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THE  
**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

OFFICIAL REPORT

[VOLUME 2]

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

5th Sitting

Tuesday, 15th August, 1967.

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

*The Assembly met at 2.00 p.m.*

*Prayers*

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

*His Honour the Deputy Speaker, Mr. R. C. Tello.  
Members of the Government*

*Elected Ministers*

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

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

**The Honourable P. S. d'Aguiar,**  
*Minister of Finance*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**The Honourable M. F. Singh,**  
*Minister of Works and Hydraulics.*  
**The Honourable S. S. Ramphal, C. M. G., Q. C.,**  
*Attorney-General and Minister of State.*  
**The Honourable M. W. Carter,**  
*Minister of Information.*

*Parliamentary Secretaries*

**Mr. D. B. DeGroot,**  
*Parliamentary Secretary, Prime Minister's Office.*  
**Mr. G. Bowman,**  
*Parliamentary Secretary, Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources.*  
**Mr. O. E. Clarke,**  
*Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Education.*  
**Mr. P. Duncan,**  
*Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Local Government.*  
**Mr. J. G. Joaquin, O. B. E., J. P.,**  
*Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Works and Hydraulics.*  
**Mr. C. V. Too-Chung,**  
*Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Finance.*

*Other Members*

**Mr. W. A. Blair**  
**Mr. J. Budhoo**  
**Mr. M. Kasim**  
**Mr. W. G. Carrington**  
**Mr. R. G. B. Field-Ridley**  
**Mr. D. Mahraj**  
**Mr. H. Prashad**  
**Mr. T. A. Sancho**  
**Mr. J. H. Thomas**  
**Rev. A. B. Trotman**  
**Mr. H. M. S. Wharton, J. P.**

*Members of the Opposition*

**Dr. C. B. Jagan,**  
*Leader of the Opposition.*  
**Mr. A. Chase**  
**Mr. B. H. Benn**  
**Mr. Ram Karran**  
**Mr. R. Chandisingh**  
**Mr. H. J. M. Hubbard**  
**Dr. Charles Jacob, Jr.**  
**Mr. C. V. Nunes**  
**Dr. F. H. W. Ramsahoye**  
**Mr. E. M. G. Wilson**  
**Mr. M. Hamid, J.P.**  
**Mr. J. R. S. Luck**  
**Mr. D. C. Jagan**  
**Mr. H. Lall**  
**Mr. Mooneer Khan, J. P.**  
**Mr. Y. Ally**  
**Mr. L. Linde**  
**Mr. R. D. Persaud, J. P.**  
**Mr. M. N. Poonai**  
**Dr. S. A. Ramjohn**  
**Mr. E. W. Stoby**  
**Mr. S. M. Saffee**  
**Mr. M. Bhagwan**

**Officers**

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

## ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

### Resolution of Sympathy

The Deputy Speaker: I have to announce the receipt of a letter advising us that a Resolution of Sympathy has been passed on the death of the Speaker by the Kitty and Alexanderville Village Council.

#### Leave to Members

The following hon. Members are excused from today's sitting because they are accompanying our visitor on a flight to the Kaieteur Falls:

Mr. Joaquin  
Mr. Budhoo  
Rev Trotman  
Mr. Nunes  
Mr. Ally

## PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following Papers were laid:

Annual Report and Financial Statement of the Board of Commissioners of the East Demerara Water Conservancy for the year ending 31st December, 1966. [Minister of Parliamentary Affairs on behalf of the Minister of Works and Hydraulics.]

## PUBLIC BUSINESS MOTION

### DEBATE ON GOVERNOR- GENERAL'S ADDRESS

The Assembly resumed consideration of the following Motion:

"Be it resolved that this National Assembly direct that an expression of its sincere appreciation and thanks be conveyed to His Excellency the Governor-General for the Gracious Speech addressed to the Assembly on

the occasion of the Opening of the Second Session of the First Parliament of Guyana under the Constitution of Guyana, on Tuesday, 8th August, 1967." — [Rev. Trotman.]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, we continue the debate on Motion No. 1 on the Order Paper. At the adjournment yesterday the hon. Member Mr. Wilson was speaking. He may continue.

Mr. Wilson: When the adjournment was taken, I was dealing with the question of displaced persons and the Government's neglect of these very unfortunate people. The Government has always been very loud in its promises to do something for them. A statement was put in the mouth of His Royal Highness the Duke of Kent, who handed over the Independence Instruments, to the effect that this Government was prepared to do all that was possible to find homes for them. The Prime Minister, especially at Budget time, always goes on record that he proposes to do something for displaced persons. The Ministers concerned, particularly the hon. Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, always say, "We are going to do a lot for these people."

