black Sea and bathed in the Black Sea. It seems as though he had not only bathed in the Black Sea but he had washed out his brains because all we have heard is clichés and repetition of phrases which have no meaning in the context of Guyana today.

Listening to the hon. Member, Mrs. Sahoye, last night, she told us that it will be a resurrection, it will not be an election. In her eagerness to show off her regard for repetition, she did not take time to understand what is the meaning of the word, “resurrection”, because she was not speaking in the term of Christianity, which is something new to her.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, when referring to hon. Members in the House do not refer to them as “he” or “she”. The hon. Member, Mrs. Sahoye, spoke last night. Please address your remarks in her name.

Mr. Bancroft: The hon. Member, Mrs. Sahoye, in her eagerness to criticize and condemn the government, did not know that the interpretation of the word, “resurrection” is, “revival from disuse, restoration of something”, and she did not realise that instead of condemning the hon. Minister, she was complimenting the P.N.C. Government. In other words, she was complimenting the P.N.C. Government for restoring democracy to the village fathers. Hon. Members know within their heart of hearts that this Government is an honest, fair, democratically elected government and the only thing which bothers them is the realisation that this Bill is something which they could not attempt for ten years. They were unable to implement local government reforms.

I understand and I would sympathise with the United Force because their members were paid for three years and nine months to bring about this reform and were unable to do it and it was just the same with the P.P.P. What the P.P.P. Government was unable to accomplish in ten years, the P.N.C. has been able to accomplish in nine months. It is not that the Bill has anything wrong with it. It is that they are jealous of our achievement. We have fulfilled our promises to the electorate. We have told the electorate we have a local government reform measure to bring to the House and that we have been able to do it is to the eternal credit of the efficiency and dedication of these local legal experts who together with the Minister responsible have made this dream come true.

On the other side of the House, it is an unpalatable fact to swallow. It is our wish to go with the people. The P.N.C. is the only party in this country to solve their problems and on our performance in no uncertain manner we have made it known to the world that they have given to this side of the House a mandate not only to solve the problems of local government but all the problems of Guyana, and in such we shall not fail.

Mr. Balchand Persaud: I am certain that the last hon. Member could not have said what he just said in Barbados. Anyhow, we are engaged in the discussion of legislation which concerns the people at the local level, elections at local government level. Realising what took place at the last general Elections, surely members of the Opposition, especially the P.P.P., have many reservations. It is not really that the rules and laws put forward are so bad but the fact is that the hon. Minister gives very little confidence in this department of local government and there is hardly any confidence in the P.N.C. We have got the points of view of many people in this country and we realise that local government elections, when they are held, would not be able to fulfil the wishes of Guyanese in general.

In every society, persons may have political affiliations but such persons when placed in high office must serve the nation impartially. Only with justice and fairness can they meet their obligations. We have seen certain officers of the Government and the Minister who did not wish impartiality in the conduct of the last election. So, we in the P.P.P. do not have any confidence whatsoever in the Chief Elections Officer, nor do we have any confidence in the Chief Registration Officer. This is so because they have been in charge of carrying out the General Elections, we have seen that they succumbed to the pressures of the P.N.C. and obtained election results that were fraudulent. We cannot with an open heart go to the polls in local government elections when these tendencies exist and surely if these elections are going to be held with those officers in their positions, it is as clear as day that the elections will be rigged. We have been able to see their participation at all levels where at every stage there have been road blocks, where the position could not have been running smoothly.

I notice here in clause 3 of the Bill, Supervision of Elections, where the minister would be having certain powers.

One would expect that since the hon. Minister is in charge of local government affairs, that he would be in a position to set the rules and leave the election officer to carry out the rest of the duties, but then, the hon. Minister – now I am going on to Clause 18(1):

“An assistant electoral registrar may, for the purpose of maintaining order at a place appointed for applying for registration as a voter –

- (a) Regulate the admission of applicants;
- (b) Exclude all other persons except –
 - (i) the Minister;”

Now, why does the hon. Minister has to go to the local level? Why does the hon. Minister has to be present when the votes are counted? The position is that the hon. Minister cannot be impartial because he is the Minister in the government. He would like to see the election results in favour of the P.N.C. The hon. Minister should set the rules so that the officers carry out the elections and this is not clear. The hon. Minister should not be there at every level. Does he want to coerce people? We cannot have fair elections if the hon. Minister wants to be there.

With our experience of the last election there are certain new policies which this Government must adopt. This is not like the general elections where you can rig it and get into power. This is local elections. The people have to form themselves to look after their own affairs, to see where their bread and butter is at stake. If the Government has no proper policy, there will be no co-operation. This is a piece of legislation that is nailing the coffin of the P.N.C. We see it in this way. The Government cannot hope to have any confidence in the minds of people if they carry out fraudulent elections. The ballot boxes used at the elections were made out of boards and screws and were tampered with. We need an improvement of this type of thing. It is either that the hon. Minister guarantee the electors that the ballot boxes will be of metal or some form other than wood, and each having locks which each candidate can lock himself and not to worry with the Government's machinery. I think that this would be an improvement because there is doubt about the ballot boxes and we can see on numerous

occasions that they were tampered with. The seals were taken out and so on. We must have an improvement. The question of proxies – nearly every hon. Member spoke about this –

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am surprised to hear you repeat it.

Mr. Balchand Persaud: No, sir, it is just our concern about it. Let us assume that one man has to vote for three persons, then those persons will have little interest in local government matters. Surely the hon. Minister should amend this part of the Bill which will be able to guarantee one person to vote by proxy for another. We have grave reservations about this and I would like to quote a programme, a television programme carried out in London where millions of people were able to see it: “World in Action – The Trail of the Vanishing Voters”, 11th December, 1968. I wish to quote certain points in the Chamber so that we will know what is the position.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I will have to interrupt you if your quotation is not relevant to the matter under consideration. The present legislation does not include any matter dealing with overseas voting so, if it will deal with overseas voting, I will have to stop it.

Mr. Balchand Persaud: It deals with the misuse of proxies and the Government has done this where the people –

Mr. Deputy Speaker: This legislation does not deal with overseas voting and if you make a reference to anything overseas I cannot allow it.

Mr. Balchand Persaud: I will continue. Probably the hon. Members of the government would not like to have this recorded. We have seen where at the last election candidates were not permitted to accompany the ballot boxes to the place. There were obstacles all the way – the police, road blocks, disruptions by the P.N.C. – and candidates could not accompany the ballot boxes; and they were tampered with. I wish to ask the hon. Minister to ensure that the candidates

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National Assembly

8.50 – 9.00 p.m.

have a right to accompany the boxes in the same vehicle. One can be stopped by the police for some frivolous reason and, as a result, the box can be tampered with. I also ask the hon. Minister not to make police stations registration centres or counting centres because we have grave reservations, not in relation to the members of the Police Force, but to some officers of the Police Force and since elections will be held on a piecemeal basis, the P.N.C. will permit disruptions.

Guyana has to be built and the only way to build it is in confidence but we cannot have it when a minority Government is usurping power to maintain itself in office. Why not forget elections and rule by military, by coercive machinery. This is what should have been done instead of implementing the powers. There are many other matters which should have been gone into in relation to proxies and so on. I hope that the hon. Minister will be able to give this item of proxies careful consideration. While I know that the hon. Minister is sympathetic, the P.N.C. would like to ensure that they have control in the local government elections and local authorities elections.

I hope that as we go through the Bill clause by clause, the hon. Minister will take into consideration some of the points which are being made. It is quite clear that the electorate, while they would like to have elections, they will not be prepared to accept a fraudulent system.

9 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member Mr. Sutton.

Mr. Sutton: Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to rise to reiterate a few points in relation to this Bill, primarily for one or two reasons. In view of the fact that this Bill attempts to perpetuate the same problems and the same principles that were in fact the cause of the united Force party leaving the coalition, we must make it absolutely certain that everybody understands our stand in this matter. We are not prepared, in order to try to get the advantage, to accept the means of acting which is definitely written and cannot be justified in any circumstances whatsoever. If we were prepared to leave the Government on these principles it must be

expected that we must take a lot of trouble to see that these principles are exposed and there must be no doubt at all about why we are opposing this measure.

