

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

56th Sitting

2.00 p.m.

Monday, 29th 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,
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 N. J. Bissember,
Minister of Trade and Parliamentary Affairs

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

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

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

The Honourable B. Ramsaroop,
Minister of Housing and Reconstruction

The Honourable M. W. Carter,
Minister of Information

The Honourable H. O. Jack,
Minister without Portfolio

Parliamentary Secretaries

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

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

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

Other Members

Mr. J. N. Aaron
Miss M. M. Ackman
Mr. K. Bancroft
Mr. J. Budhoo, J. P.
Mr. O. E. Clarke, Deputy Speaker
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. R. Ally
Mr. E. L. Ambrose
Mrs. L. M. Branco
Mr. Balchand Persaud
Mr. Bholu Persaud
Mrs. R. P. Sahoye
Mr. V. Teekah
Mrs. E. DaSilva
Mr. M. F. Singh
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 S. S. Ramphal, C. M. G., Q. C.,
Attorney General and Minister of State

The Honourable H. Green,
Minister of Works and Hydraulics

Dr. the Honourable Sylvia Talbot,
Minister of Health

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

- on leave

Mr. J. R. Thomas, Parliamentary Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister	-	on leave
Mr. L. I. Chan-A-Sue	-	on leave
Dr. C. B. Jagan, Leader of the Opposition	-	on leave
Mr. A. M. Hamid, J. P	-	on leave
Mr. E. M. Stoby		
Mr. I. R. Remington, J. P.		
Mr. J. A. Sutton	-	on leave

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER**LEAVE TO MEMBERS**

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, leave from today's sitting of the Assembly has been granted to the Hon. Members, Mr. Thomas, Mr. Duncan, Mr. Chan – A – Sue, and Mr. Sutton.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following Paper was laid:

Consumption Tax Order, 1969 (No. 57), made under section 4 of the Corporation Tax Act, 1969 (No. 13), on 15th of December, 1969, and published in the Gazette on 20th of December, 1969. [**The Minister of Finance**]

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS – FIRST READING

The following Bill was introduced and read the First time:

Pensions (Consolidation) (Amendment) Bill, 1969. [**The Minister of Finance.**]

PUBLIC BUSINESS**MOTION****ADOPTION OF CONCLUSION IN SESSIONAL PAPER 3/1969 ON I. L. O.****RECOMMENDATION (No. 132)**

“Whereas the International Labour Conference at its Fifty – second Session in Geneva during June, 1968, adopted Recommendation (No. 132) concerning “The Improvement of Conditions of Life and Works of Tenants, Share Croppers and Similar Categories of Agricultural Workers,

And whereas Guyana, as a member of the International Labour Organisation, is required to bring Conventions and Recommendations adopted by the International Labour Conference to the attention of the National Assembly within one year and in no case later than eighteen months after the closing of the Session of the Conference;

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And whereas the above Recommendation was laid in the National Assembly on the 22nd of December, 1969, in Sessional Paper No. 3/1969:

Be it resolved that this National Assembly adopt the conclusion contained in Sessional Paper No. 3/1969 on International Labour Recommendations adopted on 25th June, 1968, at the 52nd Session of the International Labour Conference.”[**The Minister of Labour and Social Security**]

The Minister of Labour and Social Securing (Mr. Carrington): Mr. Speaker, this Recommendation concerns the improvement of conditions of life and work of tenants, share croppers and similar categories of agricultural workers. Before I present this Recommendation, I should like to make certain pertinent remarks concerning this Recommendation, No. 132, which was adopted on the 25th June, 1968, at the 52nd Session of the International Labour Conference.

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I wish to state that according to the constitution of the International Labour Organisation, an I.L.O. Recommendation unlike an I. L. O. Convention, does not require ratification by any national parliament. An I. L. O. Recommendation seeks to bring to the attention of government certain guidelines to national legislative action if those guidelines are in accord with the social and economic circumstances of the country concerned. Today in considering Recommendation No. 132, I wish to direct the attention of this House to the guidelines as adumbrated by the provision of this instrument with respect to the improvement of the condition of life and work of tenants, share – croppers, and similar categories of agricultural workers. The 26 provisions of this Recommendation are sufficiently comprehensive to cover the wide ambit of agricultural practice and land tenures which embrace the many different countries of the world. This has to be so if this Recommendation reasonably seeks to fulfil the objective of universal application.

Agricultural practice and land tenures mirror the economic history and evolution of different countries. In some countries for example, France, Germany, and Italy the *metayer* system of agricultural practice has left its mark. In others, for example in the West Indies and Guyana relics of the old manorial system of cultivation exist, as seen in the plantation system of

sugar – cane cultivation. Still in others, like some countries in Latin America and South America, the *latifundia* type of agricultural practice exists.

Under paragraph 3 of this Sessional Paper the position of agricultural practice in Guyana is clearly stated. Guyana does not have an agricultural system where tenant farmers come within the directional control of landlords, as is the practice in certain States in Latin America and South America, where a *latifundia* type of agricultural practice exists. Briefly this latter practice is where the tenant farmers rent land from large landed proprietors who derive profits directly from the labours of tenant farmers. In such a situation there is much scope for exploitation by unscrupulous landlords. The plight of such tenant – farmers is rendered more difficult if the government fails to introduce agrarian reforms and proper land utilization. The present Recommendation seeks to promulgate certain guidelines to remedy such situations.

