

THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

[VOLUME 2]

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE SECOND SESSION OF THE FIRST NATIONAL
ASSEMBLY OF GUYANA CONSTITUTED UNDER THE CONSTITUTION
OF GUYANA.

4th Sitting

Monday, 14th August, 1967.

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

The Assembly met at 2.00 p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

Present

His Honour the Deputy Speaker, Mr. R. C. Tello

Members of the Government

Ministers

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

Dr. the Honourable P. A. Reid,
Minister of Trade.

The Honourable N. J. Bissember,
Minister for Parliamentary Affairs (Leader of the House).

The Honourable R. E. Cheeks,
Minister of Local Government.

The Honourable E. F. Correia,
Minister of Communications.

The Honourable Mrs. W. Gaskin,
Minister of Education.

The Honourable C.M.L. John,
Minister of Home Affairs:

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

The Honourable W. O. R. Kendall, C.B.E., J.P.
Minister of Health and Housing.

The Honourable C. A. Merriman, J.P.,
Minister of Labour and Social Security.

The Honourable M. W. Carter,
Minister of Information.

Parliamentary Secretaries:

Mr. D. B. DeGroot,
Parliamentary Secretary, Prime Minister's Office.

Mr. G. Bowman,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

Mr. O. E. Clarke,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Education.

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

Mr. J. G. Joaquin, O.B.E., J.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Works and Hydraulics.

Mr. C. V. Too-Chung,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Finance.

Other Members:

Mr. W. A. Blair

Mr. J. Budhoo

Mr. M. Kasim

Mr. R. G. B. Field-Ridley

Mr. D. Mahraj

Mr. H. Prashad

Mr. J. H. Thomas

Rev. A. B. Trotman

Mr. H. M. S. Wharton, J.P.

Members of the Opposition

Dr. C. B. Jagan,
Leader of the Opposition

Mr. A. Chase

Mr. B. H. Benn

Mr. Ram Karran

Mr. R. Chandisingh

Mr. H. J. M. Hubbard

Dr. Charles Jacob, Jr.

Mr. C. V. Nunes

Dr. F. H. W. Ramsahoye

Mr. E. M. G. Wilson

Mr. M. Hamid, J.P.

Mr. J. R. S. Luck

Mr. H. Lall
Mr. Mooneer Khan, J.P.
Mr. Y. Ally
Mr. L. Linde
Mr. R. D. Persaud, J.P.
Mr. E. M. Stoby

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

Absent

The Honourable P. S. d'Aguiar, <i>Minister of Finance</i>	–	<i>on leave</i>
The Honourable M. F. Singh, <i>Minister of Works and Hydraulics</i>	–	<i>on leave</i>
The Honourable S. S. Ramphal, C.M.G., Q.C., <i>Attorney-General and Minister of State</i>	–	<i>on leave</i>
Mr. W. G. Carrington		
Mr. T. A. Sancho		
Mr. D. C. Jagan		
Mr. M. N. Poonai		
Dr. S. A. Ramjohn		
Mr. S. M. Saffee		
Mr. M. Bhagwan		

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have to announce that leave has been granted to the hon. P. S. d'Aguiar to the 31st August, 1967.

2.10 p.m.

PUBLIC BUSINESS MOTIONS DEBATE ON GOVERNOR— GENERAL'S ADDRESS

"Be it resolved that this National Assembly direct an expression of its sincere appreciation and thanks to be conveyed to His Excellency the Governor-General for the Gracious Speech addressed to the Assembly on the occasion of the Opening of the Second Session of the First Parliament of Guyana under the Constitution of Guyana, on Tuesday, 8th August, 1967."

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Assembly shall continue the debate on Motion No. 1. At the Adjournment the hon. Mr. Hubbard was speaking and can continue to do so.

Mr. Hubbard: In addition to the problems which I enumerated earlier, I must express concern about the position of our visible balance of trade. According to the *Economic Survey of Guyana, 1966*, our balance of trade which had been in surplus since 1961 went into deficit in 1965 and 1966, the figures being for 1965 \$4.3 million and for 1966 \$7.6 million. The figures published by the Government for the first four months of this year, that is, up to the end of April, revealed that the balance of visible trade was in deficit at that time by \$26 million. It is not merely the question of our having a deficit that I am concerned about. What disturbs me is, why we have the deficit in terms of the commodities which we import.

Our imports of foodstuffs have gone up by millions. Our imports of consumer durables and motor cars have gone up considerably, and in order to finance the importation of consumable durables we have

resorted to hire purchase on a grand scale; I (would suggest that it is a scale) that is quite disproportionate with the abilities of our economy. I remarked that the money, according to the securities which we have to back our currency only amounts to about \$24 million. Yet at the end of 1966 we had consumed \$12.6 million in hire purchase for financing the purchase of consumer durables such as motor cars, and so on. I should like to read paragraph 11.24 of page 68 of this Survey:

"Consumer Durable goods including motor cars accounted for about 61% of the total credit outstanding at December, 1966, Industrial and Agricultural Equipment and Vehicles accounting for the remaining 39%."

Here, we have put our finger upon the sore of Government trading because we have reversed the situation; whereas we require that credits should be applied in the productive sectors of our economy, we find that credit is being applied in the consumer section so that our people, instead of going level with earnings we are going ahead of earnings as fast as credit will allow. The instrument for controlling this kind of credit is surely a Hire purchase Act.

