

THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

[VOLUME 3]

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

49th Sitting

2 p.m.

Thursday, 20th November, 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 Communications

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

The Honourable N. J. Bissember,
Minister of Trade and Parliamentary Affairs

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

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

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

The Honourable H. O. Jack,
Minister without Portfolio

Parliamentary Secretaries

Mr. P. Duncan,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Local Government

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

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

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

Other Members

Mr. J. N. Aaron
Miss M. M. Ackman
Mr. K. Bancroft
Mr. J. Budhoo, J. P.
Mr. L. I. Chan – A – Sue
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. M. Zaheeruddeen, J. P.

Members of the Opposition

Dr. C. B. Jagan, Leader of the Opposition
Mr. Ram Karran
Mr. R. Chandisingh
Dr. F. H. W. Ramsahoye
Mr. G. H. Lall
Mr. M. Y. Ally
Mr. R. D. Persaud, J.P.
Mr. E. M. Stoby
Mr. R. Ally
Mr. E. L. Ambrose
Mrs. L. M. Brance
Mr. Balchand Persaud
Mr. Bholu Persaud
Mr. I. Remington, J. P.
Mrs. R. P. Sahoye
Mr. V. Teekah
Mrs. E. DaSilva
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

The Honourable R. J. Jordan,
Minister of Agriculture and National Resources

- 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

Dr. the Honourable Sylvia Talbot,
Minister of Health - **on leave**

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

Mr. E. F. Correia

Mr. C. K. Wrights

Mr. D. C. Jagan

Mr. E. M. G. Wilson

Mr. A. M. Hamid, J. P. - **on leave**

Mr. M. F. Singh - **on leave**

Mr. R. E. Checks

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER**EXPRESSIONS OF SYMPATHY ON THE DEATH
OF SIR DAVID ROSE**

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, I have the following announcements to make. We have received from the Right Hon. Arthur Bottomley, O.B.E., M.P., Deputy Chairman of the U.K Branch of the C.P.A., a cable and a letter in which he has expressed the great shock of the U.K Members by the news of the tragic death of the Governor – General, Sir. David Rose. He has also requested that the deep sympathy of the Members of the U.K Branch be conveyed to Lady Rose and family and to the Members of our Branch.

We have also received a letter from the Port Kaituma Community Co – operative Council extending sympathy to the Assembly on the death of Sir. David.

VISIT OF U.K MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

I have also received, hon. Members, a letter from the Deputy Chairman of the U.K Branch of the C.P.A. and he has requested that I pass on sincere thanks to hon. Members of our Branch on behalf of the Members of the U. K. Branch who visited us for five days during last month. I also received a letter from the leader of the delegation, Mr. MacDonald, and I should like to read two paragraphs of that letter. It states:

“On behalf of all the delegation of British M. P.s who recently visited your country, I should like to express our deep appreciation for the varied and interesting programme that was officially provided for us. In four days we learnt more about Guyana than I should have thought possible in so short a time; we are far better informed than we were, and I hope we are also wiser.

I think that all the delegation now feel a certain affection for Guyana and its people; perhaps we did not all realize that our visit would develop our spirits as well as our

minds, but it is so. My own especial memory is of the schools that we visited at Blairmont, Rosignol and Matthews Ridge; I was honoured by being asked to speak to the school at Rosignol and perhaps one day I shall return to see how these schools have developed.”

LETTER FROM THE RELATIVES OF THE LATE MR.C.V.WIGHT

We have also received from the relatives of the late Mr. C. V. Wight a card thanking us for the Resolution passed by the Assembly paying tribute to Mr. Wight and extending sympathy to his relatives.

LEAVE TO MEMBERS

Leave has been granted to the Hon. Minister of Health (Dr. Talbot) from the 17th to 22nd November, 1969 and to the Hon. Member, Mr. Feilden Singh, from today's sitting.

~~His Honour the Speaker, Mr. Gajraj, who came back to Guyana on account of the death~~ of the Governor – General, was able to leave here on Monday, the 17th November for the Bahamas to attend the Second Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Conference of Presiding Officers and Clerks of the Commonwealth Caribbean, scheduled to be held in Nassau from the 18th to the 20th November. His Honour is expected to return to Guyana by the end of next week.