In Guyana the above situations do not exist. Here generally, two types of agricultural arrangements exist. The first arrangement is described under paragraph 1 of the heading – “*Position in Guyana*” where agricultural work is remunerated by wages fixed by contract negotiation between employers and unions bargaining for workers. This is the position in the sugar industry. In the rice industry, the practice of tenant farming is entirely independent and the conditions governing land tenures are laid down in the Rice Farmers Land Tenure Act. Farmers lease land from the Government, or private land owners, and pay fixed annual rentals. It should also be noted that in this arrangement there is the absence of the directional control of the *latifundia* type landlord over the tenant farmer. In land settlement scheme like Black Bush Polder, Cane Grove, Tapakuma, the Government has spent huge sums of taxpayers’ money in producing infra – structure development like roads, land reclamation, irrigation and water control, and social welfare. The rents paid to Government are for the use of the lands so developed, but even here, Government could not be considered a landlord in the traditional sense, because Government derives no share from the profits of the tenant farmers of these land settlement schemes.

In this connection, Mr. Speaker, provision No. 11 under the Head – “*Methods of Implementation*” is very relevant, where provision is made for the protection of tenants, share –

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croppers against the performance of personal services in any form, paid or unpaid to the landlord, and such attempts at imposition could be met by an appropriate penalty by the competent authority (i. e. the Government). It would be ridiculous to contend that Government could be a landlord, and the competent authority to enforce such a penalty by the competent authority (i. e. the Government). It would be ridiculous to contend that Government could be a landlord, and the competent authority to enforce such a penalty at one and the same time.

In sum, Mr. Speaker, the Government adheres to its contention as expressed in the conclusions of this Sessional Paper, and it is proposed to inform the Director – General of the I. L. O. that agricultural practice in Guyana differs markedly from that envisaged by the provisions of this Recommendation and there is no need for Guyana to implement them.

It is necessary to make that statement since, on the last occasion, the Opposition indicated that this matter was controversial. The Government sees no controversy in this Recommendation since we can, at any future date, if necessary, implement the necessary laws if we find that in Guyana there is need for such legislation. It would then be in the interest of such organisations to bring to the Government's attention that such conditions exist and the Government should see that the necessary legislation is laid in Parliament. At the present moment no individual has made it known that these conditions exist.

Therefore I ask that the Resolution as set out in the Paper here that this National Assembly adopt the conclusion contained in Sessional Paper No. 3 of 1969 on International Labour Recommendations adopted in 25th June, 1968, at the 52nd Session of the International Labour Conference be adopted. As I said in the Recommendations and it reads:

“Since the terms and conditions of work of agriculture workers envisaged by the Recommendation do not apply to agricultural workers in Guyana there is no need for Guyana to implement the provisions of the Recommendation.”

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: The Motion has been moved.

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Mr. Ram Karran *rose* --

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. acting Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Lall *rose* --

[At this stage Mr. Ram Karran indicated that he would give way to Mr. Lall.]

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

Mr. Lall: Sir, the Hon. Minister of Labour (Mr. Carrington) says that the situation as set out in the Recommendation is non – existent in Guyana. It is beyond comprehension. Firstly, sir, I would like to refer to page one.

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Paragraph 1 (1) states:

“The recommendation applies to agricultural workers –

- a) Who pay a fixed rent in cash, in kind, in labour, or in a combination of these;”

Now sir, I should like to know what is the meaning of a fixed rent in cash”. [**The Prime Minister:** “Each word there is English, Harry.”] I am submitting that so long as it is stated here that the recommendation applies to agricultural workers “who pay a fixed rent in cash”; it means that this applies to tenants who pay rents in terms of cash.

Sir, if you will permit me, I should like to refer to page 6, paragraph 23, sub – paragraphs (2) and (3).

Mr. Speaker: From what document is the Hon. Member quoting?

Mr. Lall: Paragraph 23 reads thus - - -

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Mr. Speaker: Is it a Sessional Paper Hon. Member?

Mr. Lall: Sessional Paper No. 3 of 1969. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: You may proceed Hon Member.

Mr. Lall: Your Honour, I wish to quote paragraph 23 (2).

It is stated here that:

“Where such persons are covered by agrarian reform or land settlement projects, special programmes of education and training should be developed to enable them to benefit fully therefrom.”

This indicated, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that a Government is a landlord and as such a Government must live up to its obligation as a landlord and must set an example by implementing what the I. L. O. Convention recommended. Therefore, for the Hon. Minister to come and tell us that we must assent to the Secretary – General of the I. L. O. and indicate that this problem does not arise in Guyana is not fooling us, but fooling Hon. Members on that side of the House.

I should like to make reference to clause 10 (a) on page 3 of this Paper, roman figures (i), (ii), (iii) –

Mr. Speaker: The document is a Sessional Paper, it is not a Bill; therefore you should refer to paragraph number so and so.

Mr. Lall: Page 3, paragraph 10.

“Steps should be taken and procedures appropriate to national conditions established with a view to –

- a) Ensuring that rent is at a level which –
 - i. Permits a standard of living for the occupant which is compatible with human dignity;
 - ii. Gives each of the parties concerned a just and equitable return;
 - iii. Promotes progressive husbandry;”

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Then I should like to refer to (c):

“(c) making rent adjustments in certain circumstances
such as substantial changes in yield, prices and value of land.”

I want to make a few observations here. The past U.F/P.N.C. coalition Government – [The Prime Minister: “No, no. it was P.N.C./U.F. coalition Government.”] – took away certain facilities that were granted farmers, such as duty free gasoline. When you take away these facilities it means that the cost of production must go up. I see clearly stated here: “making rent adjustments in certain circumstances such as substantial changes in yield, prices and value of land”. I want to appeal to the Hon. Minister of Labour to see to it that these adjustments are made.

Now, sir, I should like to go on to (d) which states:

“(d) postponing the payment of rent and, where circumstances so require, reducing it in case of crop failure or other disasters affecting the holding, due to natural causes which the tenant, share – cropper or agricultural worker in a similar category could not foresee or control.”