There was published, before our Constitution was "Luyted" in 1964, a Hire Purchase Bill on which the Prime Minister who was then the Leader of the Opposition was invited to express the Opposition's opinion, so that we could have reached a consensus on this question. Obviously, hire purchase must be managed, not in the interest of the merchants but in the interest of the community as a whole. I am disappointed that the Minister of Trade who is at this moment doubling for the Minister of Finance, has not told us anything about this Bill which is ready and which, incidentally was drafted by the official who is now acting as Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Trade. This is a most important element in the whole matter of trade - the

[MR. HUBBARD]

control of hire purchase. But there is on the Statute Books all the authority which the Minister needs to regulate imports so that they are in consonance with the capabilities of our country.

The Trade Ordinance of 1958 will give him all the power he wants, but he does not seem to want power. He surrenders that power to committees of the Chamber of Commerce and certain other nondescripts who know nothing at all about trade or the needs of this community. I invite the Minister to assume the powers which he has under the law, and to use those powers in the interest of this country.

We are deluding ourselves if we look at figures which represent a high input of consumer goods and say that our economy is rising because we are collecting the greater proportion of our revenues from import duties. This is not healthy for a country such as ours. The Government is on the horns of this dilemma that, in order to pay for its burgeoning bureaucracy, it must have a high importation of consumer goods to collect the import duties. But the country needs a low consumption of consumer goods so that greater savings can be generated to make us independent of borrowings from outside. These are factors which have a very grave consequence on our economy as a whole.

2.20p.m.

If the rate of profit in commerce is very high and the Government has to compete with commerce to find money, then the cost of borrowing for the Government is bound to rise. I have with me a notice issued from the Bank of Guyana; it is information received by the press regularly. It is Exchange information from the Bank of Guyana on securities offered for sale from 3rd August to 9th August 1967. We see Bank Breweries \$1 shares quoted at \$3.45 and \$3.50. We have not been able to tax Bank Breweries for one penny in spite of all

this profit. What is the position with regard to offers for Government securities? Guyana Government 3½ per cent debentures, 1976 to 1986, \$62 for \$120 in capital and interest at the end of 10 years. This is the consequence of bad fiscal and trade policies, and I urge the Government to take the necessary steps to correct the faults.

While I am on this subject, I should like to observe that the Government's propaganda instruments and propaganda personnel, including its Ministers, are always trying to tell us that we must buy local food in order to ease the balance of payments. I should like to ask that they lay more stress on consumer durables which we do without and not waste our time on cabbage and blackeye peas, which amount to very little in the economy as a whole.

We have an Agreement which the Caribbean islands with regard to oil, the Oils and Fats Agreement, under which we undertake not to import for local consumption oil or fat other than coconut oil as a stimulus to coconut development in the islands. If we visit the super markets we find in growing quantities peanut oil, corn oil and similar substitutes for coconut oil. The reason that these substitutes have become so popular is because there is an insufficiency of sanitary supervision over the shops. A shopkeeper puts aside a half drum, in which he keeps his coconut oil for retailing, and from the time he opens his shop until he goes into bankruptcy he never washes that drum. The consequence is that practically every person get coconut oil that is rancid in some way or another. This is a serious matter for trade and the Minister of Health had promised us, when he spoke on the Budget, that he would present for us later this year a Food and Drugs Act which would set standards that are up to date and allow us to correct matters like this. Unfortunately, there is no reference whatever in this Throne Speech to the Food and Drugs Act.

I could go on, but I feel a sense of urgency. It is time for us to stop talking and get on acting. I have given the Minister of Trade (Dr. Reid) a number of matters upon which to take action which will rebound on the credit of this country and I would be grateful for a minute or two just to remark on one or two statements he made when he rose without telling us anything about trade. He said, in regard to rice, that the Government is taking action. In this he is at cross-purposes with the Chairman of the Rice Development Company who has maintained that what the Government is doing is carrying out feasibility studies to decide if action can be taken and, if so, what action. Perhaps the Minister is a little confused and I offer him my sympathy, but his confusion is no excuse for the confusion of the population at large.

The next point is that he read for us a number of prices and what he read for us were average prices paid for farmers' produce. This he misrepresented to us as minimum guaranteed prices. I would suggest that he gets some colleague or official to assist him to find out the difference between an average price over a year and a guaranteed minimum price.

Finally I would like to refer to the stockfeed company and the decision to increase the price of feed. The stockfeed company has been paying a dividend of 25 per cent and it has a tax holiday. The Government refused to pay the crop bonus to the farmers for producing cabbage. In giving incentives to the company the Government allows it to pay all expenses including the upkeep of itself and all personnel involved in management of the industry and, out of a 25 per cent dividend, nothing comes to the Government at all, but it cannot pay a \$30 an acre encouragement bonus to a farmer for producing one of the most difficult of crops in this country, cabbage, because cabbage is subject to attack by pests more than in most countries. A farmer must virtually live in his cabbage

patch if he is successfully to reap his crops.

I think that when the Government takes a look at what it is giving the so-called "investor" and what it is denying the farmer it will understand the lack of confidence which the agricultural community has in the Coalition Government and will continue to have until it is brought down. [*Applause (Opposition)*]

2.30 p.m.

