

**THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

OFFICIAL REPORT

(VOLUME 3)

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

46th Sitting

2.00 p.m.

Friday, 24th 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

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

The Honourable M. Kasim,
Minister of Communication

The Honourable H.D. Hoyte
Minister of Home Affairs

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

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

The Honourable B. Ramsaroop,
Minister of Housing and Reconstruction

The Honourable W.M. Carter,
Minister of Information

Parliamentary Secretaries

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

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

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

Other Members

Mr. J.N. Aaron
Miss M.M. Ackman
Mr. L.I. Chan-A-Sue
Mr. D.A. Singh
Mr. R.C. Van Sluytman
Mr. C.E. Wrights
Mr. M. Zaheeruddeen, J.P.

Members of the Opposition

Mr. C.B. Jagan, Leader of the Opposition
Mr. Ram Karran
Mr. R. Chandisingh
Mr. F.H.W. Ramsahoye
Mr. D.C. Jagan
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
Mrs. R.P. Shahoye
Mrs. E. Da Silva
Mr. J.A. Sutton

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

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 L.F.S. Burnham, Q.C.
Prime Minister - 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 S.M. Patterson,
Minister of Education - 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

Dr. the Honourable Sylvia Talbot,
Minister of Health

Mr. P Duncan, Parliamentary Secretary,
Office of the Prime Minister

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

Mr. K Bancroft	- on leave
Mr. J. Budhoo, J.P.	- on leave
Mr. E.F. Correia	- on leave
Mr. E.H.A. Fowler	- on leave
Mr. S.M. Saffee	- on leave
Mr. E.M.G Wilson	
Mr. A.M. Hamid, J.P.	- on leave
Mr. E. M. Stoby	
Mr I.R. Remington, J.P.	
Mr. V. Teekah	- on leave
Mr. M.F. Singh	- on leave
Mr. R.E. Cheeks.	

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER**LEAVE TO MEMBERS**

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we have received a communication informing us that our Speaker, Mr. Gajraj, who is still in Canada, is ill and that he has been advised by his doctor against returning to Guyana at the end of October. An application for an extension of one month's leave has also been received on behalf of His Honour. On behalf of the hon. Members, I hereby instruct the Clerk to send a letter to Mr. Gajraj, expressing the concern of the Assembly over his illness, and informing him of the grant of the necessary leave and extending to him our best wishes for a speedy recovery.

Hon. Members, leave has also been granted to the hon. Prime Minister from today until the 6th November, 1969, the hon. Minister of Trade and Parliamentary Affairs, Mr. Bissember;; the hon. Minister of Education, Mrs. Patterson; the hon. Minister of Works and Hydraulics, Mr. Green; the hon. Minister of Health, Dr. Talbot; the hon. Members, Mr. Bancroft, Mr. Budhoo, Mr. Corrica, Mr. Saffee, and Mr. M.F. Singh, from today's sitting, and the hon. Member, Mr. Fowler, from the 22nd to the 31st October, 1969,

DEATH OF MR. E.V. VIAPREE

Hon. Members, I am sure that you have heard of the death of Mr. E.V. Viapree, a former Clerk of the Assembly, and you would wish us to place on record our regret at his death. I therefore instructed the Clerk, on behalf of hon. Members, to send a letter to his sorrowin widow expressing the Assembly's regret at his death and extending our condolences to her and to their children.

VISIT OF OVERSEAS PARLIAMENTARIAN

Last of all, we must also place in the records of the Assembly our great pleasure at having with us in Guyana over the last few days, at our invitation and as our guests, a team of Members from the House of Commons. The team comprised Mr. A.H. MacDonald, who is leader of the delegation, Mr. T. Alec Jones, Mr. W.H. Alldritt, Mr. Kenneth Baker, and Sir John Rodgers. We

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have also had the following Members from other Commonwealth Parliaments, the hon. Mr. C.J. Magara from Uganda, the hon. Mr. R. Ngala from Kenya, Dr. N.M. Perera from Ceylon, and Mr. J.W.E. Davies, the Clerk from Sierra Leone. We have also been pleased to have with us at the same time, Mr. Edwin Brooks and Mr. Tony Gardner, United Kingdom Members of Parliament who paid us private visits during the same period.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following Papers were laid:

- (i) Ministers, Members of the National Assembly and Special Officers (Allowance) (No. 3) Order, 1969 (No. 43). (**The Minister of Finance**)
- (i) Schedule of Losses of Cash and Stores. (**The Minister of Finance**)
- (iii) Report of National Honours Committee – July, 1968. (**The Minister of Home Affairs**)

STATEMENT BY MINISTERS

REPORT OF THE NATIONAL HONOURS COMMITTEE

The Minister of Home Affairs (Mr. Hoyte): Mr. Speaker, the National Honours Committee set up under the chairmanship of His Excellency the Governor-General, pursuant to Parliamentary Resolution Number V of 1967, submitted its Report to Cabinet in July, 1968. The said Resolution reads as follows:

“Whereas Guyana is now a politically independent State:

Resolved, that the Government set up without delay a National Committee to go into the question of the establishment of National Honours and to make recommendations.”