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I want to turn my attention to Black Bush Polder where the Hon. Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources was taking certain measures against people who rented land there. We on this side of the House feel that, as recommended by the I. L. O. Recommendation, it is Government's duty to assist the farmers who are affected by shortage of water which is diverted to sugar estates instead of to the farmers holdings at Black Bush, Albion, Port Mourant, Corentyne and Rose Hall and thereby causes a failure of crops. A Government should use its discretion in waiving rental. But what did the Government do? The Government started to bulldoze the tenants' houses.

We want to advise the Government; we are not critical; it is our duty to advise. This world body, the I.L.O., has studied all the problems that face human beings and that it why it

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has recommended that steps should be taken to have these recommendations implemented where that has not already been done.

It should not be the Minister's policy to mislead this world body. It should be the Minister's policy to implement agricultural returns so that tenants who rent lands could be benefited. I am therefore asking Government to implement these recommendations wherever possible, rather than mislead this world organisation; to make changes and reforms. Then the Government will be doing something meaningful.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member Mr. Chandisingh.

Mr. Chandisingh: I would just like to say a few words on this. A short while ago we commemorated the 50th anniversary of I.L.O. and, having expressed satisfaction with the work of the I.L.O. on that occasion, it seems to me that this proposal by the Hon. Minister of Labour is not in keeping with the universal respect which has been accorded to this organisation. Of course, I speak as a layman. In my way of looking at things, it does appear that the spirit of this Recommendation does provide for a situation such as we have in Guyana.

I do not want to repeat what my colleague the Hon. Member Mr. Harry Lall has said on this. I merely wish to emphasise that, in my opinion, this Recommendation is certainly typical of our situation in Guyana, particularly with respect to tenants. It may be, of course, as the Hon. Minister said in his opening remarks that in certain other countries, such as he referred to, there are conditions more applicable to share-cropping and that type of farming. Perhaps in the United States it also applies. It may be that in Guyana you will find a smaller proportion of this type of landlord/tenant relationship. Nevertheless, I would like to observe that it is quite clear that the intention of the Recommendation is to cover such cases as Government Land Settlement Schemes.

In any event, I should imagine that if the Opposition and the Government hold different views on this particular interpretation it would be the duty of the Government to defer this measure. If it does not wish to change the terms of the Motion and to seek approval of the I.L.O. Recommendation, at least it is its duty to defer this Motion in order to transmit to the I.L.O.

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some of the views of the Opposition in the Guyana Parliament so that some clarification may be secured before bringing on us the rejection, so to speak, of the Recommendation.

It is true that Recommendations do not have to be accepted by Member Governments of the I.L.O. but certainly Recommendations are what one may describe as “feelers” on certain questions on which there has not yet been majority acceptance. When these Recommendations have been accepted by a certain number of members of the I.L.O. they tend to become Conventions or, at least, to form the basis of Conventions.

Despite the fact that there is a Rice Farmers (Security of Tenure) Ordinance, to which the Minister has referred, there are certain points to which I shall refer. Recommendations form the basis for a more thorough consideration of questions by the Government in order to implement, wherever possible, whatever of the provisions can be implemented as quickly as possible with a view to improving the conditions of life of tenants and farmers in this country.

My colleague has already referred to sub-paragraph (c) of paragraph 10 which states:

“making rent adjustments in certain circumstances such as substantial changes in yield, prices and value of land;”

It seems clear that when there are changes in yield due to natural conditions, for example, where prices have undergone changes, particularly to the detriment of features – as was the case here recently when the prices of rice dropped – these changes ought to be taken into account.

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Then again (d) of paragraph 10 of the Recommendation states:

“(d) postponing the payment of rent and, where circumstances so require, reducing it in case of crop failure or other disasters affecting the holding, due to natural causes which the tenant, share-cropper or agricultural worker in a similar category could not foresee or control.”

There are many such cases on record. For example, I can make particular reference to Black Bush Polder and other Government land settlement schemes in which many farmers have been

able to show that natural conditions, apart from any other condition, have played a part. As a matter of fact, I think that the Government is aware that certain lands need grading and although Government has made promises to do so, I understand that this has not yet been done. Therefore, we would feel that the spirit of many of the Recommendations contained here would need to be accepted and applied by the Government if such tenant farmers are to benefit.

Paragraph 12 of this same Recommendation states:

“12. There should be appropriate machinery suited to national conditions for –“

I quote sub-paragraph (b):

“(b) the speedy settlement, with minimum expense, of disputes between landowners, on the one hand, and tenants, share-croppers and similar categories of agricultural workers, on the other.”

I am also aware of the fact that, in some cases, tenants are having a very hard time to get their matters settled. For example, right now tenants on the Corentyne, somewhere near Bush Lot, have a dispute. They have been unable over a long period of time to get redress for their problems in a case where the landlord has been shown to be at fault, not providing proper facilities and so on.

I should now like to refer to paragraph 24 of this same Recommendation 132. I quote:

“24. Particular attention should be paid by the competent authorities to integrated programmes for rural employment promotion so as to –

- a) Give tenants, share-croppers and similar categories of agricultural workers, as well as their families, every opportunity of making fuller use of their capacity for work;
- b) Provide permanent non-agricultural employment for those unable to obtain employment in agriculture.”

I refer to this particular provision which struck me as I read it because, only recently, some settlers at Black Bush made this particular point and asked whether representation could be made on their behalf. The request was in keeping with this provision. They suggested that as the families of the settlers had increased, there were hardly any opportunities for them in agriculture in the agriculture in the area. They were requesting that their grown-up children who cannot

obtain jobs should be given some measure of priority for performing internal works which are paid for by the Government in order that they may obtain some relief in this way.