Dr. Jacob: The 1967 Throne Speech is a very remarkable one, not for what it contains but for what it ignores. At the present time, there is great uncertainty and a high degree of social and economic instability in Guyana. These conditions have existed ever since the Coalition Government assumed office, and during the period it has been in office no attempt has been made to remedy these conditions. Official propaganda and the touts of the Government would have Guyanese and the world believe that conditions are better than when the predecessors of this Government were in office and that the economy is progressing. [*Mr. Wharton: "You know that that is so."*]

Now, this Throne Speech, as I have said, ignores some of the very grave problems which confront us, and I would mention these very briefly and then elaborate on a few of the more important ones. For example, there is the problem of rising unemployment; there continues to be an exodus of Guyanese from the country; there have been business failures; there is an increase in the incidence of crime; inflationary tendencies have developed in recent times; there is a high degree of disequilibrium in our balance of payments; there is a threat of devaluation of the Guyana dollar; and there has been no proper accounting for the expenditure of public funds. Nothing is mentioned in the Throne Speech about the remedies the Government proposes to eradicate some of these evils.

[DR. JACOB]

Since we are pressed for time, let me go immediately into one of the most pressing economic problems in connection with the balance of payments. My colleague who preceded me, the hon. member Mr. Hubbard, referred to the deficit on our balance of visible trade. Now the balance of trade is one of the most important items in the balance of payments, and if we refer to the figures put out by the Government, we will see that, since the Government came into office, there had been a deterioration in the balance of trade. As a matter of fact, the whole current-account part of the balance of payments showed a very large deficit of nearly \$28 million at the end of 1965.

The economists who advise the Government have given a tentative figure for 1966, and they claim that, at the end of 1966, there will be a further deterioration of \$30.9 million in the balance on the current account. They went further and said that, at the end of 1967, the position would be even worse, that is, we are going to have a deficit on current account greater than \$30.9 million.

For the Guyana dollar to remain stable, it means that the international reserves of the country must be kept at a certain level. When the balance of payments deteriorates, as the Bank of Guyana pointed out, there is a fall in the foreign reserves of the country. When this happens, the stability of the currency is undermined and there is the possibility of a devaluation of the currency. Indeed, the United Kingdom has been faced with a similar problem on many occasions in recent times, because of its deteriorating balance-of-payments position. It seems that Guyana, which has always had a favourable surplus on its current account, is now in the position in which the United Kingdom found itself not so long ago.

As a result of this threat to the Guyana dollar towards the end of last year, the International Monetary Fund, of which this

country became a member only a few months ago, had to provide what is called "stand by" credit to the amount of \$7.5 million U.S. in convertible currencies. The provision of this credit is to prop up our deteriorating balance of payments.

It is a well known fact that, because of the control of the world market, underdeveloped countries like ours suffer as a result of the low prices received for their raw materials, and that the monopolies of the capitalist countries manipulate this market. That is why, especially since this Government came into office we have been receiving low prices for our raw materials and we have had to be paying increased prices for our imports. That is why the balance of trade has become so adverse.

Since the I.M.F. has to provide credit, it is in the position to have control over our economy. This is a serious thing that has happened as a result of the deteriorating balance-of-payments position. So because we are robbed by the imperialist countries with respect to our exports, and we are penalized because we have to pay more for the import of manufactured goods, this position has come upon us.

In the Speech from the Throne, the assertion is made on page 6 that the Government is committed to a mixed economy in which private enterprise is securely entrenched. What the Government ought to have said was that being committed to a mixed economy, public enterprise will have a role to play. Now this Government has done everything possible to prevent the development of public enterprise. All it has done since it came into power was to strengthen the private sector of the economy. No effort has been made to develop public enterprise. As a matter of fact, the Government has repealed legislation which was on the Statute Books which would have caused public enterprise to develop. [*The Prime Minister*: "Like what?"]

I refer to the change in the functions of the Industrial Development Corporation.

The Corporation is no longer entitled to undertake development of any sort. [*The Prime Minister*: "Which law has been changed?"] Shut up! The I.D.C. can no longer undertake the development of public enterprise. If the Government, or the majority party in the Government, would only stick to its election manifesto, we would have no quarrel with the Government, but everything possible is being done to prevent the development of public enterprise.

2.40 p.m.

The Government has not defined clearly the various sectors of the economy in which there will be public, private, and joint public-private participation, because there is no intention to have that. The Government is not interested in production. Production is to be left to private hands and to foreign companies.

In the sphere of distribution, is there any attempt being made for state participation in trade? [*Interruption.*] There is no desire to have a public banking sector established. We advised the Government that the Post Office Savings Bank should undertake commercial banking. The Bank of Guyana legislation makes no provision for that public institution to engage in public banking. This happens in Australia.

All of these important matters are to be left in private hands and that is why this country is so backward. All the profits made go into the pockets of capitalists and monopolies and yet the Government has the cheek to talk here about being committed to a mixed economy. It is one thing to say that is so, but another to take steps to bring about this mixed economy.

All the election pledges of the major Party in the Government have not been honoured, and yet the P.N.C. has put these things in print and put them in words of the Governor-General in this Throne Speech.

It is a scandalous state of affairs disclosed by the Director of Audit who reported that

there has been expenditure of public funds with covering vouchers. It is well known that since this Government came into office, there have been more thefts, frauds, unvouched expenditure, and unlawful expenditure by the Government, and an important matter like this is not mentioned in the Throne Speech. No steps have been advanced in this speech to remedy this state of affairs or to inform the public about the steps the Government is taking to improve the state of affairs in the Government. That is not good enough.

Ever since the Government came into office, it has taken steps to prevent the functioning of the Public Accounts Committee. The hon. Leader of the House (Mr. Bissember) is, even to this day, arguing with the hon. Leader of the Opposition with respect to the composition of the Public Accounts Committee.