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

Mr. D. Singh: I beg to present the petition on behalf of Mr. Alfred. L. Yhap and Mr. Rabindranauth Beharry seeking permission to introduce in the Assembly a Private Bill to amend the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce Ordinance.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Let the petition be read.

The Clerk read the petition as follows:

“To the Honourable Members of the National Assembly of Guyana:

The humble Petition of ALFRED RANDOLPH YHAP of 31 High and Hadfield Streets, Georgetown and of RABINDRANAATH BEHARRY of 192, Wellington Street, Georgetown respectfully sheweth as follows:-

- 1) Your Petitioners are the acting President and the Secretary respectively of the Chamber of Commerce of the City of Georgetown;
- 2) The Chamber was incorporated under the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce Ordinance, Chapter 200 and the objects of the Chamber are fully set out in section 6 of that Ordinance;
- 3) The Chamber has been in existence since 1889 and is an organisation well known and respected by both the Public and Private Sectors of the Community;
- 4) Your Petitioners are the Promoters of a Bill which seeks to amend the aforementioned Ordinance by removing the limit of twenty thousand dollars, which is at present the maximum value of property which may be held by the Chamber. It also changes the name of the Chamber from “The Chamber of Commerce of the City of Georgetown” to “The Georgetown Chamber of Commerce”. (Clause 2).

Other amendments proposed include the following –

- a) Inclusion of subscription to national charities among the objects for which the Chamber is incorporated (Clause 2);
- b) Amendment of terminology to conform to constitutional changes since the enactment of the Principal Ordinance. (Clauses 3 to 5 (b));
- c) Requirement for the submission of an auditor’s report to the Annual General Meeting and the appointment of an auditor. (Clauses 5 (a) to 7);
- d) Change of liability of members on winding up from forty – eight dollars to the amount of the annual subscription. (Clause 11).
- 5) Your Petitioners are desirous of having the said Bill introduced in the National Assembly and enacted by the Parliament of Guyana.

20.11.69

National Assembly

2.05 – 2.15 p.m.

Wherefore your Petitioners humbly pray that the Honourable Members of the National Assembly may be pleased to allow them to proceed.

And your Petitioner, as in duty bound, will ever pray. Signed this twelfth day of August, 1969.

- 1) (Sgd.) Alfred. L. Yhap
Address 31 High & Hadfield Streets, Georgetown, Guyana.
- 2) (Sgd.) R. Beharry
Address 192 Wellington Street, Lacytown, Georgetown, Guyana.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, in accordance with Standing Order 57 (4), I shall put the Question, which is, that the promoters be allowed to proceed.

Question put, and agreed to.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following Paper was laid:

Financial Paper No. 7/1969 – Schedule of Supplementary Provision on the Current and Capital Estimates for the period ending 30th November, 1969, totaling \$8,404,679. [The Minister of Finance]

In terms of Standing Order 69(1), the Minister of Finance (Dr. Reid) named Tuesday, 25th November, 1969, as the day for the consideration of the above-mentioned Paper in Committee of Supply.

QUESTIONS TO MINISTERS

AIDED SELF-HELP HOUSING

Mr. Chandisingh: I wish to ask the Minister of Housing and Reconstruction Question No. 7 standing in my name on the Order Paper:

- i. Is Government aware that as a result of its appeal to persons in Berbice to undertake self-help projects, at least three aided self-help housing groups have been formed in New Amsterdam?
- ii. How soon will Government be in a position to enable these groups to start building their houses?
- iii. Is it a fact that each member of such a group in New Amsterdam must make a down payment of \$350 before work can commence?
- iv. If the answer to (iii) is in the affirmative, does Government not consider this sum too large for low – income persons for whom such schemes are intended?
- v. Is the price for a house lot to be \$900 as reported?
- vi. What type of building material is proposed to be used in constructing new houses under aided self – help in New Amsterdam?

The Minister of Housing and Reconstruction (Mr. Ramsaroop): I beg to submit to this House, the Answer to the Question proposed by the hon. Member, Mr. Chandisingh, in Notice Paper No. 46 published on the 15th October, 1969. The Answer to the first part of the Question is yes. The Answer to the second part of the Question is that a start will be made with the Pearl Group in 1970. The Answer to the third part is yes. The Answer to the fourth part is that Government does not consider a down payment of \$350, which includes legal fees, to be too large for low income persons for whom such schemes are intended. Individual savings in co – operative self – help housing groups have been found in many instances to exceed this sum.