Now, a National Aid Board has been set up. Among the members we can find not one person who can be regarded as having any experience with the sufferings of displaced persons. The Guyana Association of displaced Persons has written time and again asking that one of its members be appointed on this Board, but the Government is adamant in refusing this very reasonable request. It has been careful to pack the Board with P. N. C. supporters, who do everything possible to channel whatever little relief there is to the P. N. C. supporters, with a little to the U. F. supporters.

Let us put aid aside. Money, we know, is needed for unemployed persons and for

[MR. WILSON]

those who get their limbs broken, but I refer now to the places where these people have to live. When anyone visits these places at the present time he has to walk through drift mud, as if he were walking on the sea shore. The latrines overflow and the contents can be seen strewn all over the place. It is no wonder that these people suffer from all sorts of intestinal diseases, hookworm, typhoid, gastro-enteritis. A few days ago I heard that a large number of children were suffering from diphtheria. Of course, it is not beyond this Government to carry out some degree of genocide by neglecting sanitary conditions where these people live, so that their numbers can be reduced.

I do not know if that is the reason why the document that the Guyana Information Services published, giving the population of the country, was so careful to indicate racial composition, how many Indians, Africans and so on were in the country. We on this side of the House encourage this Government to regard these people as Guyanese and not to take note of their political affiliations. They have suffered and one ought not to add insult to injury, but a Housing Development Trust should be set up as promised. The Government said it accepted the Report of the Sir Stanley Gomes Committee. Nothing has been done about it and the people are languishing in most insanitary and deplorable conditions in squatting areas.

2.20 p.m.

This Government should hurry up and do what it can to assure these people that it has their interest at heart, just as it has for the people at Mackenzie.

Yesterday I was not aware as to how long we would have gone on. I did not know whether I would have had enough time to deal with the various points so I skimmed

over some of them. I should now like to take the opportunity to amplify what I said in relation to certain points with respect to air services. I want to emphasise that it is time that this Government establishes an airfield in the North West District in the Wauna/Yarakita area to relieve the suffering and hardship which the people there have to undergo in travelling. As Minister of Communications I laid the foundation. I visited the area and walked up the mountain there. [The Prime Minister: "Is that how you laid the foundation? By walking?"] I located a site and we were satisfied. [The Prime Minister: "Which Mountain? There is no mountain there."]

Now this Government talks about extended air services and it is cutting down the services. Take the Pomeroon service established by myself. The Minister has discontinued that service. The Essequibo River road is very bad. Sometimes the people have to come out of one bus and take another bus on the other side of the bad road. In some cases they have to push for several yards through mud and slush. Yet this Minister is so callous as to discontinue that service to Charity.

I should now like to refer to the telephone service. Preece, Cardew and Ryder put up a Report as to what is needed, what is necessary and how the funds should be provided. This Report was handed over to these people and they have done nothing. You have the report that was submitted by Preece, Cardew and Ryder! Do not make people believe that you are working on your own. ]Mr. Jordan: "Did you read the Report?" I studied it. You will see my minutes on these things. [The Prime Minister: "What did the minutes state?"] I am not here to answer that. This Government should hurry up and extend the telephone service so that the time would not be distant when all the recommendations in

that Report - such as trunk dialling and the like - would become a reality. You would not have to call the telephone operators so often.

I want to speak about the postal service. There was a furore the other day when an officer in the postal service was put in a certain position. It has been the P.P.P.'s policy that made it possible for the present postal workers to be able to reach the highest position in the postal service. Towards that end a postal training school was established and steps were taken to make contact with certain overseas bodies for training of the senior staff. Therefore, there should be no quarrel as to the competence or qualifications of the senior administrative staff in the postal department. Some time ago I asked the Minister a question on this, and he simply tried to brush it off, but this is a serious matter.

These men who work from boyhood, from the age of 14, should know that they have the ability and qualifications to become Director of Posts and Telecommunications. Is this Government going to carry out a policy whereby this sort of wrangling between the classified and unclassified will cease, whereby men who work in the postal service will be able to reach the highest position, even as, policemen today, can reach the high position of Commissioner of Police? I am urging the Government to do everything in its power to make this a reality.

