

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

54th Sitting

2.00 p.m.

Thursday, 18th December, 1969

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

Present

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

Members of the Government

Ministers

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

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

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

The Honourable M. Kasim,
Minister of Communications

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

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

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

The Honourable Mrs. Patterson,
Minister of Education

The Honourable B. Ramsaroop,
Minister of Housing and Reconstruction

The Honourable S. S. Ramphal, Q. C., C. M. G.,
Attorney – General and Minister of State

The Honourable M. W. Carter,
Minister of Information

Parliamentary Secretaries

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

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

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

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

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

Other Members

Mr. O. E. Clarke, Deputy Speaker

Mr. J. N. Aaron

Miss M. M. Ackman

Mr. K. Bancroft
Mr. J. Budhoo, J. P.
Mr. L. I. Chan – A – Sue
Mr. E. F. Correia
Mr. M. Corrica
Mr. E. H. A. Fowler
Mrs. P. A. Limerick
Mr. S. M. Saffee
Mr. D. A. Singh
Mr. R. C. Van Sluytman
Mr. C. E. Wrights
Mr. M. Zaheeruddeen, J. P.

Members of the Opposition

Mr. Ram Karran
Mr. R. Chandisingh
Dr. F. H. W. Ramsahoye
Mr. D. C. Jagan
Mr. E. M. G. Wilson
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. Branco
Mr. Balchand Persaud
Mr. Bhola Persaud
Mr. I. Remington, J. P.
Mrs. R. P. Sahoye
Mr. V. Teekah
Mrs. E. DaSilva
Mr. M. F. Singh
Mr. J. A. Sutton
Mr. R. E. Cheeks

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

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

Absent

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

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

Dr. C. B. Jagan,
Leader of the Opposition - on leave

Mr. A. M. Hamid, J. P.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER**LEAVE TO MEMBERS**

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I wish to announce that leave has been sought by and granted to the Hon. Minister of Trade and Parliamentary Affairs from the 17th to the 24th December, inclusive. The Hon. Minister of Education will be carrying out the duties of Leader of the House.

Leave has also been granted to the Hon. Member Mr. Harry Lall for two weeks.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS, ETC.

- 1) Customs Duties (Amendment) (No. 7) Order, 1969 (no. 54), made under section 8 of the Customs Ordinance, Chapter 309, on the 27th of November, 1969, and published in the Gazette on the 6th of December, 1969.
- 2) Report on the operation of the Guyana Credit Corporation for the years ended 30th June, 1966, and 30th June, 1967. [**The Minister of Finance**]
- 3) Fisheries (Amendment) Regulations, 1969 (No. 31), made under section 33 of the Fisheries Ordinance, 1956 (No. 30), on the 2nd of December, 1969 and published in the Gazette on the 6th of December, 1969. [**The Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources**]
- 4) (a) National Insurance and Social Security (Benefit) Regulations, 1969, made under Sections 14, 20, 21, 39 and 51 of the National Insurance and Social Security Act, 1969 (No. 15), on the 15th December, 1969.

(b) National Insurance and Social Security (Industrial Benefit) Regulations, 1969, made under sections 12, 14, 20, 21, 23, 24, 39 and 51 of the National Insurance and Social Security Act, 1969 (No. 15) on the 15th of December, 1969.

(c) National Insurance and Social Security (Industrial Benefit Medical Care) Regulations, 1969, made under sections 19, 20, 21, 24 and 51 of the National Insurance and Social Security Act, 1969 (No. 15), on the 15th of December, 1969.

(d) National Insurance and Social Security (Medical Certification) Regulations, 1969, made under section 51 of the National Insurance and Social Security Act, 1969 (No. 15), on the 15th of December, 1969.

(e) National Insurance and Social Security (Collection of Contributions) (Amendment) Regulations, 1969, made under sections 13, 16, 17, 18 and 51 of the National Insurance and Social Security Act, 1969 (No 15), on the 15th of December, 1969. [**The Minister of Education on behalf of the Minister of Labour and Social Security**]

**REQUESTS FOR LEAVE TO MOVE THE ADJOURNMENT OF THE
ASSEMBLY ON MATTERS OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**

TRIAL OF GUYANESE STUDENTS IN CANADA

Dr. Ramsahoye: Your Honour, I should like to beg your permission to raise the question of a speedy trial for the Guyanese students who have been charged criminally in Canada in connection with student unrest arising out of allegations of racial discrimination at Sir George Williams University. The delay in bringing about a speedy hearing and determination of their cases constitutes a violation of fundamental human right --

Mr. Speaker: That is a matter of opinion. The Hon. Member did comply with the requirements of the Standing Orders informing the Speaker in writing in advance. Having given the matter careful consideration I do not consider that this is a matter of definite urgent and public importance to be raised at this Sitting. However, it is a matter on which, of course, Guyanese generally would be interested. If the Hon. Member wishes to give notice of a substantive motion it shall be dealt with in the usual way.

Dr. Ramsahoye: Thank you, Your Honour.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS – FIRST READING

Mr. D. A. Singh: Mr. Speaker, leave having been granted by the Assembly on the 20th November, 1969 for the promoters to proceed with the Private Bill to amend the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce Ordinance, I now formally beg that the Bill be read the First time.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the Bill has been published on three occasions as required and in accordance with Standing Order No. 57 (5) (c) I now put the question that the Bill be read the First time.

Question put and agreed to.

The Clerk read the following Bill for the first time:

Georgetown Chamber of Commerce (Amendment) Bill.

[Mr. D. A. Singh]

PUBLIC BUSINESS

BILL – SECOND READING

**PENSIONS (GOVERNOR – GENERAL, PARLIAMENTARY AND SPECIAL
OFFICES) BILL**

“A Bill intituled an Act to make provision for the payment of superannuation benefits in respect of service in the offices of Governor – General and Prime Minister and in other parliamentary and special offices.”

The Minister of Finance (Dr. Reid): Mr. Speaker, in moving the Second reading of this Bill. I beg to report that in accordance with Article 80 (2) of the Constitution of Guyana, I signify that the Cabinet has recommended the Pensions (Governor – General, Parliamentary and Special Offices) Bill for consideration by the National Assembly.

Mr. Speaker: You may proceed Hon. Minister.

Dr. Reid: Mr. Speaker, the sudden death of our Governor – General the late Sir David Rose made it urgent to bring legislation dealing with pensions, and death benefits. Had it not been so, it probably would not have come at this time. Most likely this bit of legislation would have come after 23rd February and at the same time we wish to deal with these same questions in relation to other Members of this House.

2.20 p.m.

It is very important that we bring this measure to this House and ask for the support of Hon. Members because, as this country proceeds on the road to development, we need more and more capable people to take their places in this House and to render service to this country. We would wish to see that, when this period of service is over, they do not find themselves in severe pecuniary circumstances, probably to be laughed at by their friends and enemies. We want them to be in a position to serve with the knowledge that in the future, if by chance anything might happen to change their position, they would not be left in this country as beggars. Therefore, this measure is before the House.

The legislation is to provide superannuation and death benefits for the Head of the State, the Head of the Government, and for Ministers and Members of Parliament. This type of legislation is not new in other countries. As a matter of fact, we find it in almost all countries, but we in Guyana have taken note of many Commonwealth countries in which this measure is already an old fact in the system in – the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Malta and, to come nearer home, Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados.

In the clauses of the Bill we will find that provision has been made for similar superannuation benefits for the Governor – General and the Prime Minister. The only difference is that the Prime Minister will have to contribute to the fund, because this is a contributory pension scheme.

We tried, as best we could, to let the scheme compare with those in Caribbean territories, but we took note of our own financial circumstances. Consequently, you will find that rates are very much below those of our Caribbean neighbours. When we looked carefully at the Governor – General and Prime Minister, we found – especially in the case of the Prime Minister – that, if we were to use the basic salary of \$840 a month, the pension benefit would be so small for the Head of Government that we ourselves would be ashamed. Therefore, we have fixed the rate at \$10,000 a year for the Prime Minister and Governor – General, the widow's pension in both cases being two – thirds of that pension or \$7,500 a year, whichever is greater. The children are taken care of in a similar manner.