We have maintained that no Minister or Parliamentary Secretary in office now should be a member of the Public Accounts Committee, yet the hon. Leader of the House, contrary to all precedent and practice in the Commonwealth, insists that a serving Parliamentary Secretary should be on the Committee.

The hon. Leader of the House is supposed to be a man with legal training, yet he cannot understand the English language. It is clearly stated in documents that the former Financial Secretary of the British Treasury can be a member of the Public Accounts Committee. This means that the former Financial Secretary which, I think, corresponds in this country to the Minister of Finance or the Parliamentary Secretary, can be a member of the Committee, but these people want an existing Parliamentary Secretary to be a member of the Public Accounts Committee.

This lawyer cannot understand the difference between the words "existing" and "former". We maintain that for this Committee to function properly and discharge its duty to Parliament, it must consist of members who are Backbenchers of

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the Government side and the members of the Opposition side.

Again, this has to deal with the Public Accounts Committee, up to this day the Government has not honoured or kept the pledge made by hon. Prime Minister when, several months ago, he gave an undertaking to this House that the expenditure in connection with the Independence celebrations would be presented to Parliament; that a proper audited statement of all the expenditure in connection with those celebrations would be presented here for us to see. This has not been done, but we understand there has been a lot of irregularities and frauds in that expenditure

We want to know what has happened to \$1.6 million. It is no wonder that the Public Service in following the example of the Government, is so corrupt and inefficient. It is because those elected are totally incompetent, if not corrupt, and this is the sad state of affairs that has plagued us ever since this Coalition Government took over the reins of Government.

I wish to give some time to another hon. Colleague to speak; therefore, I will conclude by saying this. Let this Government honour its Election pledges and let it undertake to run this Country without discrimination and to give us administrative honesty and efficiency, and it will always receive the support of the Opposition, for all we are interested in is that this Country should be run not for the benefit of foreign monopolies but for the Guyanese people as a whole. Let nepotism, bribery and corruption cease and we will give it our support.

The Minister of Labour and Social Security (Mr. Merriman): Before I attempt to take on what would appear relevant to the Throne Speech, I should like to make some reference to my hon. Comrade, Mr. Luck, who has amused himself by looking at the Hansards for 1965.

What is amusing about this is that Mr. Luck used a particular Hansard and referred to Page 50. I shall make reference to those observations he made.

I looked for the Hansard and I noted that the inner part of the cover showed that the hon. Minister of Agriculture (Mr. John) was on leave. Then I noted that others were absent, the hons. Dr. C.B. Jagan, Mr. B.H. Benn, Mr. Ram Karran, Mr. R. Chandisingh, Mr. H.J.M. Hubbard, Dr. Charles Jacob, Jr., Mr. C.V. Nunes, Dr. F. Ramsahoye, Mr. E.M.G. Wilson, Mr. A. Chase, Mr. Bagwan, Mr. J.B. Caldeira, Mr. M. Hamid, Mr. D.C. Jagan, Mr. H. Lall, Mr. Y. Ally, Mr. L. Linde, Mr. J.R.S. Luck, Mr. R.D. Persaud, Mr. M.N. Poonai, Dr. S.A. Ramjohn, Mr. E.M. Stoby.

2.50 p.m.

They were not in this House. I more believe that Mr. Luck on that particular day was around the corner - you know his usual haunt. I am just pointing out that he was not here. Not a single member of the party was here. It looks rather strange that at this late moment in 1967 they are emphasising pledges that were made when they were not here, and even now they are now aware that these pledges have been observed.

Mr. Luck referred to a pledge, and I take it that that was as a result of research that he has done. I have before me a Report on the reorganisation of the statistical and related activities of the Employment Exchange Service. Unlike the P.P.P. that endeavoured to run the Government like a salt-goods shop, we are planning a proper programme for efficiency.

With regard to fair employment practices, this has been done. We gave employment to all those who sought -- *[Interruption]*

Now we come to Workmen's Compensation. Workmen's Compensation has been introduced in this country way back in 1947. This was a piece of *ad hoc* legislation to meet the circumstances. I wish to quote from a Circular from the Colonial Office, Great Smith Street, dated 7th January, 1948:

"I have the honour to inform you that at my request, my Colonial Labour Advisory Committee has carried out a review of Workmen's Compensation legislation in the Colonial territories.

The Committee's main task was to examine the possibility of replacing the existing type of legislation in the Colonial territories by another based wholly or partly upon the United Kingdom National Insurance (Industrial Injuries) Act, 1946, a copy of which was sent to you under cover of my predecessor's Circular Note (2) of the 2nd of September, 1946. After consideration of the United Kingdom Scheme, however, the Committee reached the conclusion that there were at present insurmountable difficulties in the way of introducing into the Colonial Empire as a whole a scheme of such complexity, the chief of these being: the difficulty of arranging for the collection of contributions; the absence in many Colonial territories of any system of identification; the difficulty of arranging for periodical payments in place of lump sums; the prevalence of illiteracy and differences of language; the problem of the intermittent wage-earner; the lack of actuarial data; the shortage in many cases of trained clerical staff.

On examining the main features of the existing Workmen's Compensation legislation, the Committee formed the opinion that, pending such time as the introduction in Colonial Territories of a system of State Insurance covering industrial injuries is feasible, the existing legislation, except for the provisions concerning the compensation payable in certain circumstances, is suitable for its purpose."