My colleague has examined at length the various clauses of the Bill which are offensive and should be offensive to all hon. Members of this House if, when we are in a position to think clearly on the subject and whether the principle of right and wrong were the guiding factors in causing them to come to a conclusion.

We have heard the hon. Minister say, and we have seen in the White Paper published by the Government, that the important factors which must be borne in mind when expanding and enlarging the influences of local government are the entrenching of proportional representation, the entrenching of Adult Suffrage and the necessity to widen the responsibilities of various local authorities and those making their contribution to the progress of the country, in fact, meaningful, by having them closely involved in meaningful decisions.

Now, Mr. Speaker, apart from the sections which were quoted by my colleague touching on the lack of adequate time to do this or too do that, which are the essentials for the progress of the elections in view of the violations of the principles which I spoke about a moment ago, I must expand on the sections of the Bill that are a disgrace to this country or any country. I must agree with my hon. Friend Dr. Ramsahoye when he said that though it is important what we have, and what is taking place here, the image of this country is on trial throughout the world and we do not want to find ourselves being dubbed as rascals, as the most early calculating country in South America, when you look at what is taking place in Guyana. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker, in order to underscore these statements which though very scathing, nevertheless are true, I must again draw to the attention of this House, the particular sections that cause us to be ashamed to be associated with the forth-coming elections. I refer to Section 46, subsection (3) where in order to sign a common objection to a person's name that is wrongly put on a list, the poor people of this country will have to find the noble sum of \$3. For the sake of

argument, let us suppose there are X thousand names, some people say 20,000 and God in Heaven knows that these figures would never see the light of day, when we take 6,000 which is far below what the figure is, it means that one has to find \$18,000 in order to have proper objections. What is the use putting objections to six or four names? What purpose will that serve? Who is fooling whom? If it is the Government's intention that these objections will be examined, it must make a fee which is reasonable which can be obtained, it must make a fee which is reasonable which can be obtained and which will not be a deterrent to objections, which is in fact what is happening. This provision has been put to discourage the lodging of objections and in order to ensure, because the principles involved are so important, that this thing will not go down in history as an objection will always be there to be seen. You will find that we have submitted five Amendments to this Bill and if they are not accepted one hundred years from now, it can be seen that we in fact submitted amendments because those amendments have been submitted in writing. We are not naïve enough to believe that the Government would accept these amendments. It is done for the records so that it will be seen that the people of this country are not prepared to accept political objectives in relation to circumstances that they know nothing about.

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I started off by mentioning clause 46(3), which is one of the clauses put in for a specific purpose. The other clause to which attention must be drawn is clause 38. We are first told that electoral areas will be created and then we are told that they can be subdivided and separate lists will be prepared and separate electors will be available for those lists although they would refer to the election of one council. When the Minister was asked where this system came from he said this was the Tasmania system. I should like to be corrected if I am wrong, because the origin of the system is most important.

We can find no reason in the context of the situation in this country to justify any other but that system of proportional representation with which we are conversant. It has been said that it is the system which will solve the problems of this country. It has been said that this

system will compel different factions to come together in order to make government possible; it has been said that the system will make it impossible for a minority to rule a disorganised majority.

I took the trouble to do some research on this other system of proportional representation. Before I heard it mentioned by the hon. Minister I had not a clue where it came from and I find that it is a system of proportional representation which was evolved in Tasmania. I am reasonably certain that the majority of my good friends who are trying to express an opinion on something they know nothing about will not be able to say where Tasmania is. Tasmania, as the hon. Minister will know, is in the south-east coast of Australia. It is one of the states of Australia. The proportional representation system which was evolved in Tasmania is very interesting and I hope the Minister understands how the system came about.

Tasmania was colonised by the British in the 18th century. It is accepted to be, and is, the most beautiful state in Australia. It is the holiday resort of the majority of Australians who can afford to spend time in holiday resorts as well as the resort of several people in the world who have the money and inclination to look for places to spend holidays. As a result of this, the British colonists, when they went to Tasmania, set out to decimate the aborigines in Tasmania to such an extent that the last aborigine in Tasmania died in 1876.

What is also important is that before Tasmania got its important position on the Australian scene, it was peopled by a few colonists. In addition to that fact, its population largely consisted of convicts, because it was a convict colony of Great Britain on that obscure coast in the south-east part of Australia. What was the result? The result was that in 1807, Tasmania was given a degree of representation; it was permitted to send representatives to the House of Assembly in New South Wales and, because the history of Tasmania was such, they made absolutely certain that if there was ever again a settlement of aborigines in Tasmania, the aborigines would never be able to attain political importance. This was done because the

aborigines of Australia have the right, as Amerindians in Guyana have the right, to settle in any part of Australia.

In addition, the fact that Tasmania was a penal colony, the Australians of Tasmania naturally developed a degree of prejudice against the descendants of those convicts and that prejudice was expressed by making it impossible for them to rise and have any political power. There was a special vote for them within the districts in which they grew and in which their grandfathers before them lived.

Fortunately for Tasmania, the thinking in the world has changed. The Maoris, who are the aborigines of Australia, have been given a larger amount of political freedom and have not found it necessary to try to migrate to Tasmania which is the only part of Australia where you will not find a single aborigine today, because he was wiped out and political laws made it a very inhospitable place for him to live. Therefore, he never went there.

What do we find? We find the political system of Tasmania copied in Guyana where the people who copy it want to ensure that certain sections of the community can never again rise to political equality. What a nice state of affairs! I wonder if the Minister stopped to do some research to find out how the Tasmanian system of voting came into being. If he had done so, he would have been ashamed to quote it as a method to be used in Guyana. *[Interruption.]* Unfortunately it is not a simple thing to deal with people who display their ignorance in public.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member should be very careful in his choice of words. I would prefer if he withdrew the word “ignorance” and rephrased what he has just said.

Mr. Sutton: I see your point very clearly, sir. It causes me no difficulty whatsoever to withdraw the remark which has given offence. I would say that lack of knowledge is usually no fault of the people who display it. *[Laughter]*

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9.10 – 9.20 p.m.

Having dealt with the method of proportional representation used in Tasmania I will once again give an example. This was done yesterday, but I am afraid that, because of the remarks of certain hon. Members, it is necessary to repeat it to see if they will try to understand. I shall not move from what I quoted yesterday because it is an ideal and really good example.

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If you fix an area on the East Coast centred on Buxton and the new electoral area is now changed to include Lusignan, Annandale and Vigilance, you will find that, under clause 38(2), what the Minister could proceed to do is allot fifteen seats to this newly constituted area of Buxton and he could decide that there would be separate lists for what we now know as Buxton; separate lists for what we now know as Lusignan; separate lists for what we now know as Annandale; and separate lists for what we now know as Vigilance. He could declare that the total number of seats could be eighteen for this area. He could say that Buxton as we know it will now have twelve seats and this is their list of electors; Lusignan will have two seats and this is their list of electors; Annandale will have two seats and this is their list of electors; Vigilance will have two seats and this is their list of electors; making a total number of eighteen seats.

What is of vital importance in this exercise is that the splitting and subdividing of these areas bear no relation whatsoever to their resident population. What will you find? You will find that the people in the area where there are P.N.C. supporters will be returning to the same council seats with an electoral quota of fewer electors than another area which has two seats – Annandale for example – which may be 4,000 per seat and Central Buxton at 2,000 and 1,500 per seat. It is as simple as that.

What do we find? We find that this Government was in a political dilemma. It has declared that local government elections must take place. It finds itself in charge of the Central Government and it finds that the seat is getting a bit warm because it is committed – and any Government must now be committed – to the holding of local government elections under some

system that bears some resemblance to the Marshall Plan to which we all committed ourselves – both this Government and the present Opposition and *vice versa* – quite some years ago.