As far as Members of Parliament, other than the Prime Minister, are concerned, the Bill will cover all persons who were Members of Parliament at the date of Independence, or who became Members of Parliament after Independence, so that once a person was an M. P. his former legislative service will be counted as an elected member of the House of Assembly under the 1953 Constitution; as an elected member of the Legislative Council under the 1956 Constitution; as a member of the Legislative Assembly under the 1961 Constitution; as a member of the House of Assembly under the 1964 Constitution. There is a certain type of service

that will not be counted, namely, service during the Interim Government or service as a member of the Senate under the 1961 Constitution.

We have taken particular care to give members freedom of choice so that there will be no compulsion to become participants in this scheme. The Bill seeks to let Members, if they so wish, enjoy their freedom of choice by declaring by the 21st January, 1970, whether they will make use of the option of not participating. The scheme starts on the 1st January, 1970.

We are also fixing an age limit. In some places it is 50 years; in some places it is even below 50. We thought that for Guyana it should be fixed at 55 years, for this is a young country. We need, in this House, more and more young men and so we did not carry the age which further than 55. And since some of us are not always of sound mind and body to carry on the onerous duties of this House, we make provision for circumstances where, if a person is not sound in mind and body, not physically fit to carry on the business of this House, that person can benefit from the age of 50. Of course, this will have to be supported by medical evidence.

The length of service will be important as to the amount of pension. Other than the Governor – General and the Prime Minister, there will be a period of service and the minimum qualifying period will be six years. This will entitle the person to a pension when he reaches the age of 55 years. If he leaves before 55, he will not get a pension until he is 55. After having served for six years, he will be eligible for one – third of his highest salary as a Member of Parliament. After nine years, half of that salary and after twelve years, two – thirds of that salary. This is all calculated on basic salary; not on allowances of any kind, but on basic salary.

In some schemes, in other parts of the world, there is a gratuity plus pension. In our scheme no provision is made for any gratuity, but a Member will have another chance at freedom of choice. He can convert a quarter of his pension to a gratuity, using multiples of 12 ½. All this he will have or a gratuity with a reduced pension.

Provision is also made for a widow to receive pension of half the deceased Member's pension and then an allowance for children. The widow, along with more than one dependent child, will receive about five-sixths the Member's pension. If there is no widow, of course the children will get as much as half the deceased Member's pension. There is also provision if a Member has less than six years' service. This will entitle him to a gratuity only which will be about one – tenth of his total sum during the period of service, but in no case will the total amount exceed three years' salary.

As we go through the Bill we will notice too that if a Member begins to draw pension but, after a while, returns to the House, he will cease to draw pension. If his legislative remuneration is less than the pension, then the difference will be provided. The widow's pension will continue until her death, but if she remarries then the pension will cease. For the purposes of this scheme you will find that there is a definition of the word "child". This definition includes a stepchild, an adopted child, and an illegitimate child wholly or mainly dependent on a Member for support.

Since this is a contributory pension scheme, all contributions will be made to the Consolidated Fund and all the benefits will be paid out of the Fund. I have been saying over and over that this is a contributory pension scheme and I am certain that Members are interested in knowing what the contribution is. It is fixed at 6 per cent so that, from January, Members who are willing to participate in this scheme will be receiving their remuneration minus 6 per cent. This will be something of this amount: The Speaker will have a monthly deduction, if he so desires, of \$30 per month; the Prime Minister - \$50.40 per month; other Ministers - \$50.40 per month; the Attorney – General - \$84 per month; the Leader of the Opposition - \$30 per month; Parliamentary Secretaries - \$28.80 per month; the Deputy Speaker - \$21 per month; other Members of the National Assembly - \$15 per month. Therefore, if you are participating in scheme, these deductions will be made at the end of January.

In moving the Second Reading of this Bill I want to re-emphasise that one of the reasons for this is to put Members in a position where they can act according to their conscience knowing fully well that some provision is made for them when they should have served this Honourable House. I beg to move the Second Reading of this Bill.

Mr. Speaker: the Second Reading of the Bill has been moved. It is now before the House for consideration. The Hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran, the Acting Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Ram Karran (Acting Leader of the Opposition): It will be observed that in moving the Second Reading of this Bill the Hon. Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister did not tell us, as he has done on previous occasions, that this is a decision of the Cabinet and, therefore, it is before the House. On this occasion he has prefaced his remarks very cleverly. He said that the sudden death of the Governor – General has forced the Government to bring legislation regarding death benefits, etc. the reason for that, obviously, is because of this patent lack of courtesy and, indeed, of consultation with Members of this House.

This measure does not affect members of the Government only and I have been at pains to point out in the past – and I will repeat it again for the record – that this Government which has set itself up as a consultative democracy has been running all along without any bit of consultation, at least with the people who are concerned in this measure. It is now moving on to what it calls the “Co-operative Republic”, in inverted commas, but the co – operation seems to be from one side only. We deplore the fact that the Government has brought legislation of this type to the House without the courtesy of discussing it with members of the Opposition. [**Mr. Kasim:** “Aren’t we discussing it now?”]

Another question that comes to my mind is the question of benefits to our late Governor – General. Surely, provision had been made in the terms of employment of the Governor – General when he assumed office. I know that as a civil servant prior to his elevation to the lofty post of

Governor – General, Sir David was entitled to pensions and gratuity calculated in relation to his salaries while he worked as a senior Police Officer, while he worked in the Federal Defence Force and in various capacities in the West Indian Territories.

I would think that, having regard to past practices, if it was the feeling of the Government that Sir David, on account of his high position here, was entitled to higher death benefits, having regard to all the circumstances, a special Pensions Ordinance could have been passed – it has been done in many cases – so that his widow and his young children could benefit. It is a lame excuse for the Hon. Minister to come and tell us that, had it not been for the sudden death of His Excellency, this bit of legislation would not have been enacted today. Surely, it is only a flimsy excuse. Following precedent in this Parliament – and indeed in other Parliaments – legislation should have been brought to provide for special allowances to Lady Rose and her young children.

2.40 p.m.

The Deputy Prime Minister tells us that we need more and more capable people to take their places in this House and to render service to the country. I remember Mr. Attlee, when he was Prime Minister of Britain, always suggested to and encouraged Members of Parliament not to cut the roots from their communities, not to cut the roots from their jobs and their environment, and not to become professional politicians. This is a question that needs examination here. Are we going to create a group of professional politicians? Are we going to encourage young, experienced people in the fields to come here? No one can better represent the farmers than the farmers.

Our House is blessed today with a large number of people who have practical experience, who have been in the fields, who have dealt with the machines and can talk with experience. The argument can well be offered that with parties organising their professional politicians, the House may very well in the future be riddled with individuals who have no practical experience,

who do not know where the shoe pinches, who do not know the problems that face people. If the Government wishes to have it that way, it can have its way, but this side of the House has the largest group of practical people in the Parliament who are readily available to the Government, if the Government requires their experience. It seems to me that all the experience obtained from the Mother of Parliaments in Britain has been cast aside in order to introduce this measure to create a race of professional politicians and then the people responsible for the destiny of the land will not be the persons who matter.

A few months ago before Mr. Theo Lee, an ex – legislator died, he wrote a letter to the Prime Minister and to the Leader of the Opposition, pointing out that legislation had been enacted in Trinidad in connection with the same matter. Unfortunately, the death of the Governor – General has brought this bit of representation to the fore. There are, sir, a number of points which our Members on this side of the House would like to take up and I hope that the Governor will be able to give answers to them in due course.

Mr. Lall: Your honour, sir, my Hon. Colleague has dealt with the question pertaining to the Governor – General. I should like to deal with specific points in this Bill, the retiring age and benefits to be given to widows and children of deceased Parliamentarians. A few months back, we were debating in this House the National Insurance Bill. In that Bill, the Government indicated that the retiring age for manual workers should be 65 years. All the Members who spoke from this side of the House raised objection to this retiring age. We indicated that since the life expectancy, according to the Government's Statistical Bureau, is 59 years, and a female may live to 63 years, then it is not logical to fix the retiring age at 65 years.

We now see the Government bringing a measure to this House recommending that Parliamentarians should qualify for their pension at 55 years. Your Honour, in the name of justice I should like to state that all of us who are assembled in this law-making Assembly were elected by the people of this country and the majority of us are working – class people who do manual labour.

If it is fitting that the retiring age for a parliamentarian should be 55 years why should it not be fitting that the retiring age be the same for manual workers – workers who have tedious tasks to perform such as timber workers and cane cutters. The Hon. Minister of Education who is deputising for the Hon. Minister of Labour and Social Security indicated earlier that a lot of Amendments --

Mr. Speaker: Those are regulations; they are not Amendments.