We undertook to revive and go into this legislation. It is being revised. It is all-embracing and inclusive in the national insurance scheme that will be presented to this House shortly, and will be implemented very early next year.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition spoke about retrenchment. The hon. Leader of the Opposition said that we had given less than

2,000 jobs. Early in 1965 we had given 10,000 jobs. In 1966 - 10,000 more jobs. This is simple. When we came into office what did we get from the former Government? No machinery to run the Government! You had no buildings to house the offices! They were in such a state of disrepair that it was almost dangerous for us to get into them.

3 p.m.

That was the position. I wonder if the former Premier could tell us what he used in his office. It was most primitive. If he were to go back there now he would see what a transformation has taken place.

By the very nature of public works - roads, construction of buildings, rehabilitation of buildings, sea defences, rehabilitation of wharves and stappings - there had to be continuous work for a period. The Attorney-General's Chambers were in a bad condition. When the former Attorney-General went into his office I do not know how he came out.

The hon. Member spoke about the Transport and Harbours Department. In 1964 the number of workers at the Transport and Harbours Department, both permanent and casual, amounted to 140. In 1965 over 239 persons were employed. In 1966, there was retrenchment of 93 men towards the end of the year but they were re-employed and continued in employment. I am informed that so far in 1967 only 7 men were retrenched or laid off. No such conditions, as were alleged, existed. There were no wholesale retrenchments.

Insofar as sea defences are concerned, during 1963 and 1964 there was absolutely no work being done in this direction by the P.P.P. Government. There were only a few men carrying on maintenance work on the road. During 1965 there were over 700 men engaged in sea defences and road works. In 1966 and 1967 the number has remained the same. There are periods when men are laid off, but one has to realise that when there is

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excessive rainfall men must be laid off because of the very nature of the work. The Government is more concerned than those who criticise it. We have given employment to, and found employment for, people. In the case of members of the Opposition, they were so callous that they found no jobs for anyone. They had absolutely no concern for workers.

May I come back to the national insurance scheme? Mr. Harry Lall says he is certain it will not be put into operation. Not only have the actuarial figures been submitted from the International Labour Organisation, but the Workers Party has examined the recommendations and the actuarial suggestions. The report of the Working Party has been completed and is now before Cabinet. It will be submitted at a very early date so that we may have implementation of this laudable and desirable insurance scheme.

Some reference was made to the Arbitration Tribunal. It is either through ignorance or for some other reason that members of the Opposition are resenting this exercise. What is being attempted? It must be recognised that it is in the interest of the nation. There is great concern over the loss occasioned by strikes, lockouts, or whatever you call it. Let us see what happened in 1963. In 1963 we lost by strikes over 1,360,000 man days, and over \$4,300,000. In 1964 we lost over 1,168,000 man days and wages amounting to \$5,740,000. In 1965 we lost 133,000 man days and \$701,000. In 1966 we lost 109,000 man days and \$696,000 in wages. Compare the figures!

I am surprised to hear the hon. Member, Mr. Harry Lall, comment on this. He has lost the presidency of his union to the Leader of the Opposition and hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran is now Treasurer. He knows his contribution to this substantial loss. He knows his contribution in the sugar belt as President of the union and he knows the con-

tribution of his satellites. No one who is concerned about the welfare of this country would refuse to do something that has been accepted by workers and employers and to establish machinery whereby there would be an easier settlement of disputes than there is today.

When this Government came into office, industrial relations were in a very chaotic state. I referred to what took place in 1963 and in 1964. In addition, what happened in March 1963 when the former Government attempted to pass in this House a Bill that would have deprived workers in the trade union movement of their independence? Those were the days when the hon. Members on that side of the House waged war against the trade union movement and against the workers. They ought not to deny that a chaotic state of affairs existed. This Government is working on a tripartite basis. In 1963, this was their attitude when they attempted to pass the Labour Relations Bill. The T.U.C. said, "Let us discuss it". They said, "No". They had their First Reading.

3.10 p.m.

Therefore, you got your comment. When they asked you to defer for an additional week or two, what did you do? The result is well known to us, it is history. Perhaps that is why you are sitting over there now. You were totally against the working-class people of this country.

The establishment of this Tribunal has been arrived at after an exhaustive and intensive discussion with the parties involved: the employers' side, the workers' side and the Government. We have considered this serious situation and, as a result, we have recognised that very often the workers were willing to have arbitration. It is nothing strange to have arbitration in nearly every collective agreement. There is provision for arbitration but it must be by mutual consent. Very often the workers are willing to go to arbitration and, in the history of this country, it is well known that

the employers' side is very willing to go to arbitration.

This Tribunal will give a sort of authoritative and final decision in regard to issues and disputes. It will be a third party that is independent yet capable of assessing, evaluating and determining industrial relationships on either side. Both sides support the establishment of this independent Tribunal. This is nothing new. In Australia a similar court has been established since in the 1890s. Within recent years most of the emerging countries have had to establish a forum of such a nature. There is one in India, Australia, New Zealand, and, to some extent, in Trinidad. [Mr. Persaud: "What about Hitler?"]