The members of this Government find that they have nothing which will take the place of their honoured, revered and well worked foreign votes. You will remember that out of a total number of 36,000 votes cast, our party got the nominal sum of about 1,000 votes and the other section of the Opposition got in the vicinity of 1,000 votes. A blind man looking through a brick will know that that was impossible in the context of the position, what was happening in Canada, London, and the United States. In London and Canada alone we have registered members amounting to five times the number of the votes we got, do not talk about supporters.

Where do the members of this Government find themselves? They find themselves asking this question, “Boys, what can we do to get a pad sufficiently thick to do for us what the foreign votes did in the general election?” After ways of research they turned up the Tasmanian system of P.R. which allows them to subdivide electoral districts in order to nullify one person, one vote, in the light of their own P.R. which was devised in order to prevent an organised minority getting control of a comparatively disorganised majority.

When you find yourself compelled to be fish at one time and fowl at another you must do some serious self-searching because you are obviously creating a situation which, whichever side you turn, must eventually result in your own destruction. The people who devised P.R., with the help of the present Government and ourselves, devised it with the hope that whatever Government came into power will, with the help of the West with whom this Government is aligned, be so good as to govern well, and will show advances in this country to such an extent that racial animosities would disappear and then people will vote on policies rather than race.

What is this Government proceeding to do? It is proceeding to destroy this. It is setting out to turn the clock backwards. We all know that, if an election is properly conducted, it is statistically impossible for any party to get an overall majority. The members of the P.N.C.

knew what they had in mind when they said, “**Boys, we will not only rig, but we will be with them for a long time.**” They knew that the standards of the West, the fine points of democratic procedure and voting could not do a thing to them. They will set new standards in Latin America. Instead of having revolutions with guns they would have revolutions which are created in the ballot boxes. This matter is not a casual one. This matter is one which is reminiscent of the famous historical story which we all know about, that Nero was twiddling his thumbs while Rome was burning.

We of the United Force cannot be accused of political expediency but, unfortunately, we are Guyanese and we think in terms of what is good for Guyana. As soon as people try to dabble with natural forces they will create forces which they cannot control. This is very serious situation. We know that the amendments which we put up will not be accepted, but we have put them up so that they will go down on record for history to show what we were trying to do and so that, historically, it will be known and recognised that there was a point of light in the ocean of darkness which attempted, and seems to be succeeding, to overrun Guyanese such as the sins of Hitler did in Europe. But people then did not know how they would be contained. We do not know how they will be contained, but we believe that there is a God above who will take care of these people. As long as this Government continues to put a smokescreen of legality over organised rascality, there can be no hope for it.

The real tragedy in this whole matter is in the fact that the Government is fully aware of the factors necessary to induce the healing of the racial cleavages which are present in this country.

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But unfortunately, they have not got the character, they have not got what it takes, honesty of purpose, to pursue a course which will be beneficial to Guyana but may adversely affect the political control now held by the P.N.C. It is not that they do not know the solution. They do not have the guts. Why? Because they are afraid of losing control. They know the

force of nature. They are making the mistake which the major opposition made of calling people by certain names. They feel there are fools on this side, their side is right, without realising that there must be a certain proportion of fools among us. We cannot fool them all.

As I said before, the people to save this country will be the people themselves. I am certain of that whether it is in my lifetime or whether we have to go through fire and brimstone, possibly like the United States, possibly the United Kingdom, possibly like Russia or France, before we can find a character, the chastisement we are suffering for the sins of our forefathers. Perhaps this country will be able to raise its head when we are able to say, "We have gone through fire and brimstone and now we are one people, one nation, with one destiny."

Mr. Ram Karran: I wish to congratulate the hon. Minister, having delivered his speech on the introduction of the Bill yesterday and the one we had before. The Prime Minister's simile of a few years ago seems to have become a reality. The thoroughbred of the Local Government Board has brought a thoroughbred measure before this House. With seven days' notice, we are expected to discuss, debate, and to pass 150 pages of very heavy matter. Perhaps this is all the Government hopes to bring about, that is what it seeks, a Co-operative Republic. Sir, you have asked us to co-operate. We know that as far as the Government is concerned, it is only the Opposition which will be called upon to co-operate in these measures and the Government will continue to ride roughshod over the people. My colleagues have already made this point.

These measures are important and far-reaching. The Prime Minister has intimated that the people have given him support. The organisations that represent all local authorities have come out against this measure. I do not know why Members must continue to mislead this House and the nation. As I said, I hope that hon. Members in the Opposition are not going to do all the co-operating in the so-called Co-operative Republic and the government will at this late stage begin to understand that even though for the time being it might be able to get away with it, that in the long run it is not going to do the country any good.

Perhaps it might be opportune to mention that Wednesday has been set aside for the debate of Opposition measures, but we see from the records that the measures tabled in the last Assembly failed to get the support of the government. We have not been debating questions by the Opposition. We are dealing with the Government. I take this opportunity to remind the Government of its solemn promise. It has been not the exception but the rule and so we ask that the Order Paper be so prepared that the Opposition Members of Parliament, who are equal Members of this House, could have their measures debated.

What is more important is that despite the situation bedevilled by racialism at the centre, this Bill precisely seeks to carry this division even into the local communities. The malady suffered from the British and American interference is going to affect this section of the community as a result of this measure. It must be observed that even though looting and raping and setting fire went on in 1962, 1963 and 1964, in the majority of areas particularly where there were local authorities, every effort had been made and was successful in keeping people united regardless of race.

The situation in the rural areas seems to be healing but the Government seems determined to bring about the disease at the community level in the local authorities. I appeal to the Minister even though it might fall on deaf ears that the measures be held back so that the health of the local authorities may not be impaired and at the national level, the health and liveliness of the community prior to the interference may be recaptured.

One observation having been made by more than one Member, I do not mean to deal with it. It is the question of the Minister's function in this and the legislation recently passed. I hear Members on the opposite side asking, "Who are we going to have at the top if the Minister is in charge of local government?" Why all these almost despotic powers? It is no use pointing to what obtains in the United Kingdom from which a great deal of this legislation has come because in the United Kingdom and in many countries the national body – the Minister and the House of Commons are far removed from the local elections.

In this case we have a Minister who has himself come from the local government sphere and, indeed, in a small country like this and with the close rivalry of the parties, it is very certain that the Minister, being himself, is going to influence, to a large extent, what goes on in that sphere. It is for that reason more than any other that some attempt should have been made – and the Government has the ingenuity to devise something particularly suitable to our country, so that in the local government sphere an attempt could be made to create an atmosphere that is healthy, so that the suspicions which are reared could be removed; then the reforms which the Government seems to be very much in a hurry to bring about could be carried out in a real way and the communities not yet infected with the disease could continue to grow healthily for the benefit of the people.

The hon. Minister will exercise powers on almost everything. He has the right to decide when elections will be held, he has the power to make what is valid invalid. I do not know – he has a lot of powers. He will name, in the case of a tie in the local government elections, the successful contestant and make the final decision. There is no principle and yet the other hon. Members talk of principle. In fact, no principle is laid down. Surely the intelligence and the ingenuity of the advisers could be used to find some measure by which these things could be done in order to remove the fear which exists throughout the country.

Much has been said about the question of the Greater Georgetown area and while some of it has already been dealt with in the last Bill, I would wish to observe that if the elections are to embrace the whole area up to Cummings Lodge, then, obviously, despite the frustration and all that will come about, the hon. Minister ought to ensure that – and I do know that he cannot – it is made clear to this House. One cannot weld these two communities together without having the people concerned, the people who formerly owned these lands and who may have sold these lands to individuals to provide the services and amenities that the taxpayers of these areas will have to pay for services which they ought to have by law.