The Committee aimed at proposing to Government a fair and impartial system of granting recognition to its citizens, through the Head of State for dedicated public services, exceptional courage and bravery, or excellence in the arts, sciences and professions. In framing

its recommendations, it was guided by the following criteria:

- (a) Dignity and simplicity;
- (b) National significance in the designs of insignia and medals;
- (c) The ideals of excellence, honour, achievement and service to the nation and humanity.

The Committee's Recommendations

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The Committee's main recommendations are summarized in paragraph 8 of the Report. The inauguration of two orders was proposed, the Order of Merit of Guyana and the service Order of Guyana.

(A) The Order of Merit of Guyana

- (i) This should be the highest honour of the State, designed to recognize citizens of undoubted eminence in any field of human endeavour at a national or international level. It should be granted sparingly.
- (ii) A Member of the Order should be entitled"
 - (a) To use the courtesy title "The Honourable" before his name and the suffix O.M.G. After his name
 - (b) To wear the insignia of the Order on appropriate occasion.

(B) The Service Order of Guyana

- (i) This should an Order designed to embrace a broad cross-section of citizens with the emphasis on recognition for service to the Nation or to humanity.

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- (ii) There should be 3 grade of the Service Order of Guyana which would distinguish the quality and value of the service rendered namely:
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| Grade 1 | - | The Medal of Honour (S.O.H.) |
| Grade 2 | - | The Medal of Achievement (S.O.A.) |
| Grade 3 | - | The Medal of Service (S.O.M.) |
- (iii) There should be 3 special awards for courage and brave conduct in the Service Order of Guyana, namely:
- | | | |
|---------|---|--|
| Grade 1 | - | The Medal of Honour (For Valour) (S.O.H.V.) |
| Grade 2 | - | The Medal of Courage (S.O.C.) |
| Grade 3 | - | The Governor-General's Commendation for
Brave Conduct |
- (iv) There should be a Military and Disciplined Service Division of the Service Order of Guyana to cover the following medals for these services:
- (a) **Military**
- (i) The Military Service Order (M.S.O.)
 - (ii) The Military Service Medal (M.S.M.)
 - (iii) The Efficiency Medal (no suffix)

A person awarded a medal in any of the grades in the Service Order of Guyana should be entitled-

- (a) to use the suffix appropriate to his grade after his name.
- (b) to wear the appropriate insignia on suitable occasions.

It was recommended that there should be a Constitution of the Orders of Guyana as set out in Appendix "A" to the Report.

(C) Queens's Counsel

The following procedure was recommended for the appointment of Queen's Counsel. Members of the Bar should be allowed to apply for silk once every year to the Chancellor of the Judiciary. The Chancellor, after consultation with the Chief Justice, Judges, Attorney-General and such other persons as he might deem fit, should submit his recommendations to the Governor-General through the Attorney General as the person deputed by Cabinet to do so. The Attorney General should then formally submit the Chancellor's recommendation to the Governor-General, the convention being that in so doing he would not alter the Chancellor's recommendation. The Governor-General would then formally make the appointments.

(D) Foreign Honours:

The Committee recommended that no Guyanese be permitted to accept foreign honours without the prior permission of the Government of Guyana

It will be noted that, at the date when the Report was submitted, it was assumed that the new honours system might be introduced while Guyana was still a Monarchical State and some recommendations, for example, recommendations in regard to Knighthood and other awards made by the Queen, were of course made with that assumption in mind.

The Report, however, contemplates the change-over from monarchical to Republican status, and, consequently incorporates adequate transitional provision in the Constitution of Orders for a change to a Republican system as set out in Section 47 of the draft Constitution.

Cabinet accepts the Report with Amendments

Cabinet has accepted the Report subject to the following amendments:

1. The Order of Merit should be redesignated the Order of Excellence. (The appropriate suffix should be "O.E.").
2.
 - (a) The Service Order of Guyana should be redesignated The Order of Service of Guyana.
 - (b) The three grades of the Order of Service of Guyana should carry the following designations and suffixes:

Grade 1 – The Cacique’s Crown of Honour (C.C.H.)