2.15 p.m.

“(v) The price of a house lot is based on the cost of land, plus the cost of development plus five per cent for overheads. It is therefore not possible at this stage to state what the cost of a house lot will be.

(vi) The materials to be used would be lumber, concrete blocks, aluminum sheets, local clay blocks, etcetera.'

Mr. Chandisingh: I wonder if the Hon. Minister is aware that, previously, when aided self – help houses were built for the New Amsterdam area the amounts required to be paid down for these houses were as low as 60 in one case and for a second group of houses the amount paid was 80 or 90. [**Dr. Reid:** "What year?"] Does the hon. Minister not feel that, in view of the financial position of the low income persons –

[*Interruptions*] – who have expressed the view that it is very difficult to meet these payments, he could consider any possibility of easing the position in order to enable the really low income persons to benefit by participating in such aided self – help? Would the Hon. Minister consider, for example, giving the facility for persons to pay a down payment by way of installments so that they are helped in this way?

Mr. Ramsaroop: I am not aware of the fact that any such thing happened some years ago. You say that it was 60? I do know that this sum was arrived at after consultation with the groups and at their overwhelming request that these figures be revised and put on a more realistic footing. I am not aware of the fact that, at any time, the sum of 60 was being asked; this is the Government's policy at this time.

Mr. Chandisingh: If the persons who are members of these self – help groups do make requests for smaller payments, would the Hon. Minister be in a position – [**Hon. Members** (Government): "State an amount!"] – I can only ask questions, I cannot state amounts. [**Dr. Reid:** "That is not a fair question. No answer."]

Mr. Ramsaroop: I do not think that this Government can state what would be the sum to be asked at any future date.

Mr. Chandisingh: I am not sure that I got the full answer to Question No. 2. I would like the Hon. Minister to clarify whether he said that three groups would be started in 1970.

Mr. Ramsaroop: One group will start in 1970.

Mr. Chandisingh: Is the Hon. Minister satisfied that after such encouragement was given to people in New Amsterdam and other areas to form themselves into self – help groups that only one group in New Amsterdam will be started during the whole of next year? Is the Hon. Minister not prepared to ask his colleagues for more funds so that more people would be in a position to start aided self – help?

Mr. Ramsaroop: I wish to ensure the Hon. Member that there are over 40 groups ... The length and breadth of this country. This is a group with a large membership and financially solvent; it has over 15,000 in savings.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS – FIRST READING

The following Bills were introduced and read the First time:

- i. Income Tax (In Aid of Industry) (Amendment) Bill, 1969.
- ii. Caribbean Development Bank Agreement Bill, 1969. [The Minister of Finance]

PUBLIC BUSINESS

BILLS – SECOND READING

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1969

A Bill intituled: “An act to amend the Public Holidays Ordinance.”[**The Minister of Home Affairs**]

20.11.69

National Assembly

2.15 – 2.25 p.m.

The Minister of Home Affairs (Mr. Hoyte): Mr. Speaker, Hon. Members, earlier this year, to be precise on the 29th of August, this Hon. House resolved on a Motion in the name of the Hon. Prime Minister that Guyana should become a Republic. The date chosen for this important transition was agreed upon as 23rd February, 1970. Later, on the 22nd of September, the Hon. Prime Minister laid in this House the report of the Republic Committee and, at the same time, took the opportunity of making a statement setting out the decisions which Cabinet arrived at in relation to the report.

The Committee recommended, among other things, that Republic Day should be a public holiday and that, as from 1970, Independence Day which, hitherto, had been a public holiday should no longer be a holiday but that its national significance be marked in some appropriate way. In keeping with the acceptance of the Government of that part of the report, this Bill was introduced seeking to amend the Public Holidays Ordinance by substituting Republic Day as a national holiday for Independence Day and to give effect to that recommended. I beg to move the Second Reading of the Public Holidays (Amendment) Bill.

2.25 p.m.