I refer to the Greater Georgetown area, lands which have recently been bought from Bookers – Prashad Nagar and Smallstown and lands in that area where certain basic services should have seen put in long ago. I refer also to the great disservice that is being done to our country in relation to the Green Belt which will come under this Bill and which is catered for by this measure. It is true that most of these lands are unoccupied but instead of the government arranging for or working towards the building of a real green belt, we note that day after day, the owners of these lands are making fantastic profits from them by private sales. In 1932 the area from Industry to Kitty was sold for \$60,000, and in 1947 or 1948 one-ninth of that area was sold for \$450,000 leaving out the rest which is now being sold at \$4,000 per acre. Fantastic profits are being made on these lands and the owners are pressing, not only the Government who seem to be mesmerised by these forces, but other people who are purchasing these lands to cut them up in small cubicles and creating more lots in an area which, according to Mr. Costello, ought to be the Green Belt.

I think that Mr. David Singh understands that as he lives in that area and he ought to know that if this area is cut up and sold in various small lots as Bookers have done to make more money, that, at some future time, long after these hon. Members who ought to know better are gone from the scene, the Guyanese people who will be living here will have to redevelop it according to the sensible proposals put up by Mr. Costello.

It is no use putting up elections; according to these Bills great detail seems to have been gone into to put in blanks – and this is one – and I hope that something will be done for the development of these areas. As I said, despite the fact that the Bill will be going on, that alone will not take care of the problems of these areas. Take, for instance, an area I referred to where the Government seemed to be terribly interested, when Bookers sold the lands to the people with mere tracks; they are now called on to perform self-help, an exercise for which the Government is providing very crude materials which is far below the standard required and, indeed, when the elections are held, I understand from the hon. Minister that it will be held shortly and that is why they want it passed tonight, these poor people will be saddled with the responsibility of what should have been provided by the first owners of the land. This is not a colonial Government,

even though they want to leave the name of the city as Georgetown – I thought they would have changed it to another name instead of naming it after a mad King of Britain. That is as far as they want to go to decolonise.

I wish to refer to the question of the proxies. I think it has been dealt with on many occasions but I said that the local areas in this country have not been infected as badly as the organisation in our country. This Bill seems to be patterned after, to a large extent, the National Elections Bill and they have taken care of the mistakes that they made in getting a two-thirds majority so that they can change the Constitution at will. In the local government elections they have corrected the error but I want to ask why is it necessary, if in the general elections where the country is one constituency, to allow the person who votes to cast three proxies?

9.50 p.m.

In the general elections, it is different. As I said, under the local elections, there are smaller communities and not only are there smaller communities but most of the people are in the area. The Government has said that there is not enough interest shown in the local elections. If you are going to create interest then you must encourage people to cast their votes rather than to allow these bright *Johnnies* going around canvassing perhaps on a commission basis. The hon. Member Mr. Harry Lall referred to a case at Ithaca where a man cast votes for people whom he did not know and they did not exist. I know of cases in the West Berbice where I was working on elections day where people did not know for whom they were casting votes. It was in the language of the hon. Member who spoke before that this matter was real rascality on the part of those organising it.

I wish to emphasise and to support the contention that if we are going to create a situation in which people take a keen interest in the affairs, then they ought to be encouraged to cast ballots by themselves. That is the first lesson in democracy. It is no use getting party activists and people who are being paid a commission to vote – to get one-page advertisements, putting photographs of the Prime Minister to say that, “I am supporting the P.N.C.” That is all rubbish

and it is destroying our community. We are going further and further into chaos. If we should have proxies, let us make it so that one person can cast a proxy. It should be in circumstances where a man should be allowed to cast a proxy for his old mother or his pregnant wife. But to give one person the opportunity of casting three proxies is making it very dishonourable and disgraceful. This is local government elections and we should not continue this fraud perpetrated against the Guyanese people.

I wish to deal briefly with the cost of the elections. The Government is being very dishonest in having promised the local authorities that these first elections will be at the expense of the central government. We see, however, from the legislation before us that this will now be the responsibility of the local authorities. We have some experience in legislative matters and in estimates, and things of that kind. From what we understand, the local authorities which have not yet been formed are going to be called upon as soon as they are set up to foot the bill, the cost of which only God in Heaven knows. Today, hundreds of people are being retrenched from the Government Service. I am sure that no one would object to the Government's carrying out its promises to the local authorities to bear the cost of these new elections. The Government itself is unaware of the cost.

I ask the hon. Minister to persuade his colleagues to provide funds for these elections to be held by the central government so that these people would not be tied down with a mill-stone around their necks as soon as this measure of democracy is offered to them. My colleague and friend the hon. Member at the back has already dealt with the situation in the sugar industry and extra-nuclear areas, some of which will come under these schemes. These are people who for generations have pampered the system of paternalism which has been prevailing as a result of the administration of the sugar industry by very low wages and adverse working conditions. As a result of prevailing conditions a measure like this is not very suitable for immediate introduction. If the hon. Minister would bear all these things in mind then he will certainly see the need for the Government to foot the Bill for these elections. We were expecting that once the local

authorities have been in existence for two or three years, they would be able to organise their business so as to hold and pay for their elections.

Elections were held in the past and were fair. In fact, we have had several interesting court matters arising from election petitions and what not and in those days there seemed to have been greater interest in local government. Today, there is no longer any interest and if the Government were to make it interesting then it ought to carry out things in such a way so as to bring some measure whereby greater interest will be created. If the people get the impression that they will have to foot the bill, and they will have to pay for this and that, I can assure the hon. Minister and his colleagues that interest would not be created and the people will regard it as a measure that they are being faced with ever since this Government came into office – there has been continued pressure on these people.

I do not wish to deal with specific clauses in the Bill because we on this side of the House have submitted to the Clerk a number of amendments. I wish to say that the hon. Minister has been behaving as if this is a simple measure or a one-page Bill; it is a very ponderable Bill; it has over 600 pages of heavy material. The Government should be thankful that the Opposition is co-operative, as Your Honour has suggested, to get through this measure. I hope that in the Committee stages the Government will give us some time to be able to put forward our objections which we refrained from doing during the Second Reading. If the Government would not wish to democratise the measure, I am sure that it will see the need to accept some of these amendments which we have put forward.

10.24 p.m.

On resumption --

Mr. Deputy Speaker: When the sitting was suspended the hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran had concluded his speech. The hon. Member Mr. Y. Ally.

Mr. Y. Ally: While some members of the Government are taking this matter very lightly it is usual to think in serious terms. This is the bread and butter of the people of our country with which we are playing.

With regard to this Bill, first of all there is supervision of the elections by a Minister. I concede that the Minister has some religious background. People at least expect some amount of sincerity, but my friend mentioned before that this is a P.R. election and his interpretation of P.R. was “political rascality”

We have to be very serious when we are thinking about this Bill. We have experience with last elections. Experience has taught us what power the Chief Election Officer had. As was mentioned before, decisions taken by his committee were never known to him. In fact, they were only known to him when he read them in the newspapers. It appears to be merely a rubber stamp of the P.N.C. Government.

The Minister will be armed with wicked and undemocratic powers to suit his whim and fancy. Clause 8(2) (e) reads:

“the day not later than which the supplementary lists and all forms of objections and applications for correction of particulars shall be sent by the assistant electoral registrar to the electoral registrar under section 19;”

Then paragraphs (f) and (g) follow. Clearly this has no meaning, when the Minister can supersede all that is written here in this Bill. This is clearly a denial to Guyanese of the right to vote. Our people were denied registration for the General Election last year. How can this Government ask Guyanese to defend our country when it is denying them their inherent right? Government is asking Guyanese to defend our country when this same callous Government is denying them their inherent right. There will be the same fraud at this registration as at the last one and as my colleague mentioned, over \$100,000 must be found for costs to the judges to remove the evil created by these P.N.C. devils.

Clause 38 deals with the electoral system. Experience has shown that surplus power by the Minister can either be used with discrimination or be abused. Clause 40(2) deals with the qualifications for councillors. No person shall be qualified to be elected as a councillor, or if so elected to hold or continue in office as a councillor if he is unable to read or write the English language. This is understood, but we do not understand what is stated in clause 53(1).