Mr. Lall: Thank you, sir. I am saying that the Government should re – consider, in the same way that it sought to fix the retiring age for parliamentarians at 55, and should do the same for all workers in Guyana. I should like to deal now with the other aspect, that is, payment to a widow who is dependent upon a husband's pension. It is indicated here that the wife of a parliamentarian will get his pension as long as she lives, but when we examine the recommendations of the National Insurance Scheme, we see that only an allowance of one-third of that pension is paid to the pensioner or person receiving invalidity benefits; only one-third will be paid for fifty-two weeks as a lump sum to the widow of a worker. We feel that this is not fair. We feel that as long as a wife was dependent upon her husband, that when he dies his widow should be given a pension, for the rest of her life.

The Speaker: Or re-marries

Mr. Lall: Sir, I am just making these points because we are representatives of the people and it is said in the Bible: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." We are not doing for the people who have put us here what we are doing for ourselves. I am recommending that since our wives will be entitled to this benefit as widows as long as they live, then the workers' wives should also be entitled to widow benefits.

Take another aspect which I should like to deal with, the aspect of children. Under the National Insurance Scheme the age of a child who is entitled to survivors benefits will be 16 and

under. But in this Bill which is now before the House for us, I include myself part and parcel, we are recommending that our children should benefit as long as they are under 21 years. Why is it below 21 years for parliamentarians' children while for the ordinary workers it is below 16 years? Sir, tell me! If we recommend below 21 years for parliamentarians' children let us do the same for the workers; if we recommend below 16 years for workers' children let us say 16 years for everyone but I prefer 21 years because this will benefit the workers. I make this point to draw the attention of the Government to the disparity of this Bill to the National Insurance Scheme. We are the servants of the people. If we are making legislation then we must make legislation to suit everyone alike pertaining to age, widows' benefit and retiring age.

I do hope that from time to time Government will reconsider the measure that has been passed, the National Insurance and Social Security Act, and that it will make amendments to bring the Act in line with this Bill that we will be passing today.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member Mr. Wilson.

Mr. Wilson: As socialists we have no quarrel with any measure which is brought here to provide economic security for workers. There is no doubt that parliamentarians are workers; many of them have to work 24 hours a day. What is puzzling is the fact that the members of this Government keep on in the direction of feathering their nests, fattening themselves, without considering what is the true position of the people in the country as a whole.

During the debate on the National Insurance and Social Security Bill I referred to the story of the old lady who lived in a shoe. Rather than give her children bread, she gave them stripes. She gave them some broth without any bread, and whipped them all soundly. It seems that the members of this Government are even worse than this old lady. They are not even giving the people broth. They are giving them forth – empty words, a lot of slogans, such as “making the small man a real man”, “consultative democracy”, “co-operative republic”. These are the

things they seem to be bent on feeding the workers with while, at the same time, they fatten themselves.

The question we should consider is whether the country can afford such liberal superannuation benefits, pensions and the like, not for parliamentarians only but for all the people. There are many things to be looked at, yet the Government is tumbling itself head over heels, fattening itself, as I said. What about the unemployed? Twenty per cent of the labour force is unemployed. Is the Government considering the hardship, the privation being suffered by the unemployed with the present high cost of living?

I think the Government should first address itself to the question of making provision for unemployed persons. Let the people for whom this Government cannot find work receive a dole before such liberal provision is made for parliamentarians. What about the men who are working for \$25 a week? The minimum wage is \$4 a day; six fours are \$24. A worker receiving as low a weekly wage as \$25 may have six children. What about child allowances? Is this Government so blind that it cannot see these things? The salaries of parliamentarians were Increased by \$100, \$300 and \$600, free from income tax. [Mr. Jordan: "Do you take yours?"] I will not leave it for you to squander it. What about the children of persons who are working for only \$25 a week?

We would like to see this Government bring forward measures to give allowances for the children of persons whose income are at such a low level. Let the Government bring forward a measure to give the dole to unemployed people who are starving on the streets, people who have nowhere to live.

The members of the Government talk about socialism. Socialism must provide economic security for all. A woman's husband dies leaving her with, let us say, six or sometimes eight children. What is happening? The authorities spend months considering her application under the

social assistance scheme. When she does receive something it is just a crumb - \$6.50 for a child and not all the children are assisted.

We should like measures such as I have mentioned to be brought before a measure such as this. It is not that we are against social security for anybody. We cannot be against economic security, but, as my colleague pointed out, is it fair for parliamentarians, who should regard themselves as stewards with workers as their wards, to fatten themselves at this rate and yet talk about a co-operative, socialist Republic? Where is the socialism in this measure?

[**Mr. Jordan:** "You are going to opt out of this class?"]

Is this not securing an elite class, a special class, a privileged class? If I knew that the money would go to workers I would opt out of this tomorrow.

[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Please let the Hon. Member make his point.

Mr. Wilson: My contention is that if I knew the money would go to workers to provide unemployment benefits, child allowances, further legal and social security, fatter old age pensions – the rate is now \$10 and \$12 a month for the old people and, if they have an income to the extent of \$16 a month, they are not granted even this \$12 a month in the city and \$10 in other areas. Let us liberalise these measures for the mass of people before we look after ourselves.

I would like to take the opportunity to suggest to the Minister of Labour and Social Security that the means test for old pensioners should be removed. If a person is working for \$16 a month he does not receive a pension. If we do not go so far as to remove the means list let us raise the amount and say that if a person is working for \$50 a month then he should not be entitled. Let us also increase the amount of the pension. What can \$10 a month do for an old

person, a person who has given his whole life, up to the age of 65, to the country? The minimum old age pension should be \$50. This is a challenge to the Government.

This is our position today. We, as I said before, are agreeable to economic security being provided not only for parliamentarians but for all the people and we would like the Government to give us an undertaking today, before passing this Bill, that the points raised by my colleague Mr. Henry Lall and myself with regard to workers will be considered.

3.10 p.m.

Mr. M. F. Singh: I should like to raise what I consider a very specific point for the consideration of the Hon. Minister of Finance. I know that according to the provisions of clause 5 of the Bill the widow of a Governor – General or Prime Minister will get a pension. In these days when there are women Parliamentarians and women Governors – General, like Lady Hilda Bynoe of Grenada - - [**The Prime Minister:** “Not ‘Lady’, ‘Dame’.”]

Mr. Speaker: I consider the interruption merely a correction. You may proceed.

Mr. M. F. Singh: In these days when there are women Parliamentarians, as there are in this House, and when there is claim for equality of the sexes, one wonders what is the position in respect of the widower of a woman Parliamentarian. The clause specifically refers to widow; it does not state widower, it does not state spouse. If one looks at the Interpretation Ordinance, section 2(1) (a) states:

“(a) words importing the masculine gender shall include females;”

It does not say vice versa so when I asked the Hon. Minister of Finance just now he gave me the impression that widowers were also covered. That is what the Hon. Minister of Finance seems to suggest. In my humble opinion this is not so. The legislation does not so provide, so if it is the

intention of the Government – and the Hon. Minister of Finance did indicate to me that it is – to provide for widowers also, I suggest that the appropriate amendment should be made in the Bill.

What happened if the widower remarries? I put it out for the consideration of the Hon. Minister because, as I said before, in all seriousness, the Minister of Finance did indicate to me that it was intended to cover widowers also. I am contending that as it is at the present moment it does not.

Mr. M. Y. Ally: While one cannot be so naïve as to say that Parliamentarians are not deserving of pensions, etc., this Government, which fools the nation that it is a co-operative republic - - [**The Prime Minister:** “A Government cannot be a co-operative republic.”] this Government claims to be a socialist Government. We cannot say that the Bill before us is entirely wrong. While we are doing something to benefit ourselves, we should think in terms of helping others also.

My colleague the Hon. Member Mr. Lall spoke at length about the National Insurance Scheme. According to the provisions of the Bill before us, if the Prime Minister served one day he is entitled to his pension, whereas, with the National Insurance Scheme, a worker has to attain the age of 65 years before he gets a little assistance. Let us compare what happens in a truly socialist republic. In a truly socialist republic, when a worker attains the age of 55 years he is entitled to a flat pension. This goes for every worker. When the Government wants to help the people, it should think in terms of helping them truly.

We have seen also where victimisation, discrimination, is levelled against certain people.

Mr. Speaker: Let us be quite clear with our words. One may charge discrimination as against one Parliamentarian or against another, but not victimisation. Where does that come in?