Mr. Ram Karran: Sir, I merely wish to call Hon. Members' attention to the observations made by the Hon. Prime Minister – it is significant that he is absent today when legislation was sought for the substitution of May Day for Empire Day or some such change. The Hon. Prime Minister was then very solicitous and said that we ought to have two holidays instead of one, and he went on further to say that those who sought to bring about that legislation were talking on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce. I wonder whom the Hon. Minister is talking for when he suggests that the very important day – Independence Day, which is of national significance – should be observed in some other way and that the act should be amended to allow for Republic Day to be substituted therefor.

This is not a big thing but it is merely to remind the Hon. Members on the other side of their inconsistency all the time. One of these days, I should like to re - read certain things for the benefit of this House and particularly for the benefit of the Prime Minister, to allow the inconsistency of this Government.

It is not difficult, of course, to substitute Empire Day for Labour Day – a day which is a very important day in the lives of all the people of this country, including those who say they are representatives of the working class. But even though Independence Day is in name only – in inverted commas – all that we are going through since 1964 shows that the Hon. Members on the other side are prepared to carry out the Independence Constitution independently, and their lackeys and puppets, all their over – lords in the United Kingdom and in the United States – *[Interruption by the Hon. Minister of Local Government.]* My Hon. Friend across there says, “a complete puppet”. *[Interruption]* This Independence Day, a day which this country was given freedom – **[Dr. Ramsahoye:** “It should be called ‘Cuffy Day’.”] My friend and colleague wants to know if we can call it “Cuffy Day”. *[Laughter]*

In all seriousness, Independence Day should also be a Public Holiday. Whom is the Hon. Minister speaking for – the Chamber of Commerce? *[Interruption]* In this country we count our holidays in relation to those obtained in the United Kingdom – [Dr. Reid: “Don’t you remember that your Committee recommended 12 holidays only.”] – but what Hon. Members are forgetting is that we live in the tropics. *[Interruption by the Hon. Deputy Prime Minister.]* The Hon. Deputy Prime Minister said that we do not have enough working days. Obviously he wants to bring back days of slavery. The climate of this country does not allow for continuous hard work as in colder countries. *[Interruption by the Hon. Deputy Prime Minister.]* When we have the Prime Minister or the Deputy Prime Minister we cannot have peace in this House.

I think that the Hon. Minister could have disregarded the Committee’s report – he is bigger than the Committee – and include in the holiday roster, not only Republic Day, but also Independence Day.

Mr. Hoyte: Mr. Speaker, it is disconcerting to find such irrelevant statements in relation to a matter which is of national importance and significance. It was clearly spelt out, both in the report of the Republic Committee which was circulated in this Hon. House and in the Statement made by the Hon. Prime Minister, that it was hoped that Republic Day would be a day when the entire nation would forget political partisanship, civic strife and all the petty divisions, and come together in unity to mark our common respect to the nation and country of Guyana. It is also hoped that on Republic Day, we will gather up all our national attributes and the things which tend to unify us as a nation in this common and public act of allegiance, under the flag of Guyana.

It is difficult to understand how the Hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran can get up with such an air of levity to say that Independence Day should be a Public Holiday. The Government cannot accept that there should be an additional holiday. It is hoped and indeed, it is Government's intention, that under the Co-operative Republic, there should be an understanding that a nation must be founded upon hard work. There will be no room for people who feel that you can make economic progress and in the final analysis, political progress by idling or seeking every opportunity to avoid work: stet a nation.

I think, Mr. Speaker, it is important that we remember Independence Day, and I have indicated that day will be marked as a day of national significance. There will be appropriate acknowledgement of Independence Day but that day will no longer be a Public Holiday. Republic Day is significant because, unlike Independence Day, it has arisen out of the consensus of the Guyanese people and, indeed, out of a consensus of Hon. Members of this House. Republic Day will be of greater significance than Independence Day.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Bill be read a Second time.

Bill read a Second time.

20.11.69

National Assembly

2.25 – 2.35 p.m.

Assembly in Committee.

Bill considered and approved.

Assembly resumed.

Bill reported without amendment, read the Third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, “That this Assembly do now adjourn until Tuesday, 25th November, 1969, at 2 p.m.” – [Mr. Bissember]

Adjourned accordingly at 2.35 p.m.