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Clause 53 deals with “**Death or withdrawal of candidate.**” The P.N.C. Government anticipates getting support from dead persons as is implied in sub-clause (1) of clause 53 which states:

“53. (1) If a person whose name is included in a list of candidates which has been submitted to the returning officer dies, or, by notice in writing signed by him and addressed and delivered to the returning officer, withdraws his candidature, his name shall be deleted from the list and, if the list has already been published, the returning officer shall cause notification of the deletion to be published:”

It is enshrined here that you want something in writing from these dead persons. The proviso to that sub-clause states:

“Provided that where the name of a person is the only name originally included in or remaining in the list of candidates, that person shall not withdraw his candidature unless his notice of withdrawal is delivered to the returning officer not later than the 19th day before election day.”

These are the things that leave one to wonder.

We know about the fantastic fraud at the last national elections and the P.N.C. is again banking on being honoured with the same list to carry out the same fraud at this local government election. I should like to give some religious advice to the P.N.C. Muslim group. With your permission – *[Interruption]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order! Let the hon. Member speak; he is making a quotation.

Mr. M. Y. Ally: I am quoting from page 576 of the *Al-Hadis*. [**Mr. Kasim:** “Author?”
There is no author; it is the *Al-Hadis*. [**Mr. Kasim:** “There must be an author.”]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I think that while the hon. Member is quoting he should be given a chance to make his quotation. I would prefer if hon. Members would remain silent while the quotation is being made. The hon. Member may proceed.

Mr. M. Y. Ally: Thank you. I quote:

“Verily Allah does not change the condition of a people until they themselves change their own conditions. (13:11Q). God says in another verse: It may be that your Lord will destroy your enemy and make you rulers in the land. Then He will see you how you act – 7:129Q. The Prophet said: He will try you how you act – 2:42. The Quran says: and He it is who has made successors in the land and raised some of you above others in rank that He might try you by what He has given you – 6:166Q. And your Lord is self-sufficient, Lord of Mercy. If He pleases, He may take you off and make whom He pleases successors after you, even as He raised you up from the seed of another people – 6:134Q. He (God) causes such of His servants to inherit it (land) as He chooses – 7:128Q.

From the above verses, it is abundantly clear that the righteous servants of God who are just and kind are given ruling powers and administrative charges. They continue to hold the reigns of a government till they remain righteous and just. As soon as they fall into evil ways, become engrossed in luxuries and enjoin oppression on the subjects under their care, there arise signs of their down-fall till they are totally crushed to give place to a new people who are more just and righteous. As is the rise and fall of an individual, so is the rise and fall of a nation.”

We have seen that there was open fraud in the counting of the votes for the Kitty area. We have seen where 210 P.P.P. votes were added to the P.N.C. votes. We have seen where 78 P.P.P. votes were added to the G.U.M.P. votes. There were poor civil servants who were working day and night and who were involved in this fraud. When a clear objection was made,

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the result showed that the amounts did not balance. Seven ballot-papers were missing and had to be treated as spoilt votes. We can see how unfair this election was.

I should like to give a little further advice because I agree that the non-Muslim members of the P.N.C. might not see my point but the Muslim members of the P.N.C. should at least give guidance to the government Ministers. I should like to quote from page 580 of the *Al-Hadis* – some rules for the guidance of the leader.

These are very good rules:

“Administration is the most onerous task and the greatest responsibility is placed on its chief. He is either a show of Allah or a viceroy (Khalifa) of Allah, or a devil according he is just or unjust. Consequently, there is a great merit in good and just administration and a great sin in bad and unjust administration. In order to be a good ruler, he must have, before his mind’s eye, the following things. (1) He shall take the world as a temporary resting place for preparation for the everlasting next world. (2) He shall try therefore by just administration to acquire as much religious merits as possible before his death. (3) He shall take himself as a mere servant of the people and a trustee for his subjects. These things, if kept by a ruler constantly in mind, will go to make him the most successful man in administration. A ruler shall observe also the following rules. (1) He shall love for his subjects what he loves for himself. (2) His door should always remain open for hearing grievances and for redress of wrongs. (3) Justice coupled with mercy shall be the key note of administrative policies.”

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At the last General Election, the Government said nothing was wrong but the P.P.P. is claiming that this Government got into office by choke and rob methods. The Government does not want people to know the political rascality that went on to put it into office. I would like to advise, even if members of the Government are going astray, what is the true path. The Muslims on the Government side can advise the Ministers. I would like to read a quotation which is very

good. These are the people who say the P.P.P. does not believe in religion. The heading is "*Administration of Justice.*" It reads:

“(a) Exhortation to do justice. The Quran definitely gives us advice to be maintainers of justice in many verses: O you who believe! Be maintainers of justice, bearers of witness for Allah’s sake though it may be against your own selves, be upright for Allah, bearers of witness with justice and let not the hatred of a people incite you to act inequitably. Act equitably; that is nearer to piety. Allah loves those who do justice. When you judge among men, judge with justice. When you speak, be just though you speak against a relative. Verily Allah enjoins justice and doing of good, and giving away aims to the kindred; and He forbids indecency, evil and rebellion.”

We are told to enjoin what is right and to forbid what is wrong. We have seen the fraud that has taken place. It is very good to take advice at times. The Government must not feel that at all times it would be right and as I said before, we need people in this country with some interest who can advance our country. These suspicious methods are chasing the people away. If we make a mistake now, posterity will show that we have blundered. I appeal to the Government to practise, “Vox Populi, vox Dei, the voice of the people is the voice of God.”

If this Government has any regard for religion as it pretends to have, and if it has any regard for its people, at least it should hear the voice of the people. Railroading a Bill like this without the full co-operation of the people concerned does not show any confidence. It is only creating dissatisfaction in the ranks. The Government should try to do something even if we have to defer these elections until after the Republic is declared because we would be united. If we are united we can go into the Republic. It is no use going into a Republic with a divided community.

I urge this Government to think seriously of the things the Opposition has recommended and do something which would bless our generation.

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Mr. Ambrose: For many years, every thinking Guyanese was looking forward to the day when we would have had local government reform. We all looked forward in vain because the Bill in front of us has made no substantial change. We who have been living in the countryside know that things have been going from bad to worse and we were looking for some reform to change things. The Bill before us has made no significant change.

We were further surprised to see that the Government in its haste to hold local government elections, is prepared to use the very list which was prepared to carry on the 1968 General Elections. However, thinking Guyanese know what took place at the December last elections. This is no secret. For instance, the compilation of the 1968 electoral list shows 110,000 names more than in the list of 1964. In 1964, there were 250,000 persons who were entitled to cast their franchise at those elections.

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In a matter of four years there was an increase of 110,000. Any child would know that this did not represent the true situation in Guyana. When one examines the list in detail, one sees how this fraud was organised. For instance, there were certain districts in this country where the list had grown within the last four years by one and a half times. Take areas like the Western Berbice area – the Abary. In the Abary, there was a fifty-two per cent increase.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: You are repeating the arguments of the other four hon. Members on your side. If you are going to repeat –

Mr. Ambrose: This is not repeating, sir. What I have said is that in the Abary, in this one constituency, there was a fifty-two per cent increase on the list from 1964 to 1968.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: You did not listen to the hon. Member Mr. Harry Lall.

Mr. Ambrose: I was not here when he spoke.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope that you would refrain from repeating the arguments that others used.

Mr. Ambrose: We saw that the increases had identified themselves in some areas more than others. In the Mahaicony area there was a forty-nine per cent increase to the 1964 list. In Buxton, there was a fifty per cent increase. On the Essequibo coast area there was forty per cent increase while at Wismar the increase was one hundred and nine per cent. From 8,000 in 1964 to 17,000 in 1968! It can be clearly seen that in the Corentyne there was only an eight per cent increase. This shows clearly, in the way the list was padded, where these increases came from.

In Georgetown, in one single house in Russell Street, there were – *[Interruption]* Clearly it is taking place in the course of compiling that list. We remember quite clearly the Grant Kingelly area of West Coast, Berbice – that area had 596 votes but, after a check, it was found that 190 persons could not be found and this has taken place in every part of the country. In my particular area, there were names that we opposed, names of people who were not to be found. This was done specially and now we all know why! We think that this particular list should be scrapped. This list does not identify itself as a true picture of persons entitled to vote. In using this list already, it can be said that the intention is to introduce party politics in local government elections.