Mr. M. Y. Ally: The point I am trying to make is that if Parliamentarians give service to the House, surely, they should be entitled to some help, but there is juggling here. I should like to tell a little story from the *Hadis*. [**The Prime Minister:** “The Speaker knows more about that book than you.”] Mr. Speaker, I am being heckled.

Mr. Speaker: You have got the Floor, please continue.

Mr. M. Y. Ally: A leader by the name of Hazrat Omar, the second Caliph of Islam, when he assumed the role of head of Government, called his Ministers together and told them to check what is the average earning of every man in his country. When he received that information, he told the Exchequer to apply that same figure to his income. Now one day his wife wanted some extra money to make sweets for their children and this is the reply that this socialist leader gave to his wife - -

Mr. Speaker: I wonder where the Hon. Member has got the information that Hazrat Omar was a socialist leader. Let us be quite correct in our statements.

Mr. M. Y. Ally: I am just showing the socialism that was practiced in those days. It is the same thing, but it is called “socialism” now. The point I am trying to make is that when his wife wanted this extra money he told her that unless every man in his dominion could afford such a luxury then and only then the House of Omar would be able to get that luxury.

I am not saying that we should try and achieve 100 per cent of what was practiced before, but at least leaders in high positions should try to emulate some of these great socialist-qualities, and this would help our country, especially since we want to become a republic.

Unless there is meaning behind the Republic, there would be no Republic. I urge that in future when the Government is proposing approving any loans, it should take into consideration that all the people of this country are one and whatever is said or done should be for the benefit of all concerned.

Dr. Ramsahoye: To me it is always gratifying when a person who has given of his service or labour is to receive recompense, and we freely concede the principle that in so far as the Members are concerned, they ought to be provided with some facilities in respect of pensions and or so gratuities at the correct time. So far as the P. P. P. is concerned, the test is service, and in so far as a person has given service, we would freely recognise his right to relief.

As a result of this, we say that except for official Members of Parliament or the Assemblies or the Legislatures from 1953 who, by virtue of their having given service, enjoy their pensions and gratuities appropriate to their Civil Service status, all other Members who had served in the Legislature ought to have their service considered for the purpose of pensions and gratuities. If the test is service, then so long as a man had served we say that service ought to be taken into account. The result is, people who had served, except Official Members who had already been provided for by the Civil Service, ought to have that service counted.

It sometimes has happened that persons who have been in service have been killed in the course of duty or while performing work which is directly related to their duties as Legislators. We think that those cases are special and that we ought to provide for them. Our proposals will be that where a legislator is killed in the course of his duties, the matter ought to be considered as if he had lived on to work the aggregate period of twelve years which would entitle him to pension and gratuity. There are many hazards in the course of duty and one must consider that very grave misfortunes are likely to arise where people are cut off prematurely. Our position is that where they are cut off, killed, in the course of duty as Legislators, then provision should be made so that the widows should receive the maximum pension.

There is also the problem of the widower. We seem to work at all times on the basis that a woman is dependent upon a man. Well those days are passing and we could envisage that in our society there are cases in which a man is dependent upon a woman M. P. He could be in a very embarrassing position if she were to die and leave him and we think consideration ought to be given to those cases as well so that the widow and widower will have an equality of right.

In respect of illegitimate children, I think that they should be entitled if they were partially dependent upon the deceased legislator but there may be cases where the child is living with the mother and it could be argued that the child is mainly dependent on the mother and not on the father who may be living elsewhere.

The position therefore is, that while the scheme as put by the Hon. Minister of Finance may not be as generous as in other places, there is reason and justice in bringing forward the provisions so that people who had served could look back and see in their last days that their services to the people and to the State were counted for their subsequent financial security. The legislation itself is complicated and one must congratulate those who tried to work out what was obviously a very difficult thing. That is all I wish to say.

The Attorney-General and Minister of State (Mr. Ramphal): I share the sense of gratification expressed by my Hon. and learned Colleague that a measure such as this should have found such substantial unanimity in the House. I take it, of course, that the Hon. Member who spoke last was the definitive speaker for the opposition point of view and that some others who preceded him had been indulging in diversionary rambling which need not detain us. I should like to respond to the constructive suggestions that have been made from the Opposition and if I may deal with the particular points one by one, the first suggestion was that the concept of former legislative service should embrace all persons other than Crown servants, who gave service as Members of Legislatures subsequent to 1953; in other words, from April 1953 onwards. That will include service as a Member of the Interim Government and service as a Nominated, but not Nominated Official, Member of other Parliaments since then.

We have not, in our initial formulation, felt that it was right to relate former legislative service in this way; but one must, Mr. Speaker, take account of the views that have been expressed from the other side and, having regard to those views, the Government is prepared to concur in that suggestion. We will, therefore, at the Committee Stage, bring forward amendments designed to reflect it.

Members of Parliament killed in the course of duty are always in a special category and the tragic circumstances of the event which necessitated the advancing of this legislation in the parliamentary time – table is a vivid reminder of these grim realities.

3.30 p.m.

The Government will be prepared to make modifications in the provision to take account of this. What we have in mind is a provision which will guarantee a maximum pension for Members of this House who die in the course of duty without having qualified for a maximum pension.

The case of dependents, whether of reputed wives or dependents of other kinds, is also always a difficult one. The Bill, as drafted, takes into account the dependents who are illegitimate children and it is perhaps not an unreasonable extension to make provision for a Member to take care in his superannuation arrangements for dependents other than illegitimate children.

What we have in mind, at the moment, is a provision permitting a Member to assign by Will not more than one – third of the widow's pension to one or more persons who are, at the date of his death, dependent upon him. This meets the case that has been advanced by the Opposition and this too will be subject to amendment.

That leaves only the case of the widower. It is true that nearly all the Commonwealth schemes that we have examined and on which we have formulated the Guyana proposals have dealt only with widows; and on the assumption on which we have proceeded and drafted the Bill, a special obligation arises on the part of the State to a widow who is assumed to be dependent upon a male Member of Parliament. The Government agrees, however, that we are moving into different realities and that account must also be taken of a dependent who becomes a widower upon the death of a female Member of Parliament. On the basis of this acknowledgement it will be our aim to ensure that for the purpose of this legislation “widower” is embraced by “widow”.

With those Amendments I hope we will have met all the constructive suggestions that have been urged by the Opposition. While we might not be in a position to table Amendments immediately, it is our undertaking that they shall be brought forward at the earliest possible time.

Mr. Speaker: I take it that that ends the debate on this side. Does the Hon Minister wish to reply?

[The Hon. Minister of Finance indicated that the question be put.]

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: It is my understanding that in view of the fact that Amendments will have to be prepared and submitted to the Committee, we shall not now take the Committee stage. We shall adjourn the Committee stage perhaps until tomorrow.

The Minister of Education (Mrs. Patterson): We would like to adjourn the Committee Stage. I should like, with your permission, to say a little later whether Committee stage will be tomorrow or at the end of today's Sitting.

Mr. Speaker: We shall move on to item 2 on the Order Paper which is a Motion standing in the name of the Hon. Minister of Finance.

**LOAN FROM CANADIAN GOVERNMENT TO PURCHASE AIRCRAFT
FOR GUYANA AIRWAYS CORPORATION**

“Whereas for the purposes of the Development Programme of Guyana for the period 1966 to 1972, as amended, the sum of \$1,700,000 (Canada) is require for the acquisition of two aircraft, together with certain services, materials and equipment, for the Guyana Airways Corporation;

And whereas it is necessary to raise a loan in the sum of \$1,700,000 (Canada) for the purpose aforesaid;

And whereas the Government of Canada is willing to make available a loan for the purpose aforesaid in the sum of \$1,700,000 (Canada) equivalent approximately to \$3,100,000 (Guyana) free from interest and repayable in eighty semi – annual instalments of \$21,250 (Canada) each due and payable on the last day of March and September in each year commencing on 31st March, 1980 and ending on 30th September, 2019:

Now, therefore, be it resolved that this National Assembly in pursuance of section 4 of the Public Loan Ordinance, 1966, as it has effect by virtue of section 5 of the Guyana Independence Order 1966, approve of the raising, from the Government of Canada, for the acquisition of two aircraft together with certain services, materials, and equipment for the Guyana Airways Corporation, of a loan in the sum of \$1,700,000 (Canada) free from interest, commitment or service charges and repayable in eighty semi – annual instalments of \$21,250 (Canada) each due and payable on the last day of March and September in each year commencing on 31st March, 1980 and ending on 30th September, 2019.” [The Minister of Finance]

Dr. Reid: Mr. Speaker, I beg to report that in accordance with Article 80(2) of the Constitution of Guyana I signify that the Cabinet has recommended that the Assembly proceed with this Motion.