They pointed out that it is very difficult for them to obtain employment through the Employment Exchanges and if you were to investigate you would find that very few persons were able to obtain employment through the Employment Exchange. As a matter of fact, the exception seems to be that persons in certain areas have been able to obtain employment through the Employment Exchange. In view of all these things, I feel that many of these provisions – and I do not intend to take up time by going through all of them – such as those which I have quoted, seem to be very appropriate in our conditions.

Finally, I should like to refer to paragraph 18 which refers to the provision of certain amenities for tenants and specifically to the provision of drinking – water and sanitary installations. Here again this seems to be an extension of whatever laws may exist at the moment relating to landlord and tenant and, certainly, it does not seem as if the Government as a landlord is taking this matter of provision of drinking – water and sanitary installations very seriously since in Black Bush itself many of the areas – at least two of the four areas – are now without drinking-water. This is another point on which representations are being made to the Government to provide adequate and suitable water supplies, to drill wells, or by some other medium to provide adequate water for these areas. Of course there are areas which have been assisted by Government – even in Black Bush Polder – by the use of tender trucks carrying water, and the settlers in the other areas, Yakusari and Johanna, are making representations to the Government to provide similar facilities so that they would be able to have decent conditions of life. I take this opportunity to refer to these things in the hope that the Government would not only reverse its position with respect to this Recommendation but that it would also act on some of the points which I have made to improve the conditions or to remedy the defects contained therein.

In conclusion, let us again just refer to the point I made earlier on, and that is we feel that the recommendation of the Minister is, in fact, the misrepresentation of the case in Guyana to this internationally respected body, the International Labour Organisation. If the Hon. Minister is

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of the view that the Recommendations here do not apply to agricultural workers and tenants in Guyana, well then it seems reasonable that he would undertake to communicate the views of the Opposition to the Director – General of the I.L.O. in order to secure some further clarification.

We would not like to feel that the Government is disregarding the views of the Opposition, in other words, steam-rolling this Motion through, and we would be very unhappy to know that we sat down quietly, so to speak, and allowed an even bigger misrepresentation to be made to the whole I.L.O.

2.50 p.m.

Mr. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I feel great sympathy for the Hon. Minister of Labour, Mr. Carrington, who has found himself in a position of bringing a recommendation like this for this House to accept. I am sure that since he has heard the Hon. Members, Mr. Harry Lall and Mr. Ranji Chandisingh, he has begun to feel that he has been ill-advised to make such a recommendation. The Hon. Minister is usually hard-working but it appears that he just left everything to the civil servants and he also failed to consult the Hon. Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources. I am sure the Ministry of Agriculture can tell of several instances where these provisions of the I. L. O. apply to Guyana. Perhaps the Minister is already considering whether as a man of dignity he should stand up and withdraw this Motion.

As I said, I feel great sympathy for him and I do not want to rub it in too hard. He would have found not a few instances if the Minister did really study this Paper. I do not want to say that he has come here deliberately to mislead the House. On page 2 of the Recommendation attached to the Sessional Paper, we see a reference to sugar workers where a condition should be remedied.

“6. In conformity with the general principle that agricultural workers of all categories should have access to land, measures should be taken, where appropriate to economic and social development, to facilitate the access of tenants, share-croppers and similar categories of agricultural workers to land.”

I am sure the Hon. Minister of Labour and Social Security will agree that the sugar workers who are tenants in the extra-nuclear areas do not have access to land for agricultural

purposes. In years gone by, we know that sugar workers, tenants on estate lands, were allowed to cultivate plots for rice or ground provisions, or to use plots for the rearing of livestock, but I am sure the Minister is aware that this is not so now. As a matter of fact, the people cannot even plant ochroes on their house lots. That is what their agreement as settler states. I am sure the Minister will agree that as far as Guyana is concerned, this provision applies to us and the situation needs to be remedied in accordance with this paragraph.

On page 3 at paragraph 11, there is a statement about tenants being made to render personal services to their landlords. I do not think the Minister can be serious when he says this does not occur in Guyana. At Hope Estate and on the estate of one of the Government Ministers on the Essequibo Coast, people are being made to render personal services, to work as domestic servants to the wives of the landlords. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Hon. Member is entitled to be heard. Let him speak.

Mr. Wilson: Paragraph 12 (b) states:

“the speedy settlement, with minimum expense of disputes between landowners, on the one hand, and tenants, share-croppers and similar categories of agricultural workers, on the other.”

I wish to speak on this aspect and on paragraph 15 (3) sub-paragraphs (e) and (f) with regard to the right to compensation. As I said at the opening of my speech, the Minister did not seem to consult with the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources because very recently we have been dealing with a certain problem in the Essequibo. There are some tenants at Philadelphia who occupied cow byres where they reared milch cows. Their tenancies have been arbitrarily terminated even after the Government received rents due and there has been no question of compensation to be paid to the people but we feel that a co-operative society composed of supporters of the Government has been given the right to enter upon these lands where these people had their cow byres and to put out the tenants by force. The Minister of Agriculture is attempting to create a situation at Philadelphia which, if not properly dealt with, can lead to serious consequences. Of course, we know what this Minister's attitude to certain people is. It is often said that he has compared the strength of a certain ethnic group and it would

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seem that he wishes to see these groups clash in that respect.

I should like finally to refer to one other paragraph, that is, paragraph 18 on page 5. It states:

“Where it is customary or necessary for the tenants, share-croppers and similar categories of agricultural workers to live on the holding, land-owners should be encouraged to provide them with adequate housing conforming to standards compatible with human dignity with respect to such matters as protection against natural elements, provision of drinking-water, sanitary instalations and separate accommodation for animals.”