Grade 2 – The Golden Arrow Head (A.A.)

Grade 3 – The Medal of Service (M.S.)

- (c) The awards for brave conduct should carry the following designations and suffixes:
- (i) The Cacique’s Crown of Valour (C.C.V.)
 - (ii) The Golden Arrow of Courage (A.C.)
 - (iii) The President’s Commendation for Brave Conduct (No suffix)
- (d) In the Military and Disciplined Services Division of the Order of Service of Guyana, the Medals of Service should be follows:

Military

- (i) The Military Service Star (M.S.S.)
- (ii) The Military Service Medal (M.S.M.)
- (iii) The Efficiency Medal (No suffix)

Police, Prisons and Fire Service

- (i) The Disciplined Service Star for Distinguished Service (D.S.S.)
- (ii) The Disciplined Service Medal for Meritorious Service (D.S.M.)
- (iii) The Disciplined Service Medal for Long Service and Good Conduct (No suffix)

The badges for these grades should show separately the Services in respect of which they were awarded.

In the light of Cabinet’s amendments the Constitution of the Orders has been amended by this Law Officers to reflect the changes.

New Honours System to be inaugurated on 23rd February, 1970 – Republic Day

The new national system of Honours will come into being on Republic Day -23rd February, 1970 – when the first awards will be made.

New Dignity of Senior Counsel

In the legal profession, the dignity of Queen's Counsel will be abolished and a new dignity of Senior Counsel will be established in its place.

British Honours under the Republic

Finally, it is to be noted that as from 23rd February, 1970, all British honours will be dispensed with. However, persons at that date in receipt of British awards, may, as a courtesy, if they wish be allowed to use them after the change-over to Republican status. This permission will not apply to persons who hold the Office of President or who are members of the Cabinet or holders of public office under the Constitution of Guyana.

I am circulating for the benefit of Honourable Members, copies of the Committee's Report, copies of the Constitution as amended and also colour photographs of the proposed designs for the various medals and insignia of the Orders.

In conclusion, it is appropriate to say that the designs are the work of two Guyanese artists – Mr. Alvin Bowman and Mr. Basil DeFreitas and represent an excellent example of Guyanese artistic ability.

Mr. John rose --

Mr. Ram Karran: I wonder if Your Honour will allow me to make an observation?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: This is not usually done under the Standing Orders.

Mr. Ram Karran: The hon. Minister spoke very eloquently. I would think that this is a matter of such great importance affecting all the citizens of the country and should be brought for debate and not just thrown down our throats.

DEATH OF MR. E.V. VIAPREE

Mr. John: Mr. Speaker, under the heading of Statements by Ministers, on behalf of the hon. Minister for Parliamentary Affairs (Mr. Bissember) for whom I am today acting, I think that

it is necessary despite the mention which Your Honour had made in relation to Mr. Elwyn Viapree, for this House to formally make some pronouncement having regard to the fact that one who was so important to the service of this House has passed away.

2.45 p.m.

Mr. Viapree has been known to quite a good number of us here today, indeed, nearly to all of us but I make that reference to the manner in which Mr. Viapree was known. I would rather refer to those hon. Members of this House now present today who have had, during their time, the good fortune of coming into contact with Mr. Elwyn Viapree in the course of his performance of his functions as Clerk of the hon. House. I am sure that those of us who, from time to time, have come into contact with him and who have been able to observe his mannerisms and his work not only in this House but also his manner in carrying out the other services which are so very important to the dignity of this House could have been impressed by the very calm manner Mr. Viapree was able to carry out his services, at a later stage as a call of duty, in another Department of the Government.

I think that his services in the Parliament of this country are that aspect of public service with which he had been particularly distinguished. In the circumstances, I have already spoken with the hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran, and I have no doubt that hon. Members of the other section of the Opposition will share our sentiments. I should like to place on record, from this side, our appreciation of the service which had been carried out by this gentleman and to convey our condolences to his bereaved relatives.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I think that what the Acting Minister for Parliamentary Affairs attempted to do was to get the House to move a Motion of Sympathy. Under the Standing Orders a statement could not be followed by debate. I will suggest, having regard to the fact that the hon. Minister has already made this statement, I wonder whether we should not suspend the relevant Standing Order before we get into Public Business so as to allow other hon. Members of the House to partake in this. At this stage I would ask the hon. Minister to do so briefly.

Mr. John: I shall do so before Public Business. (After a pause.)

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I should like to move the suspension of the Standing Order in order to table a Motion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Just allow the hon. Minister of Home Affairs to introduce a Bill on the Supplementary Order Paper.