When my friend talks about Hitler he ought to know that there is no arbitration tribunal in communist countries. It just cannot strive. When there was a strike in Poland the other day it was international news, nobody worried with a strike. It was something strange to hear about a strike there. At long last the workers have been brave enough to defy dictatorship and fight for their rights. This is all I can say to the hon. Member who says it is absurd to have a Tribunal. He who follows the ideals and idealism of the communist countries would sit in this honourable House and decry the establishment of a piece of machinery that will give authoritative, as I have said before, and final decision in the interest of the workers

The establishment of the arbitration tribunal is important to bring stability and create the climate for growth of this country's economy. Incidentally, only last night I heard the acting Mayor of Georgetown speaking of building activities in this country, and yet the Members on the other side are talking about unemployment. The Government is doing its best to give as much employment as possible in all the different areas. We have been creating the climate. In 1964, in the city of Georgetown, there were only about 300 building

applications. In 1965 there were about 500 building applications. In 1966 there were over 670 and, for the first half of 1967, there were over 504 building applications. This is only in one facet, in one single area of activity. Because of the stability which has been given to the country by this Government, there is opportunity for the workers and hope for the development of this country.

I would make no reference to the observation made by the hon. Member Mr. Lall about social assistance. All I can say is that our concern has been much greater than what the Members opposite have shown. No longer will we persist in giving patronage to the Social Assistance Department but every deserving person will be given what he is entitled to.

I was most amused to hear one hon. Member speaking about training of domestics. It is pathetic that, in a country where there are almost 15,000 workers subject to exploitation, an individual would sit in here and say they are not worthy of consideration at one level or another. Is it not known that there are domestics in this country who are paid \$12 and \$15 per month? We have already carried out a survey; we have already made recommendations. But it is not limited there. We are giving them training whereby they would be recognised for what they could do. Not only would they be recognised but, through their unions, they could demand more. I was very moved when I heard that a Member of this House would object to a scheme for training 15,000 neglected people.

3.20 p.m.

However, we will not be dissuaded by the railings of anybody. We will continue to pursue our course of training and fit workers for better wages and remuneration.

I also heard some reference made to the manpower survey and I should like to sympathise with that individual because his sense of values, his knowledge as to the necessity to plan for the development of human resources is very small.

[MR. MERRIMAN]

Now, the manpower survey initially - and this was almost the first exercise of this Government early in 1965, when it came into office and that was when my hon. Friends were not in the House; they were away; what they were doing I do not know - was established in order to provide reliable and up-to-date information on the inherent characteristics of the labour force and to assess the manpower supply/demand relationships and the capacity of the labour force to achieve the targets set down in the Development Programme.

The second part of it was intended to supply the necessary "know-how" for the collection of manpower information on a regular basis. This is to ensure the orderly and rapid development of the country's human resources since the information collected in 1965 would be revised and be continually revised in order that the information may be useful.

As a result of the second aspect of it, there has been established a manpower unit and this has been assigned the task of bringing up-to-date such information as may be required and prescribed. It has first to widen the scope of this information previously collected by the statistical section of the Department of Labour. It also has to re-organise the statistical and related activities of the Employment Exchange Service. It will also deal with research and primary statistical information required for the solution of particular labour problems, and there are many. They could have been less, had it not been for motivation by the Opposition.

So, you will see that the fact is, that this Government is saying nothing that is untrue. What seems to be clear is that these statements were made only to fill the pages of the "Mirror" with news because all one sees in the "Mirror" is what some hon. Member of the Opposition has stated in some place or other. I suppose they have to carry their own image, even though a false image,

not only in Guyana but all over the world. When one bears them commenting on things in Guyana, their comments are unrelated to the Throne Speech. Their comments relate only to the Throne Speech. Their comments relate only to what they would like to see in the

"Mirror".

I hope I have covered everything. As I said originally, my intention was to touch only on those comments that are relevant to the throne speech, therefore I have made no reference to what is irrelevant. I hope that those who have not spoken will confine themselves to the subject of the Throne Speech.

Mr. Ram Karran: When one goes through the Speech from the Throne so graciously delivered by His Excellency the Governor General, one is apt to think that the Government could not be sincere, particularly when we look at Page 2 under Development Programme. The Speech says that:

"The achievements of the past year are well known. It is my Government's intention to maintain progress and redouble its efforts with the co-operation of the people to ensure economic advance and establish true equality and opportunity for all."

"The Seven-Year Development Programme launched a year ago has had some initial difficulties chiefly as a result of a shortage of skilled personnel. However, as a result of the dedicated service of those involved and with certain changes in priorities, it has made its impact and it is estimated that there was an expenditure of over \$30 million last year under the capital budget spread over a number of sectors and aimed at strengthening and expanding our economic infrastructure."

3.30 p.m.

I do not wish to refer to the Persauds, the Gangadins, the Viaprees, the Bacchuses and the dozens of people whose heads have been rolled. I wish to refer to what is going on at the present time. Only today a young Guyanese, eminently qualified in Business Administration, Post-Graduate Training and Business Management has had to leave these shores to return to the cold United Kingdom to seek a living. This young man came here, applied for employment in the Public Service where the officers could not assess his qualifications, as a result of which he had had to walk the streets for two months before he was finally employed at the G.D.C. He was told by the head of that Corporation that: "Your experience and your training is very highly recommended and we will find some work for you although there is no permanent position at the moment. As soon as there is a vacancy you will be employed."

I was quoting from the Throne Speech when I referred to the shortage of personnel, and I want to show that qualified Guyanese are hounded out of this country despite the so-called shortage. I referred to the case where this man was called and handed a letter by the General Manager of the G.D.C., who could not explain to him the reason for sending him away, despite his qualifications. He asked the General Manager: "Is it because of any deficiency on my part? Is it because I came to work late? Is it because I do not know my way around?" The General Manager could not look at him in his face, he looked down and said: "I am sorry that the members of the Board have instructed me to do this." This officer whose time was extended by a month in lieu of notice - or some such thing - approached a member of the Board to find that the matter had not been raised there. Anyway, he has gone back to the United Kingdom. This Guyanese has left on flight 343 to go to the United Kingdom because the country in

which he was born, the country which he wants to serve does not accept him.