The P.N.C. has already won the elections because when one takes the figures into consideration, one see quite clearly that the P.N.C. party starts with about 50,000 lead, that is, when you take the padded list into account. In this coming election a new situation will arise whereby thousands of people in each area do not have their identification cards for one reason or the other – the main reason being that their photographs have been spoilt and they would not be permitted to go and exercise their franchise as if this is relevant. Thousands of people are in this particular position whereby they have attained the age of twenty-one, they are entitled to take

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part in any national or local government elections, they were registered but their identification cards cannot be given because of their spoilt photographs.

I, myself, have not got my card although I have, on more than a dozen occasions, gone to secure it. Each time I am told that the photograph is spoilt and the card cannot be given to me until another one is taken out. Many times I go and the photographer is not to be found and, if we find him, something is wrong with the camera and so it goes on and on. So the situation is, at the moment, that if local government elections are coming in another forty or fifty days, I will not be one entitled to vote because I cannot get my identification card. This is the situation. This has been prevalent in the areas where the Opposition party is very strong. One sees that all the supporters of the P.N.C. have their cards. None of their photographs were tampered with. They had no difficulty in obtaining their cards.

Since they are starting with a lead of about 50,000, no doubt thousands of supporters of the Opposition party do not have their identification cards, this will mean that the Government is starting off with a 100,000 lead. There is no need for elections!

What they should have done as the hon. Minister is given so much power, they should have nominated people and carried on and let the world know what is really going on. This is not an election! What is needed in local government is to tackle the money problem that faces the country, not try to rig the elections. The Government should have seen that up to the 31st December, 1968, a little over fifty per cent of the rates were collected.

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In the seventy-eight local authorities scattered all over the country there is over \$100,000,000 in arrears rates. This is why more and more people are losing confidence in local government because the situation in the local authority areas is even worse than the ordinary plantation areas. This alone can reflect how the people feel about local government. I think the

Government should direct its attention to improving these conditions so that people can have some confidence in local government system.

This is the true position which faces the country today. Since people have lost confidence, they have not been paying their rates, and conditions have deteriorated in local authorities, for example, there is bad drainage and there are bad roads.

The last local government election which was held in 1960 or there about, in our area there were new qualified areas which were brought under local government. It was for the first time the back-land or cultivation area was brought under local government and this was the first time people started to pay rates. After people started to pay rates they looked forward to seeing some benefit but only to find that conditions are worse. The drains and canals are silted up. Money that was allocated for one area is being spent on another area. People are paying special rates and they are worse off now. If the Government would look into these matters it will encourage people and they would contribute in no uncertain way. But the people are not co-operating because they have not seen any benefits from the local government. The situation is going from bad to worse. This can be reflected if the hon. Minister examines the Annual Report of the Commissioner of Local Government. These are the rates collected up to the end of that year. It is clearly stated: Upper Corentyne area, 5 per cent; Central Corentyne area, 44 per cent; Lower Corentyne area, 46.1 per cent; Western Berbice 32.2 per cent; East Coast area 51 per cent. There was a rise in percentage for the East Bank area – 82.6 per cent; West Demerara, 56.1 per cent; Essequibo Island, 62.1 per cent; Essequibo 51 per cent, Northwest District, 28.1 per cent and Mazaruni –Potaro area 53.1 per cent. This only reflects how people are thinking about local government and something radical should be done to encourage these people.

We have seen nothing new; the situation is the same, if not worse. Next year this amount of \$1,102,973.41 would be increased. The P.N.C. has won the elections by rigging and to start off with a false list means that more and more people will lose confidence in those who would be

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carrying on local government work. The padded list should be scrapped and a new list compiled. It is known all over the world what took place at the last elections; it is known that the P.N.C. rigged the election to get political power. The list will not have non-existent people and people will be prepared to make a general contribution not only in local government but in the general development of the country. You cannot win the confidence of the people if you have a situation like this continues.

If one goes to the Passport Office it will be seen that thousands and thousands of young people are leaving the country for one reason or another. People are trying to get away. In my area nearly half of the youths who have left school are leaving or planning to leave the country. When you meet them and ask them what they are doing, they will reply and say that they are trying to leave the country because there is nothing good. Yesterday I met twenty-five young boys from my area and I asked them what they were doing in town -- [*Laughter.*] Why do hon. Members of the Government laugh, this is not a laughing matter.

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Guyana is a very large country with a very small population and, while it might be good for some of us, this is not good for Guyana. It suits a certain policy that we have but it means that the smaller the population the less it will be possible to carry out progressive measures that will be in the interest of the country.

Guyana is a country which needs people because in every part of it people are needed to exploit the fertile soils. No doubt millions of people can be brought in and they would make a very good living compared with what can be done in some countries. But people are leaving. Why? Because conditions are worsening day after day. So long as measures like this continue to be passed people will never have confidence and, as I said before, this will not be in the interest of the country.

In winding up I should like to tell the Government that it is not too late. It is not a question that we are opposing the local government elections, but we see that no election based on the electoral list can be of any interest to right-thinking people. We are therefore urging the Government, since it wishes to have elections in the early part of next year, to prepare a new list that can reflect the true number of Guyanese who are entitled to cast their votes. In doing this greater confidence would no doubt be had by the people of this country in the government and this would be meaningful to the development of our local government system.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member Mr. R. D. Persaud!

Mr. R. D. Persaud: Let me say at the very outset that members of the Opposition are not opposed to local government reform. As a matter of fact we believe that greater powers and authority should be extended to village councillors throughout the country, as well as to the municipalities. Municipal and village councils are important institutions in a young developing country and we feel that the responsibilities that are given to them should be extended. A village council should not be a mere agent of the Government. That would reduce village councils to the level of being agents of the Government and would subvert the true development of village councils.

When one examines the legislation before Parliament, one finds that in these places of legislation important authority is kept away from village councils as well as from municipalities. Both municipalities and village councils have to run to the Minister before they can do several important things for the development of the rural as well as urban areas. What bothers me, particularly in the village councils, is that there is discrimination between the urban areas, that is, the municipalities and village councils. In the case of estimates, for instance, the municipalities have the right to approve of estimates without going to the Minister.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have been listening to you very carefully to discover whether you were discussing this Bill which is now before the House. You are winding up on behalf of

the Opposition. I should like you to confine your remarks to the Bill before the House. I do not see any section here that deals with the type of things you are saying.

Mr. Persaud: What I feel is that in arranging for local government elections we must also take into consideration what authority will be extended to the councils throughout the country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That authority was discussed in the Bill which we debated yesterday. I should imagine that you recognise this. I want you to confine your remarks to this Bill.

Mr. Persaud: In looking at the Bill one discovers that there is discrimination between the two areas but when one examines other clauses of the Bill one finds that the Minister has complete control over the operation of the village councils and this is clearly stated in clause 3 of the Bill No. 23. When one examines other clauses within this Bill one finds that the Minister seizes all the important authority and, when this is so, one can clearly say, without any fear of contradiction, that the councils are going to be mere agents and not really fully authorised to carry out the wishes and aspirations of the people in the various villages throughout the country. Therefore, while there might be in the Bill certain minor reforms, the major questions have been ignored completely by the Government.

I should like the Minister to tell us what will be the position with respect to extra-nuclear areas. I ask this question because the Sugar Industry labour Welfare Fund was set up and the workers within the sugar estates have contributed to this Fund because it had to be utilised for the development of extra-nuclear areas.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I do not think you were here last night when Mrs. Sahoye spoke on this point.

Mr. Persaud: I am expanding the point to let Members know that workers on the sugar estates, because of the contributions they have made to the Fund, must get certain benefits before the change-over to local government is made. I say this because they are entitled to have community centres, markets, proper roads, proper drainage and other facilities in all these areas so that when the changes are made in the various areas they will have very little to do to improve them. But, if the change is made without the Government making a statement in this House as to the position with respect to the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare fund, then these persons will be forced to contribute high taxes for development in their areas, although they have already made contributions to the Fund.