From time to time we have had to go through what is now routine. This Motion seeks authority by this House for the Government to borrow from the Government of Canada the sum

of \$1,700,000 (Canada) to purchase aircraft for the development of the Guyana Airways Corporation. In Guyana dollars this sum is \$3,100,000.

During recent years, the Guyana Airways Corporation has been making rapid strides. In this country of ours, there are numerous additional airstrips to facilitate traveling into the hinterland. We need more aircraft to service this country, and with the coming into being of Carifta and discussions surrounding a regional carrier for the Caribbean area more demands have been made on the Guyana Airways Corporation for service outside of Guyana. It is routine for the Guyana Airways Corporation to provide freight services for Caribbean territories. To do this task efficiently and to meet the demands of this growing need then the Guyana Airways Corporation will have to be supplied with the additional but necessary aircraft.

We hope that this Motion when passed will put Government in the position to make use of this loan providing necessary aircraft for the Guyana Airways Corporation so that in time it will become a very viable Corporation in this country. I am certain that all Hon. Members in this House will see the need for this loan which is being provided on terms according to this present age which can be considered very liberal.

The loan was for some 50 years interest with a 10 – year moratorium and 40 years to repay 80 semi-annual instalments. I am certain that with wise leadership and good government this can indeed contribute significantly to the growth and development of the Guyana Airways Corporation. I now move the Motion standing in my name.

Mr. Speaker: The Motion has been moved. It is now before the House for consideration. The Hon. Member Mr. Balchand Persaud.

Mr. Balchand Persaud: Mr. Speaker, we in the Opposition do not have any quarrel with the Government for raising loans to finance the purchasing of two aircraft but the criticism that

we make is in relation to the conditions for the repayment of the money that the Government intends to borrow, \$1.7 million (Canada), which is approximately \$3.1 million (Guyana).

If the Government intends to purchase two aircraft, one should ask the question, how long is the life of an aircraft? How long will these aircraft last? I wish to quote the third paragraph of the Motion:

“That this National Assembly in pursuance of section 4 of the Public Loan Ordinance, 1966, as it has effect by virtue of section 5 of the Guyana Independence Order 1966, approve of the raising, from the Government of Canada, for the acquisition of two aircraft together with certain services, materials, and equipment for the Guyana Airways Corporation, of a loan in the sum of \$1,700,000 (Canada) free from interest, commitment or service charges and repayable in eighty semi – annual instalments of \$21,250 (Canada) each due and payable on the last day of March and September in each year commencing on 31st March, 1980, and ending on 30th September, 2019.”

Why does the Government want to repay this money free from interest beginning in 1980? By that time the aircraft will perhaps be lying on the scrap heap because the normal life of an aircraft does not exceed ten of fifteen years. We will find ourselves in the position of having to pay from 1980 to 2019 for two aircraft that are not in operation. I do not see why the Government does not consider paying off for the aircraft before 1980. We should be able to pay off the loan before that date because, if the Government is getting a loan free from interest, there is no additional burden on the Government. Why should we pay from 1980? We might not be alive at the time this loan is to be repaid. I think the Government should consider paying off the loan before 1980.

The Government will have to repay the loan in Canadian dollars. One does not know whether the same rate of exchange will be in force at that time. Most likely be the time this country is ready to pay back in Canadian dollars Canada will be so industrialised and highly developed that perhaps four of our Guyana dollars will be equivalent to one Canadian dollar. It is most probable that the value of the Canadian dollar will have increased in terms of Guyana dollars, so that, while we do not have to pay interest, we may have to pay a larger amount of

money than if we had to pay interest. The Government is fooling people by saying it is getting money free. In ten or twelve years the country will have to pay much more in Canadian dollars. We know what is taking place; in every five-year period, the industrialised, capitalist countries raise the value of their money and third-class countries like ours find the value of our money is reduced every year. Therefore, while it is written here that we do not have to pay interest, we will virtually be paying interest on the money borrowed. Government is fooling people by saying that we are not going to pay interest.

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

Dr. Reid: I ask that the Motion be put.

Mr. Speaker: I shall now put the question but before doing so I shall ask the Deputy Clerk to read the Motion for us.

Motion read.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

AMENDMENT OF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME, 1966 – 1972

“Whereas the Development Programme of Guyana for the period 1966 to 1972 was approved by Resolution No. LXXIV of the House of Assembly of 25th April, 1966; And whereas it is provided by section 3 of the Public Loan Ordinance, 1966, as it has affect by virtue of section 5 of the Guyana Independence Order 1966, that any modification, amendment, or extension of, and substitution for, the said Development Programme may be approved by the National Assembly;

And whereas it is necessary to amend the said Development Programme so as to provide for additional capital expenditure as detailed as follows:

\$8.3 million to implement a programme of aid to Civil Aviation in Guyana:

Now, therefore, be it resolved that this National Assembly in pursuance of section 3 of the Public Loan Ordinance, 1966, approve of the amendment of the Development Programme for the period 1966 to 1972 as aforesaid. [**The Minister of Finance**]

Dr. Reid: The next Motion standing in my name on the Order Paper is necessary so that the first Motion will become operative.

3.50 p.m.

As I was saying, to give effect to the Resolution that has just been passed, the Development Programme has to be expanded. When the Development Programme was introduced in this House, it was made quite clear that it was a flexible programme, a programme that would from time to time undergo change as we gain experience in the needs of this country and as the circumstances do change, hence to accommodate this loan the Development Programme must now be amended. This can only be done with the authority of this House.

Apart from purchasing aircraft for \$3.1 million, there is also provision in this loan for a grant to provide navigational aids for the Civil Aviation Department, to provide for training civil aviation staff, and also to provide equipment for the Timehri airfield. Now that the House has agreed to the first Motion, I am certain that all of us will support the amending of the Development Programme to accommodate this loan.

Mr. Speaker: the question is before the House. The Hon. Acting Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Ram Karran: While we wish to get through with our business and we wish to co-operate with the Government, we would nevertheless expect that the Hon. Minister, in moving the variation of the Development Programme, would give us something more reasonable with

respect to the request for the expansion of the Development Programme. Surely, when the Development Programme was worked out at the outset, the Government would have had some idea of the amount of money required for expansion, having regard to the promises of loans, to the developments it had envisaged, and to the amount it had hoped to raise.

Surely, the sum of \$3.1 million (Guyana) required for the purchase of these two aircraft should have been included in the original Estimates because the Government would know, as any layman would, that the DC 3s and the Grumman Goose that we have simply cannot go on forever. In fact, they are at the end of their use and one would consider it hazardous to travel in those aircraft. Even if the Government did not know the cost, it should have been in a position to know that an additional amount would have been required for this.

We were told of Interior air strips. The Government had worked it out in great detail – the construction of the Timehri Airport and all the requirements, ancillary services – and should there be any increase outside of variations in cost, one would have thought that that increase would have been influenced by improvements in technical developments in civil aviation. For the Government to come and tell us that it needs additional equipment for Timehri Airport, it needs navigational aids and things like that, shows that it is not doing its homework and that this programme which was presented to this House with all the flourish at the disposal of the Government was just “Guestimates” and was not prepared properly.

We have no objection to voting this amount of money for civil aviation, but we would wish to know now whether other services are going to be treated in the same manner, whether the Government is going to come back and say, “We want a variation in the Development Programme because of our agricultural needs,” and then next week the same thing with respect to another service. Let us know in detail.

The way in which the Hon. Minister treated this was, “Oh, we want some equipment for Timehri.” Surely, when the contract was given out all these details should have been taken into

consideration. You cannot operate an airport without all the facilities. I have already severely criticised the way in which the Government did the Timehri Airport. Even the question of landscaping has not been properly done and if you go to Timehri today you would see the jungle that has been created in the planting of simple things like grass. The Government should be criticised for the very slack manner in which it attempts to do its business.

I hope the Minister of Finance would ask his colleague the Minister of Communications to tell us something in detail, not to tell us that we want more equipment for Timehri and navigational aids to put in the North West District. Let us know in great detail what is required.