Another Guyanese who was convicted of a criminal offence was employed by the University of Guyana. He was dismissed by the person in charge of the University but in a matter of hours instructions were issued to him to re-employ this Guyanese. It is a pity that men in permanent positions - I refer to the one at the G.D.C. and the one at the University - who admit that it is a bad thing to have ministerial interference prevailing in these institutions, do not have the guts to stand up to their conviction, to stand up and say: "This is wrong, stop it." More of this is likely to happen because of the slackness of these people who tell us about the shortage of staff when, at the same time, they are indulging in chasing out qualified Guyanese and encouraging rackets with people with convictions and what not, merely because they happen to be in the right political party or she happens to be somebody's sister. It is time for such nonsense to come to a stop.

On page 3 of the Throne Speech it is stated that 40 miles of all-weather road have been constructed, and that the road programme will be continued throughout the present year. We have to be grateful for the promise of the continuation of the road programme. I had hoped that the hon. Minister of Works and Hydraulics would have returned in time to tell us where the 40 miles of all-weather roads are. I have been to the Corentyne and only yesterday I travelled from Parika to Wales and I was at a loss to find out where these 40 miles of all-weather roads are. But I have seen a tremendous lot of impassable roads and I am sure that the hon. Ministers on the other side will substantiate this. Could it be that they are referring to the all-weather roads provided by the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund Committee?

have observed recently that the S.I.L.W.F.C - guided and directed as it is by Mr. Ishamel, President of the M.P.C.A., and

[MR. RAM KARRAN]

several representatives of the M.P.C.A., Mr. D'Ornellas and the Chief Labour Officer - has built a wonderful stretch of road going from the Public Road right down to Ogle, along which there is not a single house. There is another road running from the Public Road to the railway line, that is east of Plaisance Village, in Better Hope Village which caters for the sugar workers in the area - [Mr. Merriman: "40% non-sugar workers."] There is another road starting from Cummings Lodge and going into the Turkeyen area. Nobody lives there. Are these the roads which the Government referred to?

3.40 p.m.

The Commissioner of Police is running all over the place in an effort to stop traffic hazards and, here it is, the Government is indulging in a practice that is bound to create more hazards in an area where four or five people are killed every year. There is a road at Sheperd's Lust, one at Better Hope and a third in the vicinity of Plaisance at a blind corner. The policy of bringing so many roads to the Public Road, especially at blind spots, causes hazards and, with such heavy traffic on the main road, there is bound to be more loss of lives. The Commissioner of Police and the Traffic Inspectors ought to look into that question.

The Sugar Industry Welfare Fund seems to be carrying out the policy of the Government. People who are qualified to receive loans to build houses in villages and in other areas are not being assisted whereas the Government is doing unproductive work and building white elephants through the Fund.

"The modernisation of air transportation will continue as well as the programme for construction of additional air strips in the interior largely on a self-help basis."

Where is that happening? I wonder whether it would not be better for the

Government to be less verbose and to do something on this question of air transport.

The hon. Minister of Trade (Dr. Reid) dealt with stockfeed and the increase of price for stockfeed. That question will be dealt with by several persons. When the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources mentioned that Guyanese farmers were not producing corn, as a result of which, the stockfeed factory had been forced, despite the tax concession, despite the profits, to raise the price of stockfeed so that farmers will have to pay more.

The expert who came from the United States of America - it seems to me that this Government can only find its experts in the United States of America - when he spoke to farmers at the C.S.A. Hall at a meeting which was attended by the hon. Minister himself, made it quite clear that there was very little difference between corn and rice in the production of poultry feed. He said that the protein content in corn is a little higher but if rice is available in this country some research should be done with a view to using more rice with perhaps a little more concentrate added to it to bring the quality of the feed up to what is required.

We heard a lot of excuses about corn. The hon. Minister of Trade (Dr. Reid) emphasised that inefficient rice mills must go. No one on this side of the House will support the retention of any inefficient mills, but in the same breath he said no second quality rice is available and no broken rice is available. That, he said, is the reason why the mills are producing a higher quality rice which has caused the cost of feed to rise. That is unacceptable because there are a large number of single stage mills. Perhaps the Minister does not know that a large quantity of broken rice is still produced by these so-called "inefficient" mills and a large quantity of rice is consumed by people who cannot afford to buy the better quality grades of rice. Farmers are using broken rice for human consumption, not for dogs, and the best quality rice is bought for the

manufacture of stockfeed. I am sure the hon. Minister will recognise that people are eating second quality rice and feeding their poultry with first quality rice, and have to pay more for it.

The hon. Minister should not attempt to fool us when the stockfeed company is allowed to make more profit and then we are told this nancy story about corn having to be produced. Even if corn is produced in this country when farmers are made to produce it, everyone will recognise that the price of stockfeed is not going to be reduced. In fact, experience has shown that when the price of anything rises it continues to climb rather than to come down. I challenge the hon. Minister that although promises are given to farmers about the reduction of the price of corn, yet the price of stockfeed and poultry feed will continue to rise rather than come down. It is dishonest, and I say that advisedly, for the Minister to come here and to mislead the House and mislead the nation when he says that the cause of the increase in stockfeed and poultry feed is due to the absence of corn in this country and to the fact that the stockfeed company has to use higher grades of rice for the production of feed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: In spite of the fact that you used the word "advisedly", I do not think it is parliamentary for you to refer to the hon. Minister as being dishonest. I wish you to use a more parliamentary word.