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This is the seriousness in the changeover from the present situation because we all know that many sugar workers are not employed seven days per week. Some of them work for two days only and some do not work when there is no grinding. If they have to pay heavy rates and taxes, the likelihood is that many of the sugar workers' houses are going to be sold for rates and taxes and I am particularly worried because the Government is so silent on this matter. This matter has been raised from time to time in this House during the course of other debates but the Government has remained silent. Why is this so? Every day several changes are being made in the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund but the Government remains silent as to what is the position with respect to the sugar workers throughout the country.

In the municipality, a boundary will be from Agricola on the East Bank to Cumming's Lodge on the East coast. I see that two nuclear areas are being drawn into the Municipality – Houston and Cumming's Lodge – and I understand that there is a third one. What will be the position of the people at Cumming's Lodge as well as Houston under the improved development? This development must come from the S.I.L.W.F. If these areas are converted into the Greater Georgetown area and will be controlled by the municipality, one can clearly assume that heavy taxes will have to be paid by the sugar workers at Houston and Cumming's Lodge. Therefore, at this stage, it is necessary for the hon. Minister to tell us what will be the

position in these areas and I hope that we will get this answer during the course of the Minister's reply.

Another important point I wish to raise is with respect to clause 62 of the Bill. In clause 62 one finds that an important provision to ensure some degree of impartiality and fairness at the elections is omitted. I think that that provision appears in the 1964 legislation as well as the legislation pertaining to the 1968 national elections. Provision is made for the returning officer of the respective district to make available a list of the proxies issued for the respective constituency. If the Government is arguing – as I understand it is arguing – that the village council elections will be fair, then why has it omitted from this Bill a provision to compel the returning officer to allow agents and candidates to inspect the list of proxies and to copy the list of proxies? This shows clearly that the Government has absolutely no intention of having fair elections in the village areas as well as in the municipalities.

Clause 64(3) states:

“(3) The returning officer shall keep a list of proxies which shall be in the prescribed form and which shall be in the prescribed form and which shall set out the names, addresses and the serial numbers of the identification cards of the registered voters for whom proxies have been appointed and of the registered voters who have been appointed to vote as proxies on their behalf,”

This position wilfully omits the further wording that is supposed to be there to allow the agents or candidates to inspect the list of proxies and to make a copy of the list of proxies.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That point was raised before.

Mr. R.D. Persaud: I raised this point –

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I only remind you that it was made before.

Mr. R.D. Persaud: This is an important point concerning the Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Do not make the same points over and over again.

Mr. R.D. Persaud: I am moving on to another point and this is with respect to birth certificates. The Bill states that a baptismal certificate together with an ordinary birth certificates issued by the Registrar of Births and Deaths will be accepted. Why not only one certificate? To my mind, some people are going to be penalised. They are not going to very easily get birth certificates from the Registrar of Births and Deaths and, as a result, they are going to be denied the right to be registered as voters. There are those who are going to be allowed to be registered as voters if they present baptismal certificates. To my mind, there should be only one type of certificate accepted and this should be the certificate issued by the Registrar of Births and Deaths.

When one looks at the Bill one sees that there are many provisions to allow the Government to manipulate the elections to bring about a result which may not indeed be a fair result of the village council elections. What will be the position with respect to the selection of presiding officers and returning officers? Because of our experience, we have complained again and again of these important points. We are not opposed to all the clauses in the Bill. We want to make this very clear. What we are doubtful about, what we have our reservations about, is the manner in which the elections are going to be conducted.

All of us who have contributed to this debate had our experience as candidates in the various areas. I had the experience of going to a particular polling station where the presiding officer, after he was told that he had the power of arrest, did not allow me to stay and witness the manner in which elections were being conducted. And I was a duly appointed candidate for that area! Ninety-nine per cent of the presiding officers in the particular constituency, lower Demerara River, were known P.N.C. activists. In the past we had Magistrates and District commissioners as returning officers at national elections, and when one examines the list of returning officers one sees that certain District Commissioners and certain Magistrates were not appointed to be returning officers at the 1968 elections.

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Are we going to experience the same situation in village council and municipality elections in 1969? The members of this Government feel that we are only out too complain, but I am sure that if they examine their consciences they will come to the conclusion that our complaints are justified. Surely, people going to vote at the various polling stations – whether at national elections or at local government elections – must feel that there is an appearance, there is a semblance of justice and fair-play.

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But when one left one polling station and went to another polling station, one saw in this polling station known activists controlling all election machinery. Can one feel there is fair play at an election? The man did not allow me to remain. At the other one – I do not want to name the persons – this gentleman who was the presiding officer did not even understand the rules that he was governed by in the polling station when I referred to certain rules. This was the dilemma candidates and agents found themselves in during the course of the 1968 elections.

Let me hope that at the coming village council local government elections that the Government will not display the same performance that we witnessed at the 1968 General Elections, employment of only P.N.C. members as returning officer, etc. This is the discrimination we see developing before our eyes and when we complain of these instances, the Government says, “You are only complaining because you want to complain.” I do not want to be too positive because the Government Members would feel ashamed.

In one district, the District Commissioner was returning officer. In another area, because he was suspect, because of the colour of his skin, because of his hair, he was not appointed. I hope it will not be the case in the local government elections. The time has come when the discrimination and racialism in this country should cease. I therefore hope that this Government will not carry this vendetta, this policy of open discrimination, continuously in this country because it has done it in the national elections, in the personnel, returning officer, poll clerk, and

assistants in the office. *[Interruption]* If I tell the Minister what happened at the Sabha elections, he would walk out of this House, he would vomit.

This country wants to build one people, one nation, where discrimination ought not to take place. Guyanese must feel proud of that motto and ought to feel that they have to play a part in this most desirable achievement. How can we achieve this if the Government is in fact acting partially? The Government shares the view that only some people must contribute to the development of this country and others have no say in its development. The country cannot make progress in this way and if the Government is to change the minds of people, the Government will have to be positive in this respect. The masses cannot be fooled any more.

As I said and I repeat for the consideration of the Government, the present policy cannot help Guyana and will not help Guyana. Guyana can make progress but only if the Government changes its policy. We do not oppose the men who sit in the Government. We are opposed to the Prime Minister and his Government because of their actions. We are trying to get the Government to change its policy of the Government, to tell its members to change their policy for the benefit of all the people of this country. The position as represented in this National Assembly is that they can count on the full and complete support of the Opposition but if they continue to act to the detriment of the people of this country, they cannot count on the support of the Opposition.

I therefore in conclusion say that we want local government reform but we have grave reservations as to how the elections for local government will be conducted. We are suspicious of Government's actions at the forthcoming local government elections because our suspicions are based on what took place at the national elections. The Government can only correct the situation or change our opinions by deeds and not by words.

The Leader of the Opposition, Dr. Jagan: "It is my firm conclusion that the election inside Guyana was neither free nor fair. *Quotation. Research Officer of the Granada Television Company.*

This is for the benefit of the hon. Member over there who says that we keep repeating over and over again the word, “**fraud, fraud, fraud.**” Thus, I start out with this quotation. Another member who spoke on the opposite side, the hon. Member, Mr. Singh, said that if the thing was so fraudulent, why did we not bring a case? Mr. Rudy Luck signed an affidavit pointing out that many persons were registered at a certain address. What has been done about it?

“I Joseph Rudolph Spencer Luck, Barrister-at-Law”,

This is the affidavit,

“of 38 Blygezigt Gardens, East Coast Demerara, do solemnly and sincerely declare and affirm as follows:-

- (1) I am the duly authorised candidate of the People’s Progressive Party for the South Georgetown district at the General Elections.
- (2) On the 14th December, 1968, I inspected the list of proxies prepared by Mr. Alleyne, Returning Officer for the said South Georgetown District.
- (3) I discovered that the Returning Officer had allowed a total of 1,285 (one thousand two hundred and eighty-five) electors to vote by proxy out of a total electorate of 10,332 (ten thousand three hundred and thirty-two).