Mr. Speaker: Does any other Hon. Member wish to speak? [*Pause*] Then the Hon. Minister of Finance may reply.

Dr. Reid (replying): I am certain that my friend is not serious in what he is saying. I know that he is making an attempt to get some other person on this side to speak but, in view of what I have said in my speech on the previous Motion, this is not necessary. The Hon. Member seems to be blind to what is going on in this world today. The world is undergoing rapid changes and in a developing country these rapid changes are urgent. Sometimes before you complete building – even when properly planned – certain changes take place in the world and you need to adjust what you have done.

This has actually happened at the Timehri Airport. Before we were finished, it was announced that larger planes had been perfected and will be flying in the Caribbean, so the necessary adjustments had to be made. We have already said that, because of CARIFTA and the opportunities CARIFTA has opened to us, we have to use aircraft not only in Guyana but overseas as well, as far as the United States.

These changes, I believe, are too rapid for my Hon. Friend to keep up with and, because of these changes, those who are planning the Development Programme originally thought that it

18.12.69

National Assembly

3.50 – 4.00 p.m.

must be such a flexible programme that the Government can come to this House and seek approval for the necessary changes. This is one of those changes.

Mr. Speaker: Before I put the question, I shall ask the Clerk to read the Motion.

Motion read.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

Mr. Speaker: I think this is a convenient time to suspend the Sitting.

Dr. Reid: The next Motion is a short one.

Mr. Speaker: Do you think we can complete it before tea?

Dr. Reid: I think so; it is routine.

4.00 p.m.

CUSTOMS DUTIES (AMENDMENT) (NO. 7) ORDER

“Be it resolved that this National Assembly, in terms of section 9 of the Customs Ordinance, Chapter 309, confirm Customs Duties (Amendment) (No. 7) Order, 1969 (No. 7) Order, 1969 (No.54), which was made on the 27th of November, 1969, and published in the Gazette on the 6th of December, 1969.”
[The Minister of Finance]

Dr. Reid: In accordance with Article 80 (2) of the Constitution of Guyana, I signify that the Cabinet has recommended the Customs Duties (Amendment) (No. 7) Order, 1969 for consideration by the National Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, sir, this is one of the Motions that must come here from time to time because under the CARIFTA Agreement, imports from CARIFTA countries qualify for duty – free entry under certain conditions relating to the proportion of value produced in the area, that is, 50 per cent or more of the local constituent would qualify certain goods for duty – free entry. Brandy and liquors contain a large proportion of local spirits so these will qualify but locally manufactured brandy and liquors pay excise duty which by our legislation is not imposed on the imported product of the same kind.

All that this Order is seeking to do is to put our local brandy and liquors on par with the imported brandy and liquors. If we are to do this, then we need to agree on this Motion that is before the House so that they will get import duty equivalent to the excise tax levied on the locally manufactured brandies and liquors. All of us will agree that we do not want the foreign commodity to enter to the disadvantage of the local product so this adjustment is being made in order that local brandy and liquor which are manufactured with a great deal of locally constituted ingredients may benefit from the passing of this Motion. I do not think anyone can say that this should not be adjusted.

Mr. Speaker: Any comments on the Motion? *[Pause]* Mr. Clerk, will you read the Motion.

[The Clerk read the Motion.]

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

18.12.69

National Assembly

4.00 – 4.03 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: It is time for the sitting to be suspended.

Sitting suspended at 4.03 p.m.

4.03 p.m.

On resumption --

Mr. Speaker: We go to the Motion which is item 5 on the Order Paper. The Hon. Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources (Mr. Jordan).

FISHERIES (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS (NO.31)

“Be it resolved that this National Assembly in terms of section 33 (3) of the Fisheries Ordinance, 1956 (No.30), confirm the Fisheries (amendment) Regulations, 1969 (No.31), which were made on the 2nd of December, 1969, and published in the Gazette on the 6th of December, 1969.” **[The Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources]**

The Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources (Mr. Jordan): This is a very small matter, Mr. Speaker, which some time ago was brought to the House to bring in line a situation which has recently arisen where fishing boats are not what they used to be. The purpose of these Regulations is to take care of the large number of trawlers which now use this port, so that instead of a berthing fee of twenty-five cents, they will pay \$100. That is all this Motion is intended to do.

Mr. Speaker: The Motion is before the House for discussion. Is there any Hon. Member who wishes to speak before the Question is put? *[Pause]* The Clerk will now read the Motion.

[The Clerk read the Motion.]

18.12.69

National Assembly

4.03 p.m.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

Mrs. Patterson: Mr. Speaker, today, we received three Motions, numbers 80, 81 and 82. We have consulted with our friends on the other side and with their agreement I now move the suspension of the Standing Orders in order that the Motions may be dealt with today.

4.40 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I understand that consultation has resulted in agreement for Motions Nos. 80, 81 and 82 to be constituted into another Supplementary Order Paper and to be dealt with at this Sitting. I shall, therefore, put the question that the relative Standing Orders be suspended in order to allow the Motions to be dealt with today.

Motion put and carried.

Mr. Speaker: Motion No. 80.

AUTHORITY TO GUARANTEE OVERDRAFT FACILITIES – GUYANA

“Whereas the Guyana Electricity Corporation, the Commonwealth Development Corporation, and the Government have agreed that the present Management Agreement between the Guyana Electricity Corporation and the Commonwealth Development Corporation, should come to an end;

And whereas it is necessary, as a preliminary, to pay off the existing loan of approximately \$2 m. owed by the G. E. C. to the C. D. C.;

And whereas it is projected to do this with funds provided by Barclays Bank D. C. O., subject to a Government guarantee of repayment:

18.12.69

National Assembly

4.40 – 4.50 p.m.

Be it resolved that this National Assembly do authorize the Government to guarantee overdraft facilities up to a limit of \$2m. to be provided by Barclays Bank for the Guyana Electricity Corporation.” [Minister of Finance]

Dr. Reid: Mr. Speaker, in accordance with article 80 (2) of the Constitution of Guyana I hereby signify that the Cabinet has recommended this Motion for consideration by the National Assembly.

According to this Agreement a loan of approximately \$2 Million owed by the Guyana Electricity Corporation to the Commonwealth Development must be paid off. Arrangements have been made for this re-financing by Barclays Bank and so the Government is asking the National Assembly to authorise it to guarantee overdraft facilities up to the limit of \$2 million to be provided by Barclays Bank for the Guyana Electricity Corporation.

Arrangements were in fact made with the C. D. C. to refinance the Electricity Corporation when it was in difficult circumstances, but Government has noticed during the period of the life of this Agreement that there were certain fundamental disagreements and so the step was taken to initiate discussions to terminate the Agreement because of its dead effect on the Corporation. We have from this exercise two things that stand out: One is that notwithstanding the long negotiations that went on with C. D. C. when disagreement arose, Government found out that it was difficult for the Guyana Electricity Corporation to continue because, so the Government demonstrated courage to call a halt to the agreement. That is one. The next is that sometime one gets into agreements and one is tied outside of the Agreement and even if there is difficulty one finds it almost impossible to terminate any such agreement. This Government has maintained freedom of action in this particular case and has now been in a position to inform the House that the Agreement will be terminated. But one would ask if this Agreement or the development of electricity in this country is terminated, and what is the position with the Guyana Electricity Corporation.

18.12.69

National Assembly

4.40 – 4.50 p.m.

It is good to report that the experience over the past year has served the Guyana Electricity Corporation to bring it to the stage where it can manage its own affairs – collecting arrears and collecting current fees. So that now it is in a position to handle its own affairs independently. Over the years when it will have overdraft facilities with Barclays Bank according to the projection, the development works will continue. The overdraft will be repaid and the Corporation will be speeding on its development programme to become and more viable.

When the arrangements were made with the Commonwealth Development Corporation, the Corporation had a debt of some \$6.5 million (A. I. D.). Today, we can report that at the end of this year the Corporation will be making its last payment towards that balance and so it is free to move forward. Then using the same projection and noting the ability of the Corporation to repay the loan due to A. I. D. the prognosis is fair that the Corporation will not only repay the overdraft facilities but will also have funds for capital expenditure during the years 1970 to 1973. I said a while ago that the Corporation has demonstrated will and determination to do its business properly and so it can generate funds. From self-generated funds in 1970, 1971, 1972 and 1973 the Corporation should have a total of \$16.98 Million. Out of the overdraft facilities will be repaid. There will be net funds available for capital expenditure for development – capital expenditure projected over that period, the sum of \$6.9 million.