INTRODUCTION OF BILL – FIRST READING

The following Bill was introduced and read the First Time:

Public Holidays (Amendment) Bill, 1969. **(The Minister of Home Affairs)**

MOTION

TRIBUTE TO MR. E.V. VIAPREE

Mr. John: At this stage I beg to move the suspension of the Standing Order to enable me to move a Motion of Sympathy on the death of Mr. E.V. Viapree.

Question put and agreed to.

“Resolved that this National assembly records its deep regret at the death of Mr. E.V. Viapree, a former Clerk of the Assembly and pay tribute to the service which he rendered and directs that an expression of its sympathy be conveyed to his sorrowing widow and children.”

(The Minister of Local Government on behalf of the Minister for Trade and Parliamentary Affairs)

Mr. John: I merely need to add a little to what has been said earlier in the statement. Having had the opportunity of judging the services of Mr. Viapree over a long period of time, as have a number of hon. Members, particularly those who were in the Parliament before this term of office, although he later went to another Department of Government, I think that his services to this House cannot be easily forgotten and having regard to the general loss to the community as such, I think it is only fitting for this House to partake.

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Mr. Ram Karran: I am very grateful to the hon. Minister for having given us an opportunity to raise the question of condolences to the relatives of the late Mr. Viapree. I am particularly glad for that opportunity because on the day of the funeral I was in Berbice accompanying some of our guests – parliamentarians from the United Kingdom – and it was very unfortunate that I was unable to attend the funeral.

I have known Mr. Viapree for many years, having been school mates and I know from those days of the very keen sense of responsibilities which he carried, of his ability and of his determination to succeed in anything he attempted to do. Mr. Viapree was one of the very bright students in school and his achievements in the Government in his employment have been indeed a reflection of his activities in his earlier days. I know that after his transfer as Assistant to the Parliament Office or the Legislative Council as it was then called, that he made a great study of the studies he had to carry and indeed any of the old Members who were here could point to his ability and efficiency and his efforts to help at any and at all times.

You will recall, sir, and hon. Members will recall that his removal from this office met with very serious criticisms from hon. Members particularly on this side of the House. I personally feel that his premature death might have been due to the fact that it was not a square deal. However, that cannot be erased at this late stage. I am very happy that we have been given the opportunity to at least record our appreciation of his services to this House.

Mr. Viapree, besides being a typical officer of this House and a responsible person in his public duties, had other interests, most important of which were his devotion to his family.

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I know that his mother and his wife will be very seriously affected by his untimely death. I know too, that he was thinking about retiring very shortly from the Service because it was obvious, from the position he held, that he had no further to go. Having attained the age at which he could retire and, having reached the maximum of his scale, with some strength left in him, he might have been able to retire and see what best he could do for his family.

All those plans, all those hopes, which he had are shattered and I hope that his family will be able to survive with whatever chance is left. His only son was a student in the United Kingdom; I do not know if he came back to Guyana, but I do hope if the need arises for any assistance to be given to him to complete his studies, that the Government will do what it can to assist this young Guyanese, the son of a very devoted servant of the House and of the Service which he served after his removal from this House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak?

Mr. Sutton: We in this section of the Opposition unfortunately did not have the honour of knowing Mr. Viapree as a member of this House. I myself have known him personally for quite a long time and I have no doubt, knowing him as I did, that those remarks made about him are merited. In the circumstance, we in this section of the House would wish that we be associated with the remarks made by the previous speakers.

Mr. John: With those sentiments which have been expressed I would ask that the Motion be adopted and one minute's silence be observed.

Hon. Members stood in silence for one minute.

Motion carried.

CONFIRMATION OF CONSUMPTION TAX (PETROLEUM) ORDER

CONFIRMATION OF CUSTOMS DUTIES (AMENDMENT) (No. 6) ORDER

The Minister of Finance: (Dr. Reid): I ask for leave not to proceed today with the two Motions standing in my name on the Order Paper.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, the hon. Minister of Finance is not proceeding today with the business on the Order Paper. I think this will bring to a swift conclusion today's business.

Motion, by leave, deferred.

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ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Deputy Speaker:I shall now seek the hon. Minister of Parliamentary Affairs to move the Adjournment.

Mr. John: (on behalf of the Minister of Trade and Parliamentary Affairs):I should like to state that the Motion dealing with the International Labour Organisation, notice of which has been published today by the Minister of Labour and Social Security, will be moved next Wednesday. I therefore ask that this Assembly be adjourned until Wednesday, 29th October, 1969 at 2 p.m.

Adjourned accordingly at 3 p.m.