I would invite the Minister to visit Hope Estate and see the conditions under which the tenants live there. The worst type of logie could be found there. They use drinking water from the trenches and the sanitary conditions are deplorable. These matters that we have referred to do exist and it is not fair for him to come to this House and ask us to pass this Motion when the conditions complained of do exist although he says the conditions in the I. L. O. Resolution do not apply to Guyana.

3.00 p.m.

Dr. Ramsahoye:It passeth all understanding for this Government to say to us that the conditions in respect of which these Recommendations were proposed do not at all exist. The truth of the matter is that, in Guyana, the Government is the biggest landlord and the Government functions under legislation which was enacted in the middle of the last century to promote the development of the sugar estates to the detriment of agricultural workers in other fields.

These Recommendations do not refer to workers earning wages only; they include tenants and share-croppers who are people who plant other land for a share of the produce. Certain of the recommendations in this proposal are certainly very apt for conditions in Guyana. There is one concerning the right of tenancy, that is, where a tenant has been cultivating land for years upon payment of rent. Under this he should have first preference when the land is being disposed of. This is vital for our country and the Hon. Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Jordan)

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knows it. He has taken away a lot of land from people. When 200 families developed 2,000 acres of land over many years, he took it away and gave it to George Bowman and others.

The reason why the Government is saying to the I.L.O. that these recommendations do not pertain to Guyana is because the Government does not want to clean their own Augean Stables. That is why they do not want these Recommendations to be followed in this country! We have this archaic system which puts all the power in the hands of the Minister. There is no tribunal to which people can go; all is done by the whims and fancies of the Minister. There are many people developing land on the basis of permission for many years only to find that the Ministry takes that land and gives it to other persons. The people need protection. Government is the highest landlord; it should provide protection for these people. There should be a Crown Lands tribunal to which people could go if dispossessed.

How can this country be developed when there is so much crookery and corruption all over the place? People go to the Hon. Minister and that they want land; he says: Who is on the land now; they reply: So and so; he takes away the land and gives it to these other people even though those persons already on the land have been cultivating it for many years. This Conclusion to the effect that the conditions of our workers in this country do not apply or do not make it convenient for the application of these Recommendations is false and untenable and the country must be divided on this issue. It is not a question of how it is to be applied. It is a question of the Government enacting the necessary legislation in the period of 18 months or whatever the time is.

Government should enact the legislation and provide for the social insurance which this Recommendation proposes. How is it that tenants in this country, the agricultural workers, are not entitled to some form of insurance in respect of crops and produce? How is it that they do not come within laws which provide them with a certain amount of protection against bad weather, etcetera? How is it that this Government can send a blank recommendation like this to say that the conditions of this country could not justify the application of the recommendations. It is false! The people need this sort of recommendation. In Australia, every acre of land, every animal on the farms, is subject to insurance. That is what these Recommendations mean.

In these days the Government is not sympathetic to the agricultural community but it is by them that we live. Unless they can progress, we will fall. This Government is facing an economic crisis because the agricultural sector of the country is not performing at its maximum. They say that sugar is to produce 363,000 tons. What will happen to our sugar workers? What will happen to our cane farmers? [Mr. Jordan: "What will you do?"] It is in the interest of the Government to agree to this Motion to provide for the agricultural community. It is vital. The system whereby [Interruptions] - - whereby any agricultural agreements should be registered should be adopted. [Interruptions]

Mr. Speaker: Stop this crosstalk, please!

Mr. Ramsahoye: There are people who have made arrangements which are not in writing or registered and when disputes arise, the rights of landlord and the tenant are not easily determined. This proposal contains a recommendation that they should record all contracts and these should be registered by the competent authority. How then is it not suitable for Guyana? The tenant can say: He rented the land to me. Twenty dollars [Interruptions]

Mr. Speaker: Order! Order!

Dr. Ramsahoye: - - per acre is the rent. The landlord says: No, he arranged to give more. All sorts of disputes and controversies arise - - [Interruptions] it is not right that this should be so. There is no easy settlement of disputes. This Government could not possibly be serious! What the Government should say is they will introduce the law and leave it to be implemented when the funds are available. There are many things which it would not be possible to do right away. But some protection can be given at once. So far as these Recommendations are concerned certain things should not be. Let us say that funds are not available and not that conditions do not apply to agricultural workers in Guyana.

Agricultural workers do not mean only the people working but the tenants and share - croppers. This Government is not sympathetic to the people. That is why they are allowing these Recommendations to go unheeded. This is a very important set of Recommendations which we should embrace. There are circumstances in which, when tenancies are terminated compensation

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is payable. We already have some provision in the Landlord and Tenant Ordinance, but there are other which we could implement and which could be an extension to the Ordinance.

I think that the Hon. Minister (Mr. Carrington) would be ill-advised to send a Conclusion of this nature that the proposals do not at all apply in Guyana.

3.10 p.m.

Mr. Ram Karran: Mr. Speaker, the attitude of the Government confirms to my mind what was - - *[Interruptions]* When I spoke to the Hon. Minister at his own request - - *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: I was going to suggest that Hon. Members go into the Lobby to conclude their private discussion so that the Hon. Member would be able to make his speech.

Ram Karran: Yes, sir. When I spoke with the Hon. Minister on Saturday last at his own request, I had the impression that he was concerned about this measure and he was at least persuaded that there should be some discussion between the two sides of the House to bring about some amicable solution.

I thought that there might still have been some compromise on this matter until the Hon. Minister indicated that the Government is no landlord. I think we have enough lawyers in this House to advice on that question. As a layman, my own view, sir, is if people receive rents from other people, it makes the person who receives the rent a landlord. I do not wish to belabor the point except to point out the distortion on the part of the Hon. Minister. *[Interruption by the Hon. Minister of Trade and Parliamentary Affairs.]* That is why I felt that the Hon. Leader of the House would have taken the pain to clarify this question.