Mr. Ram Karran: I would say that the hon. Minister has misled and is misleading the nation when he attempts to say that this decision to increase the price of poultry feed, which was agreed by the Government, was due to the alleged absence of corn in this country and to the use of higher grades of rice. I wish to withdraw the word "dishonest".

If we were to look at last year's estimates we would find that the Government deliberately reduced the amount of money in the estimates for many services, including poultry rearing. It could not have had the welfare of the poultry rearers, the dairy

farmers or any such people, at heart, if it deliberately reduced the vote in the Estimates.

One last point I wish to make and that is on the question of bananas. One would have thought that as the Government has been publishing so much over the air and in the newspapers and everywhere else about the banana industry which was to give employment to so many thousands of people, and so many people were hoping that they would have had an opening, the hon. Minister would have taken the hon. Members and the nation into his confidence and confessed that the banana industry has been an empty bubble which has burst and nothing more will come of it.

3.50 p.m.

Nothing is going to come out of the banana industry and perhaps all those poor people who are being inveigled to go and collect banana suckers - the word "sucker" does not relate to any hon. Minister - are suckers to go and plant them. They will soon find that they would be unable to market any of these bananas.

What has happened with the United Fruit Company which sought to put Guyana against Jamaica in order that it may get better concessions from that territory? That company could have made - I think that word "sucker" is now appropriate - suckers of the hon. Ministers of the Government by getting them to play against a sister country and to make a bang on this big bubble of bananas. Not a single thing is going to come out of it, and one of these days the hon. Minister of Information - I nearly said the "hon. Member of Bookers" - will get up - he has a clean record - and apologise to the nation for the deliberate shortcomings of those hon. Members of this House who have tried to mislead the Guyanese people but who have, undoubtedly, fallen into the trap of the big business people who have fooled us in order that they may get better concessions from Jamaica.

Mr. Wilson: In any serious Development

[MR. WILSON]

Programme there must be adequate provision for communication. In this Throne Speech we see almost an apology for the statement with regard to communication and transportation. This is certainly an omission on the part of the parties in Government. This is what is stated on page 3 of the Throne Speech:

“The modernisation of air transportation will continue as well as the programme for construction of additional air strips in the interior largely on a self-help basis. The runways at Atkinson will shortly be completed and the new terminal building will be ready for service in a few months.”

The reality is that the runways at Atkinson are total failures. They have been closed for some time and one does not know when they are likely to be opened.

The Government speaks about setting up corporations and airways. Does the Government see need for a corporation for bus transportation in Georgetown? Will the Minister of Communications (Mr. Correia) come out early in the morning and see the terrible conditions in those buses in which the people of Georgetown environments have to travel? Is he going to set up a corporation to take over the transportation for the folk in Greater Georgetown? He has his trucks busy competing with the Transport and Harbours trucks on the Bartica/Potaro road. That service is losing thousands of dollars every year and yet we find that a private individual - if it is not the Minister himself, then it is the Minister in collusion with someone, a Correia - is allowed to operate a truck service on the Bartica/Potaro road and to compete with the service of Transport and Harbours Department.

I should also like to invite his attention to the North West steamer service. Of course he does not travel by steamer, he travels by plane. That service is not fit for cattle. We

had plans to have an airport and an airfield in the North West District to transport passengers there. The Minister does not know what he should do to provide better transportation for the people of this country.

The Berbice River service is a great ordeal. The Canje service is inadequate but, as I have just three minutes more, I should like to refer to the government's callousness with regard to the displaced persons. [*The Prime Minister*: “Are you displaced?”] You tried to displace me, but you did not succeed. The Government says, with its tongue in its cheek, that it is going to set up the bodies as recommended by Sir Stanley Gomes - the National Aid Board and the House Development Trust. Only one has been set up under Dorothy Bayley - [*The Prime Minister*: “Mrs. Dorothy Bayley.”] - Mrs. Dorothy Bayley, and it is hardly functioning.

Ask the members of this National Aid Board how many times they met! They could not carry on because they did not have a quorum. They interviewed one family but 2,000 families have applied. They cannot interview the others simply because they do not have enough investigators. They have only two persons to investigate thousands of people, so they know that two persons cannot do the work satisfactorily. They are only playing to the gallery and pretending that they are doing something for the displaced persons.

I should now like to refer to the condition of the areas in which the people live. Only yesterday I had to walk in one of those areas and it felt as if I was walking on the riverside. The people have to walk through thick mud. [*The Prime Minister*: “Oh, we put the mud there?”] You have neglected the areas; there should not be all that mud there.

The previous Government had surveyed the place but since this Government assumed office, the work has not developed in these areas. The Government's attitude is: “Let the people suffer; they are the ones who voted against us.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, it is four o'clock and before we either take the suspension or the Adjournment I am asked to remind the members of the executive of the C.P.A. of tea at 4.15 p.m. in the Speaker's Office. All other Members will informally meet at 6 p.m. to welcome the Chairman of the General Council of the

C.P.A. and to attend a function at 6.30 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, "That this Assembly do now adjourn until Tuesday, 15th August, 1967, 2 p.m." [*Mr. Bissember.*]

Adjourned accordingly at 4 p.m.