So in bringing this Motion to the House and informing the House of the termination of the agreements with the C. D. C. it is done with the full knowledge that with self-generated funds from the Corporation the work of the electricity expansion will continue and the Guyana Electricity Corporation will be better off for this new arrangement.

4.50 p.m.

I am therefore happy to know that we will be able to make new facilities available. I ask the House to approve the Motion standing in my name.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the question is before the National Assembly. The Hon. Acting Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Ram Karran: I would be the last to criticise this rather unceremonious divorce from Commonwealth Development Corporation with its colonial ancestry and colonial relationship, but certainly, in these days when there are so many short comings not only in the Electricity Corporation but even throughout the country, one would have liked to hear from the Minister more about the things that are happening behind the scene. I invite the Minister to tell us.

There are many rumours, some of which reach the headlines now and again – the loss of money, the dismissal of the security officer and a whole lot of things. Were these responsible for this sudden divorce between the C. D. C. and the Government?

This Opposition strongly criticised the arrangement when it came before this House. The Hon. Minister ought to tell us exactly what is the cause. We know that when this Corporation was set up some time ago it showed very clearly that it could generate enough capital, not only to pay off for the huge debt which was created, but to repay before the schedule time. The Hon. Minister gives us a sop. He says, “By the year of Our Lord 1973 the Corporation will have generated \$16.98 million from having the experience from the C. D. C.” [Dr Reid: “Not from the C. D. C.”]

While the Commonwealth Development Corporation must be looked upon by all progressive people as an organisation which goes to the colonies, ex – colonies or newer colonies to make profits for its shareholders, we know that the Commonwealth Development Corporation runs its affairs in a businesslike manner. We have no doubt about that and we would therefore invite the Hon. Minister to tell us whether the members of the Corporation cannot get along with the strict business arrangements required under the C. D. C. banner. Perhaps this is one of the reasons for this sudden ending of the Agreement. The Hon. Minister said that the Corporation has learnt a great deal about collecting arrears and current fees and it can now handle its own

affairs independent of the C. D. C. Is that all that those honoured gentlemen appointed to the Corporation have learned during this period of studentship under the C. D. C. – to collect arrears and to be able to collect current fees? I thought that they would have learned how to run their business properly so that in 1973 they would not only have a surplus of \$16.98 million, but have capital for the expansion of the services. We want the Corporation to have generating capacity to take care of those industries to which the Hon. Minister has granted tax holidays. If the Hon. Minister were to read the Preece, Cardew and Rider Report he would recognise that we are very nearly at the point where additional generating capacity should be installed in Kingston so that we would be able to bring in hydro-electricity as the next step to take care of the high demand for electricity which will be made within the middle of the next decade.

I have made this observation before, but it is necessary to record it because a large number of Guyanese, distressed and displaced as a result of the actions of my friends on the other side, are living in sub – human conditions on the East Coast of Demerara, between Plaisance and Beterverwagting. They are without any electricity at Good Hope, Lusignan, Annadale, Buxton, Enmore and even beyond, where electricity passes them by on the public road. No electricity is available to them. Is it because of the fact that the Electricity Corporation is not prepared to provide electricity for these people – which will bring a profit to the Electricity Corporation – that the Commonwealth Development Corporation decided to walk out? I cannot understand it.

These are the things that members on this side would like to hear, not that the Agreement has been brought to an end. Why is it brought to an end? Not that members of the Corporation have now learned to collect arrears and current fees. What else have they learned? Is it that they are going to have proper facilities so that the Corporation will not run into the same sort of difficulties which it ran into the other day when the Hon. Minister had to go to the C. D. C. to marry our resources to it in order to be able to get through those difficulties?

We are all in sympathy with the difficulties of the Government so far as lack of capital is concerned. We are willing to give of our experience so that the country can be run properly, but the members of the Government must not do things and come and tell us what they have done. They must not say, "Look, this thing has come to an end. What is the reason, we do not know. Our men are going to go back to make the same mistakes they have made in the past." Let them not be afraid to make the facts available so that Guyanese people will be able to judge whether they are indeed carrying on the administration properly and in the best way.

Mr. Speaker: Does any other Hon. Member wish to reply? [*Pause*] Perhaps the Hon. Minister of Finance may wish to reply.

Dr. Reid: There is not much to reply to, but I just want to indicate that between 1961 and 1962 there was a pattern of overload at the Electricity Corporation. That is one point. Secondly, any work that was done in those years was only done in high return areas and from the right on to 1963 there was no capital development at all. Therefore, when my friend speaks about the Electricity Corporation he has probably forgotten these facts.

I made it quite clear there was fundamental disagreement between the Commonwealth Development Corporation and the Guyana Electricity Corporation, disagreement that impinges on dignity and self – respect and, for us on this side, human dignity and self-respect are most important notwithstanding the need for assistance. If our dignity and self-respect are interfered with, then we in turn will not accept that kind of assistance.

I also indicated that from self-generating funds the Corporation will proceed with development. I have already gone into several areas and this extension programme is now in progress. I ask that you be kind enough to put the Motion.

Motion read.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

Mr. Speaker: We shall deal with the Motion which appears on Notice Paper No. 81.

EXTENSION OF GUARANTEE OF OVERDRAFT FACILITIES

“Whereas by Resolution XI of 11th October, 1966, this National Assembly approve that Government should guarantee overdraft facilities to a limit of 1 million dollars for the purpose of interim financing of the housing project undertaken by the Trades Union Council Co – operative Housing Society Limited, for a period of two years from the first advance to the Society;

And whereas by Resolution9 XLII of 12th July, 1968, this Assembly authorised an increase in the overdraft limit to 1.5 million dollars;

And whereas the guarantee period has expired;

And whereas the Bank is prepared to continue the existing overdraft facilities until completion of the project, provided that Government extends its guarantee for a like period:

Be it resolved that this Assembly do authorise the Government to extend its guarantee of overdraft facilities to a limit of 1.5 million dollars in relation to the aforementioned housing project until such time as the project is completed.”
[The Minister of Finance]

Dr. Reid: I beg to move the Motion standing in my name. You will remember the story of this project. We had originally asked for a guarantee of \$1 million then, subsequently, we returned to the House and increased that by \$1/2 million. The scheme has run into several difficulties and, in order to ensure that it is completed, at one period a halt had to be called to it. We are now in a position to carry on the scheme to finality, but the period of the guarantee has

expired and, therefore, it is necessary that this House should approve the Motion to extend this period so that the houses can be completed.

The question that may be asked now is, what is the projection for the completion of this scheme? We on this side can now report that arrangements have been finalised for the completion of the scheme and work is now in progress. Contracts have already been awarded for the completion of 60 unfinished houses and 284 additional houses so as to complete the scheme of 568 houses. This time the co-operative builders in this country are participating in this scheme very actively, practically on their own. The Guyana Housing Development Corporation is doing some work on the site and will also be engaged in the completion of the work.

A select committee, comprising representatives of the T.U.C., the Society's solicitors, and the manager designate, is at the moment selecting persons to occupy the finished buildings from among the members who qualify so that the difficulties that were experienced have now been taken under control and it is our hope that the scheme will be completed.

If a scheme is not going well, it is the business of Government to ensure that the people who are involved in it do not suffer and for that reason the scheme had to be called to a halt. Now that matters have been straightened out, Government is in a position to allow the builders to proceed. The only exercise that needs to be carried out is to extend the same guarantee – not to ask for an additional amount – to ensure that the scheme is completed. I am pleased to move this Motion standing in my name.

Mr. Speaker: The question is before the Assembly.

Mr. Chandisingh: This project has had a history of misadventure. We are well aware, as the Hon. Minister of Finance has said, of the problems, the difficulties, connected with the scheme and we regret to say that while we had warned the Government, on a previous occasion,

18.12.69

National Assembly

5.00 – 5.10 p.m.

of the problems that it was likely to run into, we were given assurances and told in the past, up to early this year, that everything was being done to speed up the building of these houses.

We were also told how many houses would have been built at the end of this year. Yet we noted from Press reports that the Barker consultants who were brought in to examine the scheme found it necessary to give a rather shocking report on this whole project. As a matter of fact, we understand that the project was over-capitalised. There was a lot of unnecessary machinery lying around wasting, deteriorating. In other words, money was going down the drain and we knew, even before a halt was put to the scheme, that house building had been held up because the various creditors could not be paid the money which was outstanding to them.