Whether the Government has been spending money for infrastructure projects at Black Bush Polder is irrelevant. The fact that the Government receives rental, that makes it a landlord. I am convinced that the Government does not wish to carry out responsibilities. It is not only the Government, there are many landlords who are unscrupulous and the Hon. Members on that side of the House of times are willing to refer to this inferior practice on the part of landlords, but we

see today that they are unwilling to agitate this point and to do justice to the countless number of tenants who suffer at the hands of these landlords.

Despite all the recommendations by the I. L. O. and despite all that has been said so far, all seem to be rejected by the Government and it is unprepared to take action. My Hon. Colleagues and Friends who spoke before me have referred to a number of cases which seek regress. I should like to refer to only one and this is in relation to the toxicity of soil in the Boerasiri and in other land settlement schemes, particularly, Cane Grove and Vergenoegen. The Hon. Member Mr. Wilson referred to one case in the Boerasiri but there is a case which the Government sought to move tenants who took it to Court and it seeks not to remove the right of appeal by - -

Mr. Speaker: That is not the question before the House Hon. Member.

Mr. Ram Karran: What has happened? These tenants went to the Supreme Court, the Court awarded the land back to them and the Government now seeks to go above the Supreme Court and to deprive them of the land to be executed again. That is one of the Security of Tenure recommendations which ought to be acceptable to the Government but the Government does this and it does that, so what is the use going to the United Nations. The Hon. Minister tells us with his usual palaver and sweet talk, "The situation here does not matter. We have not been told; no representations have been made." They probably had this paper in the Archives or in a pigeon hole in the Ministry, no one knows about this; it is only yesterday we were told about it. The Government says nobody has made representations to it therefore it is not going to accept the recommendations by the I.L.O. If representations are made then it is going to legislate for it. But sir, here it is, we are making representations; and we have been making representations ever since this paper saw the light of day. I thought that one of the Hon. Minister's colleagues would have got up and said, "You are correct, the Government is going to re-consider this matter". But this Government wants to have a nice sheet abroad: Oh we are a wonderful Government, we have consultative democracy, we are going to have a co-operative republic. And in the country, they are doing what they like, they do what they want. *[After a pause.]*

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My Hon. Friend and Colleague have just drawn my attention to paragraph 15. I wish to quote from (c) of sub-paragraph 2. It states:

“(c) the rent to be paid for the holding of the remuneration due for the labour of the occupant and the form of payment in either case.”

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On coconut plantations tenants have to care for their landlords' coconut plants without pay. They are given no credit for such service. I know people in the Berbice River District now who rent their lands to farmers. The farmer have to plant coconut trees between the cultivation and when the trees are big enough farmers are told to take another piece of land and continue the same operation. That is the system under which Turkeyen Plantation, where the University of Guyana now stands, was planted.

The Hon. Minister of Communications (Mr. Kasim) is not a stranger to this sort of practice. It exists all over the country. The farmers weed the land, they clean it, they put in their potatoes or whatever slips or seeds they wish and between the cultivation they have to plant coconut trees. As soon as the coconut plants are tall enough to prevent proper farming, then another section of the land is cleared and the same practice continues.

If the Hon. Minister of Labour and Social Security (Mr. Carrington) tells us he does not know, I will certainly sympathise with him because he is a town man. He knows about industry, but surely his colleagues, especially the Minister of Finance (Dr. Reid), who is a country boy, must know; he has lived through the system. The Hon. Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources (Mr. Jordan) ought to know. If this matter was discussed by them, surely they would find that a great deal of oppression continues in the country.

I can only say to the Government and to the Hon. Minister of Labour and Social Security, who is piloting this measure through Parliament, that it is a wrong decision of theirs. My colleague and friend (Mr. Chandisingh) made a suggestion that we should defer this measure. If all that we have said has failed to convince the members of the Government that, for the proper development of the agricultural sector of this country, we should defer consideration of this

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Recommendation, discuss it and come to some compromise, then I should like to move at the appropriate time a Motion recommending that this Assembly adopt Recommendation 132 of the I. L. O.

Mr. Speaker: You will have to move an Amendment to the Motion. You cannot move a substantive Motion at this stage. Unless it is properly worded, it might not pass as an Amendment.

Mr. Ram Karran: it is difficult to move an Amendment. It is really a negative Motion.

Mr. Speaker: You will have to vote against it, then.

Mr. Ram Karran: I wish to appeal to the Government. This is not one of the political issues in the country on which the two parties are at daggers drawn. The Hon. Prime Minister and his colleagues have been speaking all over the country about agricultural development. This is an opportunity to show their sincerity as to whether they mean real agricultural development.

Mr. Speaker: Does any other Hon. Member wish to speak to the question? [Pause.] Then I shall call on the Hon. Minister of Labour and Social Security to find out whether he wishes to exercise his right to reply.

Mr. Carrington (replying): I have listened very carefully to the members of the Opposition who spoke on this Motion. I think they should know the origination of this Recommendation and the spirit of the Recommendation.

Hon. Members know very well that in past times there was a system known as feudalism which was altered into many forms by private concerns and by Governments. Some Governments amended it and introduced a system of state-owned farms where the farms are controlled by the State. This is done in communist countries.

We know of other countries where private plantations adopt a sort of feudalism where the workers have to work on land and, because of the circumstances in which they live, they have to cultivate the land. They do not receive any wages during that period but share in the crop. This is how the share-cropping system started. The farmers share in the profits that are made from the

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crop. However, we find in countries in Latin America farmers did not share in the crops as they should have done and that is how the question of exploitation came in. they were exploited by the landowners.