For polling district No. 16, 108 proxies were accepted out of 569 voters, a percentage of 19.

For polling District No. 9, 135 proxies were allowed out of a total electorate of 562 (24 per cent).

For polling District No. 6, out of a total electorate of 677, 192 proxies were allowed (28.4 per cent).

- (4) The following 58 (fifty-eight) persons who reside at 53 Russell Street, Georgetown have been allowed to vote by proxy . . .”

And then the names of the fifty-eight persons are listed.

It goes on:

“I personally, on the evening of the 14th December, 1968 visited the said lot 53, Russell Street, Georgetown.

I found that the north half of the said 53 Russell Street, was occupied in the evening by a Masonic Temple and in the day by the New Preparatory School.

The West half of the south half of the said 53 Russell Street was occupied by a family of Indian Origin. The remainder of lot 53 Russell Street, aforesaid, had two modest cottages, one of which the private residence of the Bowrets, was also used as the area headquarters of the People National Congress.

For the said 53 Russell Street 85 (eighty-five) persons have been registered as electors.

From my personal inspection of the said lot 53 Russell Street, I believe that no more than 15 adults are entitled to be registered as electors and that valid reasons exist for the exercise of the vote by proxy for no more than eight of them. Rather more than fifty of the above proxies are fraudulent.

I make this declaration conscientiously believing the same to be true and in accordance with the Statutory Declaration Ordinance.

Sgd. J. R. S. Luck.”

One hon. Member said that because we repeat the word “fraud” we are adopting the technique of Hitler. Another hon. Member said that if the P.N.C. had fully used fraudulent devices, then it would have so rigged the elections to get a two-thirds majority which they want. I thought that lawyers were supposed to learn logic which was part and parcel of the system of training, but it seems that what has been learnt is not logic but fallacies. Surely the hon. Member Mr. David Singh should know that if the government did not rig the elections to get a two-thirds majority, it does not prove that it did not rig to get the majority of one. I thought that would be logic and logically clear to any little neophyte—*[Interruption by the hon. Member Mr. Aaron]* For a majority of one, I said. Rig for the majority of one at home and rig for a majority of seven abroad! That is what has happened. Tonight and yesterday, we have been going through a long exercise into the various Clauses of the Bill and the Minister’s powers, *et cetera, et cetera.*

But the issue before the House today is not the bones that we are debating but the meat of the question which is that, so long as the P.N.C. is in charge of the election machinery, there can be no free and fair elections in this country. This is the meat of the question. The hon. Minister will probably reply, and we have heard from time to time, that this comes from the British Ordinance or this is British practice; this comes from your own Bill. Okay! This may be so! But what is at issue here is not what is written in the law books but how certain practices are carried out. Does the hon. Minister behave like the Minister in the United Kingdom?

We know that this election is going to be conducted on the basis of the 1968 fraudulent voters list. The same Minister had charge of the compilation of that list. When the Elections Commission which was supposed to be looking after these matters kept going to the Minister they were then told: "Oh, this is not the voters' list being compiled, this is the national register." [Mr. Hoyte: "But it was!"] Then, at a subsequent time another Bill, perfectly legal according to the hon. Member Mr. David Singh, was duly passed in the Parliament. It was the national registration list baptised as the voters' list. Now, we are going to have the same list being used as a voters' list for the local government elections. We know the influences that were used on the Chairman of the Elections. At first, he spoke out. Letters were read in this House which he wrote to the hon. Minister but, afterwards, there was pressure and he kept quiet. Of course, consideration of 1,000 a month – [Interruptions.] [Mr. Hoyte: "Say that in the street!"] I will say it anywhere.

Bribery and corruption! Subverting the institutions of this country! We are now being put through the same farce for another Bill which we went through once for the general election. All the commas and the dots were put in. Perfectly legal! But what happened? We saw that there was not enough time for the revision of the voters' list, and when lists were put up, people could not find them. People put in their claims to be registered, but nothing was heard. Why does not the Government, instead of speaking of irrelevancies, answer some of these specific questions?

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National Assembly

11.40 – 11.50 p.m.

They should be willing to clear their name. They should be glad to take the opportunity in Parliament to clear their name. But they cannot. *[Interruptions]* It is not moaning. They have had to remove their ambassador in England because his name is mud over there. **[Mr. Hoyte:** “Nonsense!”] *[Interruptions]*

11.50 p.m.

The same man who said that it is his firm conclusion that the elections inside and outside Guyana was neither free nor fair, invited Mr. Luckhoo and the Prime Minister to appear before – *[Interruption]* The Government is afraid to answer the world about the fraud it has committed. *[Interruption]* This Government like a dog with its tail between its legs moved Luckhoo and put him in Venezuela because the world is saying that this Government is practising racialism. It paraded Ramphal all over the world to show people abroad that there is no racialism in Guyana because he is a “coolie” man. Whom are you trying to fool you thieves, you vagabonds and rascals? *[Prolonged Interruption]*

Sir, listen to what one of their activists had to say. His name is Joe Hughes; he is in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We are talking about local government elections in Guyana. We are not dealing with overseas voters.

Dr. Jagan: But this is relevant on the matter. I am talking on the list which is going to be used for the local government elections.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: But Joe Hughes –

Dr. Jagan: Sir this deals with the list of electors.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I want to make it quite clear –

Dr. Jagan: I am dealing with the whole list.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Stick to what is relevant or else I will stop you.

Dr. Jagan: You can stop me if you want.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope that the hon. Leader of the Opposition would refrain from quoting from irrelevant documents. We are dealing with legislation concerning the local government elections and I hope that he would not bring any matter into the debate which does not concern the legislation before us.

Dr. Jagan: I am dealing with the padded list of overseas voters. I am trying to show by logical deduction how –

[Interruption by the hon. Minister Mr. Hoyte.] This person who is a lawyer opens his mouth and talks a lot.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition knows that in a matter which is before us, it is necessary that we restrict ourselves to the principles of those matters. I am sure that he does not want us to carry this debate into all sorts of areas which are irrelevant to what we are discussing. This is why I am just calling your attention to what is written in the Standing Orders in relation to the Bill. That is all. I hope that you do not get annoyed.

Dr. Jagan: I am not trying to be irrelevant. I do not want to waste your time or mine.

The elections will be conducted on the basis of the list of the last election. We can only speak from experience if we are going to make a contribution in this House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am contending that these are relevant in the context of the legislation which is before the House; I hope that you would stick to this.

Dr. Jagan: My contention is that the voters list is padded. I have a breakdown here of the thirty-five Districts in the country – the increased votes from No. 1 Corentyne River to Rupununi. I have alongside each district, the increased percentage. There is wide variation from district to district. [**Mr. Hoyte:** “**You have never heard of mobility?**”] The Sixteen districts within the thirty-five accounted for 76,939; of the total increase in those sixteen districts, the P.N.C. had 33,608 new votes which is equivalent to 78.3 per cent. How is it that some areas had such vast increases and others did not? [**Mr. Hoyte:** “**Mobility.**”]

Mr. John: Mr. Speaker, at this stage I –

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

Mr. John: I am rising to move the closure of the debate. Under Standing Order No. 38 I move that the question be now put.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am going to allow the hon. Leader of the Opposition to conclude his statement before I put the question.

Dr. Jagan: Sir, I was saying that there were unusual increases in certain areas as against others. In the last elections there was not sufficient time given, there was not enough care taken to revise the voters list, and we contend that the same thing is going to happen on this occasion. There is an Elections Commission. We objected to its functions on the grounds that it was not doing anything, so much so the P.P.P. did not appoint a member. What has the Elections Commission done about the revision of the voters list? [**Mr. Hoyte:** “It has no power to revise.”] In the past in this country the revision of the voters list took place when the machinery was there, but having fraudulently compiled it, it is not the wish of the Government to change it.

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11.50 – 12 Midnight

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, I think it is a good time for us to adjourn.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, “That this Assembly do now adjourn to Thursday, 16 October, 1969 at 2 p.m.”

[**Mr. John**]

Adjourned accordingly at midnight.