We read in the Press that, as a result of all of this, the cost of the project would now be higher than what was originally envisaged. I do not know whether the Hon. Minister of Finance would give us the revised figure but it seems to be in the vicinity of an additional \$900,000 required for the completion of the project. In this connection, what concerns us most of all is that while we see all these developments taking place, which the Minister calls difficulties, problems, many people who are expected to benefit from this housing project – both the TUCville scheme and the TUCber scheme, as the one in New Amsterdam is called – apparently would not now qualify because of the increased charges which we understand would be made for these houses. We know that there is an income qualification below which members are not entitled to participate in this housing project and what many people, and members of this project, are worried about is that, with the increased cost of the houses, they would be excluded from participating.

5.10 p.m.

I even understand that some people have been made to understand that if they can no longer participate in the project even though they have advanced sums of money, that they will have to

sell their rights, so to speak, to somebody else who comes within that qualification, in other words, someone who has a higher income.

In the light of all this, our main point is that this housing project, like some others which the Government has embarked upon, has resulted not in the people of low-income categories really getting houses but invariably it seems as if the higher-income persons are the ones who are benefitting mostly from these schemes. Again I repeat, we are not against persons with slightly higher incomes than lower-income groups having houses. But we have made the point time and again in this House – we are not against them, although the Government is trumpeting that it is undertaking scheme for low-income people when in reality such categories of working people are not in the main eligible for such schemes.

Sir, I wish once again to refer to the state of chaos which the Barker consultants referred to in connection with this Tucville project and while we have been given certain reassurance by the Hon. Minister, we would like the Government to take into account the original intention of the scheme and to ensure that the persons who had originally become members of the scheme are assisted, that something be done to make it possible for people not to lose their right to participation in this project. We are accustomed to hearing from Hon. Ministers what progress is being made with respect to housing but while things are going on and on, the net result is that houses are not being built.

Mr. Speaker, I will close my remarks by once again appealing to the Government to see to it that really low-income persons benefit and that these houses to be built will not willy-nilly find themselves in the hands of higher-income persons, which was not the original intention of this project.

Mr. Lall: We on this side of the House do not object when Government guarantees loans for housing projects especially for the lower-income group, but we are saying that when Government guarantees such loans, some sort of supervision should be carried out by

Government to see and to make sure that the loan is put to the best use and in the interest of the working class. We were told prior to Government guaranteeing the first loan for the T. U. C., that those houses were being built for the lower-income group. We appreciated that at that time but because of maladministration and because of lack of supervision by the guarantors of the loan, it was mis-spent. *[Interruption]* It was in the press.

Houses that initially were to cost \$5,000 are now costing \$8,500. I am speaking subject to correction. *[Interruption]* Houses that were supposed to cost \$7,000 went up to \$11,000. We were told that the workers were required to pay 10 per cent of the cost of a house and then they would be given one of the houses. Which ordinary worker, when the cost is jacked up from \$5,000 to \$8,500 and from \$7,000 to \$11,000, of the lower – income group would be able to find an initial sum of 10 per cent of the cost of a house? He has to go to the money lender and instead of paying for the house which he has purchased on hire- purchase terms, he will have to pay the money lender.

Adding insult to injury, although the cost of a house was jacked up as a result of no supervision, we were told that third class and second-hand materials were used to build these houses. We would like to know, now that Government is guaranteeing a further amount, if Government will supervise the building of this scheme. It is no use guaranteeing a loan in order to throw it in the drain. A few of the T. U. C. heads were going around telling the boys, “You are getting houses” but the houses were shared to their friends. Anybody on the Government side who says the Government is trying to help the low-income group is either fooling himself or is throwing dust in the people’s eyes, but one day the dust will be washed away and the people will be able to see again.

I am advising the Government, if it is guaranteeing loans, then it must see that the loans are spent properly. We further feel that the Government should subsidise these houses so that the low-income group would be able to acquire them. The Government can tax the rich.

I therefore urge that the Government carry out stricter provision as far as these housing schemes are concerned.

Mr. Speaker: Does any other Hon. Member wish to speak? [After a pause.] The Hon. Minister of Finance.

Dr. Reid: Mr. Speaker, the first thing I want to make clear is this: We are not asking for a new loan, it is an extension of the old guarantee. This is a scheme that belongs to the Trade Union Organisation. The T. U. C. in turn selected a committee to carry out this scheme; they select the people who should get houses. We thought that it was their democratic right and freedom to have the opportunity to execute the programme. Some times when you keep too near and try to institute controls people begin to say you are a dictator. Government was giving assistance only by way of guarantee so that needed homes will be provided at the lowest possible cost. There were, I must admit, many rumours about this but Government could not act on rumours. However, because of the interest of the people, the Government mounted an investigation. An investigation was carried out and when irregularities were identified the Scheme was promptly stopped.

This Government behaved as how any honest Government should behave. I agree that Government should provide more houses. When you have all the irregularities of some schemes in this country during the P. P. P. Government one cannot but help reflecting that what happened in the past affected even that scheme of TUCville. Because if you visit and discuss with some of the old members of the Committee their attitude is that you should not institute rules and regulations on them and they point to Black Bush Polder, to Makouria and these are the things that interfere with some of the things that are being done now. So any Government in office should ensure that whatever it is doing it is not left as a bad example. We have suspended the project so that we can ensure that this scheme will come to finality after the regulations are sorted out. We have seen schemes still painting a bad image in this country. The P. P. P. Government did nothing to put them right. As a matter of fact many of those schemes are only

18.12.69

National Assembly

5.20 – 5.30 p.m.

now being put right by this Government in office. We are providing houses for all types of people. This is not the only scheme and prices of houses range from \$80,000 to \$5,000. I am certain that the Hon. Minister of Housing and Reconstruction is right now supervising the construction of houses for the lowest possible income group; so we are covering the entire sphere of housing in this country. This is a record the P. P. P. Government never had hoped to achieve.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that the Motion be read a Second time.

Question put and agreed to.

Motion carried.

NEW AMSTERDAM ELECTRIC LIGHTING ORDER, 1900

“Be it resolved that the New Amsterdam Electric Lighting Order, 1900, as *mended from time to time be extended for a period of one (1) year up to and including 31st December, 1970.*” [The Minister of Finance]

Dr. Reid: Mr. Speaker, this is merely routine because this comes up year after year and we are hoping that this is the last year. I am certain that my Hon. Friends on the other side, especially the Hon. Member Mr. Harry Lall, will certainly support this Motion.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member Mr. Harry Lall.

Mr. Lall: Your Honour, every year this comes up. The consumers of electricity in New Amsterdam have been exploited. [*Interruption*]

18.12.69

National Assembly

5.30 – 5.35 p.m.

Why? They even charged themselves and robbed themselves. You have some experience, sir. They said that the charge for supplying water in the town of New Amsterdam for electrical energy, which is at the industrial rate of 8 cents per unit, was \$50,000 per year. Your Honour, this is unacceptable, inconceivable and unbelievable. *[Laughter]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think Hon. Members are showing their appreciation of the colourful way in which the Hon. Member has expressed himself.

Mr. Lall: I am saying that it is impossible for the electrical energy supplied to New Amsterdam to cost \$50,000.

I would just like you to bear with me, sir, I want to divert a little. The expenditure of the town for the supply of water is more than one – third of its total expenditure. Something is happening. What is the Government doing about it?

I have made representations to the Prime Minister – who is now responsible for this – about the 100 per cent increase in the cost of water supplied. I believe that the Government should take positive steps to see that the charges for electrical energy supplied to consumers in New Amsterdam and its environments be reduced and that something be done to develop electricity there so that the people on the Corentyne Coast can be supplied with electrical energy.

We do hope that this will be the last year, as the Minister of Finance indicated, for a Motion of this sort and that we will not have another last year.

Mr. Speaker: Do any other Hon. Members wish to speak? *[Pause]* The Hon. Minister of Finance.

Dr. Reid: I ask that the Motion be put because I have no intention of destroying this entertainment.

18.12.69

National Assembly

5.30 – 5.35

p.m.

Mr. Speaker: The Motion will be read by the Clerk.

Motion read.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, “That this Assembly do now adjourn until Monday, 22nd December, 1969, at 2 p.m.” [Mrs. Patterson]

Adjourned accordingly at 5.35 p.m.