Then, there was another group of workers who had to rent lands under certain conditions set out by the landowners, who had control over the land and the crops. Here again, workers were exploited because they were not assisted in any ways. We must look back at this brief history to see why the I.L.O. looked into these Recommendations. The purpose was mainly to avoid exploitation of the workers and share-croppers. This is not the situation. In Guyana we did not inherit this sort of system. We had a plantation system where, after slavery, workers worked and received wages. Today, the same system exists.

To make reference to the Government as a landowner and to speak of the renting of land to workers should not be referred to in the context of this Recommendation, since the Government is more or less providing a service to agricultural workers just as it does for persons who rent land for other purposes. The Government is providing a service to the agricultural sector generally, not just to agricultural workers who rent land. Services with respect to drainage and irrigation, infrastructure and what have you, are provided. It would be expected that such persons, like any other person, should pay a rent, but the Government has no control over the profits made by these workers.

If it is that the Opposition would like the Government to implement all of these recommendations in their entirety, then the Government as a landlord in the context of the Recommendation must have control over the profits which the workers make on their farms. If this applies so that workers are protected by the Government when they are unable to reap their crops, then, in cases where they make profits, they would have to share it with the Government. This does not happen in Guyana.

As I said earlier in making my presentation in a prepared statement, prepared because it is a very important matter, Guyana has a good reputation at I. L. O. and we would like to maintain it. We are not hoodwinking anyone here. If matters of this nature are brought to the Government from time to time, the Government will examine them and implement legislation if necessary.

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The members of the Opposition are making reference to just a few of the workers. When I make reference to Latin America and France, I am speaking of thousands of workers who are exploited by large landowners.

The few that they make reference to that would require legislation we must examine to see to what extent we need legislation to that effect.

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We cannot agree with the Opposition that the Recommendation in its full sense should apply to Guyana. I agree that perhaps somewhere in the North West or the Corentyne there may be this type of exploitation of a few workers and through they may be few, if this is found out to be so, the Government will introduce legislation to protect such workers.

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

Motion read.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. Ram Karran: Division!

The Assembly divided: Ayes 27, Noes 17, as follows:

Ayes

Mr. Cheeks
Mr. Zaheeruddeen
Mr. Wrights
Mr. Van Sluytman
Mr. D. A. Singh
Mr. Saffee
Mrs. Limerick
Mr. Fowler
Mr. Corrica
Mr. Correia
Mr. Budhoo
Mr. Bancroft
Miss. Ackman

Noes

Mr. M. F. Singh
Mrs. DaSilva
Mr. Teekah
Mrs. Sahoye
Mr. Bhola Persaud
Mr. Balchand Persaud
Mrs. Branco
Mr. Ambrose
Mr. R. Ally
Mr. R. D. Persaud
Mr. M. Y. Ally
Mr. Lall
Mr. Wilson

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Mr. Clarke
Mr. Thomas
Mr. Salim
Mr. Haynes
Mr. Joaquin
Mr. Ramsaroop
Miss Field-Ridley
Mr. Carrington
Mr. Bissember
Mr. Hoyte
Mr. Kasim
Mr. Jordan
Dr. Reid
Mr. Burnham

Mr. Jagan
Dr. Ramsahoye
Mr. Chandisingh
Mr. Ram Karran - 17

- 27

Motion carried.

CONFIRMATION OF CONSUMPTION TAX ORDER

“Be it resolved that this National Assembly, in terms of section 5 of the Consumption Tax Act, 1969, confirm the Consumption Tax Order, 1969, which was made on 15th December, 1969, and published in the Gazette on 20th December, 1969.” [The Minister of Finance]

The Minister of Finance (Dr. Reid): In moving the Motion standing in my name we come to one of those Motions that is now routine in this House. In view of the fact that the principle of consumption tax has been argued, debated, and agreed upon, and from time to time we bring before the House Motions to give effect to this principle. Today we have before the House a Motion with respect to two commodities: cement and flour.

We already have our flour mill here, so this is an unusual one. The excise duty on flour used to be preferential - \$1.90; ordinary – 85 cents, but due to the fact that we now have a flour mill in the country, concession has been granted to that flour mill and, instead of \$1.90, the excise tax is only 85 cents. We seek now, through the consumption tax, to recover that 85 cents by treating these commodities as commodities that originate in the CARIFTA area. In giving up the duty on cement we are recovering it through the consumption tax.

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With respect to cement, the rate of duty will be 12 cents per 100 lbs and with respect to flour it will be 85 cents per 100 lbs. we have an agreement with the national flour mill that we will impose 85 cents that we have been giving up to flour produced in this country so that it would be 85 cents per 100 lbs. this is done, as I have said, so that there can be no substantial loss in revenue.

All of us have agreed that this is the principle we will use in this House from time to time so, in moving this Motion, I have brought nothing new.

Mr. Ram Karran: While there can be no quarrel with the Government in so far as this is concerned -- [**The Prime Minister:** "Well then sit down."] The Prime Minister ought to be kept permanently out of this House for us to get some order. As I was saying, while there is no quarrel with respect to the imposition of these taxes, since the Hon. Minister has referred to the agreement with the flour mill -- which agreement has something to do with the price of flour at the outset -- I wish to say that we thought, and any reasonable thinking person would have thought, that the flour mill having been established in this country would have meant a reduction in the present cost of living of the inhabitants of this country. You will recall, and I am sure that Hon. Members will recall, the very nauseating development that took place when the price of flour was fixed. In fact the result is that the Guyanese consumers are going to pay I think a cent less than what they were paying before for a pound of flour.

As we all know, the prices of all basic commodities -- rice, flour, sugar, cooking oil and salt fish -- were controlled and the shopkeepers and merchants were supposed to sell these items at controlled prices, even long after the war. Today we find that the Government has embarked upon a venture which is laudable in itself but which will, in a short time, remove from the consumers that measure of security that they had.

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After this agreement, the Manager of the milling company put his right foot up and I do not think the Prime Minister was in a position to argue very conclusively with him. They did not go into the details sufficiently so that some benefit could accrue to the country and to the consumer.

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Because of the tax holiday, we have lost taxes. The consumers who matter most so far as the P.P.P. is concerned have not benefited. When the cost of labour goes up, and that is going up shortly, in fact it is going up but the Government is not prepared to pay its own civil servants, I strongly feel that every effort should be made to see that the price of this commodity does not go up.

Mr. Speaker: Is there any other Hon. Member who wishes to speak? [Pause.]

Dr. Reid (replying): Not that I want to continue this debate but I want to leave the record correct. The discussion with the management of the milling company was in depth. An analysis was made by our economists as to the rice of flour to the consumer and after careful and considered work, the economists advised that flour could be put on the market at one cent less per pound than what it was being sold for previously. The management violently disagreed with this, the Government insisted, and this advice has been put into practice. The price of flour now is less than it was before.

This Government is determined to keep a close look at this situation always. I am certain that notwithstanding what my friend has said, we are determined to control the price of flour as it is controlled now and in our circumstances I am certain that many of those who attempt to speak against this now would have gone along with the flour mill in those arrangements and would not have fixed those prices as we did. There was even a threat that the flour mill would not be opened but we brought the price down by a cent. When the situation warrants, we will re-examine the position and the price will decrease. Our hands are not tied. We are free to act.

Mr. Speaker: The Clerk will read the Motion.

[The Clerk read the Motion.]

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

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NEW YEAR GREETINGS

The Minister of Trade and Parliamentary Affairs (Mr. Bissember): Before I move the adjournment, I should like with your permission, sir, to take the opportunity on behalf of the Government Benches to wish each and every one of the Hon. Members in this House, all that is good for 1970. Today is the 29th and in two days' time we shall see the close of 1969. I think I am right in saying we have had a successful and fruitful year in Parliament and I should like on behalf of this side to extend good wishes to yourself, your staff, and members of the press, and to those who contributed to make 1969 this success it has been.

Mr. Ram Karran: On behalf of the Hon. Members of this side of the House, I wish to join in the expression of good wishes to the Government, to yourself, the staff and to their families, for a prosperous 1970. I know they will have to fight very hard to get it.

Mr. F. Singh: On behalf of the United Force and this section of the House, I should like to express our very best wishes to the Government, to yourself, and to the staff of Parliament Office, whose sterling services we all appreciated throughout this year. I would like to extend our very good wishes for a very happy, prosperous and successful 1970.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I am very much touched by the very good wishes that have been expressed this afternoon by the Leader of the House, the acting Leader of the Opposition and the Hon. Member, Mr. Feilden Singh as leader of the United Force in the National Assembly. When we last met, I think it was just a couple of days before Christmas, we took the opportunity of exchanging Christmas greetings. I hope that all Hon. Members and their families did enjoy a very happy time at Christmas, "de-emphasised" or not, because it is very clear that Christmas in Guyana is Christmas in Guyana and shall remain Christmas in Guyana.
[Applause]

Now, of course, we have but a few hours separating us from the New Year and it is customary as we approach the end of the year for us to take stock of what we have done during the past twelve months and more or less try to make some resolutions for the future. We do so as individuals and I think it would be right for us as the Parliament of the nation to take the

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opportunity of at least casting our minds back for a while, whilst projecting our thoughts into the future.

I think we have had a very useful and a very successful year in Parliament. We have considered legislation. Legislation has been very important indeed and we have passed many Resolutions but most important of all I think was the Resolution which this House almost unanimously carried agreeing to turn Guyana into a Co-operative Republic as from the 23rd February, 1970. As we look forward to 1970, we cannot but realise that so many of the things that we have grown accustomed to in the past will of necessity recede into the background more and more as we adjust ourselves to the new thoughts and new ideas which must permeate the idea of the Co-operative Republic.

In this respect I should like on behalf of myself and the staff of Parliament Office to reciprocate the good wishes that have been expressed and to assure Hon. Members that it will continue to be our duty to guard the rights of Parliament, to offer to all Members equally, the opportunities which the office affords to try to make of the National Assembly of the Parliament of Guyana a living force in the Republic we shall have.

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We have been assured and there is no doubt about it that there will not be any change in the rights and the responsibilities of either Hon. Members of the Assembly or of the citizens of Guyana. It will be our duty to see to it that this remains so and that the promises made to the people of Guyana shall not in any way be rejected or in any other way diluted so that, in reciprocating these good wishes for 1970, I charge you to be ever careful, ever vigilant of the responsibilities resting on your shoulders.

May the good God guide you in what lies ahead and may all of us in Guyana benefit from the prosperity which will come to this I couple the wives and families of all Hon. Members and extend it to all citizens of Guyana. Thank you very much indeed. *[Applause]*

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ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, “That this Assembly do now adjourn until Monday, 5th January, 1970, at 2 p.m.” [Mr. Bissember]

Mr. Speaker: Before I adjourn the Assembly, I would like to remind Hon. Members that arrangements have been made for us to meet in the Committee Room so that we can have some refreshments and toast the year that lies before us. This is not only for Hon. Members but also to the ladies and gentlemen of the Press who have been with us the whole year and who have serviced the proceedings for the whole year. I have not had any occasion to rebuke any member of the Press for the year.

Adjourned accordingly at 3.53 p.m.