We do not want men without qualifications to be in the top positions, but make it possible for them to be properly trained. I wonder what is happening to the postal training school; I do not hear anything about it. Is it still in existence? I am sure it is not. Are you still sending senior postal officers to receive training in the United Kingdom and elsewhere so that they may equip themselves for the highest post? I am sure that that is discontinued. What I

know the Minister is busy doing — either he himself or some relative of his — is cheating the Transport and Harbours Department by operating trucks and competing with the Transport and Harbours Department trucks. The estimated loss of the Bartica/Potaro service is \$132,000 for 1967. I wonder how long this Minister will continue to have his relatives robbing, cheating this Government.

2.30 p.m.

The Government should set about to operate the Motor Transport Services in Georgetown so as to provide the poor people with a better service. The hon. Minister of Communications (Mr. Correia) should see that the Telecommunications Corporation move rapidly to get the necessary advance. That is why a Corporation was set up. One does not want to compete with the other Government Departments. They can borrow on their own to set up their own corporation to replace the present one.

The Government should set up a housing development trust to look after the housing estates for the benefit of the displaced persons.

The training of postal staff should be speeded up. The school should be expanded. I thought that by now we would have had a big training school and that the necessary training arrangements would have been made for senior staff, so that they could be considered qualified enough to hold the highest positions in the Government. We trust that this Government will take urgent steps to do these things.

Mr. Soby: I should like to make a few remarks on the Throne Speech concerning the education system in the interior. I should like to make certain exposures on what is happening in certain parts of the interior.

There is great overcrowding in some of the schools. There is a shortage of teachers. The

[ MR. STOBY ]

April and July reports I have seen and there are up to seventy-five pupils in a classroom. This is something very grave. I do not see how a teacher could cope with seventy-five pupils.

I have noticed in certain schools that there is an average of just 15 pupils to each teacher and that is probably, I must say, the fault of the dual control system because even though I was saying that there is a grave shortage of teachers in schools, at the same time I have seen four teachers in a school with an enrolment of just sixty pupils. It is not right that so many pupils should be taken into some schools and in certain schools, so few. It is not balanced properly.

I should also like to make some comments regarding our creeks and rivers. They are the chief means of transportation for people who live far away in the interior. I am therefore making a suggestion to Government for a survey to be carried out in the Moruka, Bara Bara and Biara Rivers, and that this be included in the Development Programme so that certain dredging operations can be carried out to link the North-West with the coastland.

The last time I travelled on the Essequibo road, I had to walk four miles on the road. I did not believe that it could happen. People in the Pomeroon area make attempts to see the hon. Minister of Works and Hydraulics (Mr. Singh) and when they try to air their grievances, he simply answers them in a very rough manner by saying that Government just cannot do anything, let it remain like that until a certain stage of the Development Programme is reached.

In this Throne Speech I have not seen anything mentioned about the forest industry. There are many problems facing the forest industry – working conditions and the cost of living which has been rising.

Those people who are working in the forest industry are playing an important part in the development of the Country, because if buildings are to be put up, these men have to cut the logs before they go to the sawmills. Perhaps some people might be looking only to the sawmills for production, but these logs come from the forest. Those are the areas in which, I feel, the Government should do something to improve working conditions.

For a number of years, certain workers have been giving their services to the Geological and Forestry Departments. I should like to suggest that Government award some sort of pension or gratuity to these poor men who have given their services for over twenty-five years. I have noticed that some workers make two trips per year lasting between three to four months and although they are casual labourers, I still

believe they could be termed regular employees because they are the same persons who work year after year. I think something should be done for these people. The matter came to my attention and I am now trying to get the Government to look into this matter.

2.40 p.m.

I see that mention is made of national registration. In the Amerindian Ordinance, Chapter 58, it is stated that persons attaining the age of twelve – both male and female – shall be registered. I should like to know whether the Government will abandon the registration of Amerindians when national registration comes into being.

There are many problems facing the youths in the interior. I, personally, feel that the Government should look into these problems. I noticed that a Youth Corps is to be established and the sites for training will be at Atkinson and Tumatumari. I should like to know why Tumatumari was selected? The Northwest is a very large area. It has hills and mountains – good scenery. There

are other places in the Northwest where this training could have been conducted. I only hope that this Youth Corps would not work in collaboration with the Peace Corps because it will surely be indoctrination. Our youths are facing many serious problems and the Government is doing nothing at the moment to bring about improvement for these people.

A few weeks ago I read a pamphlet and every page was about what the U.F. was doing for the Amerindians. But that was all propaganda. Right now the Minister of Works and Hydraulics is in the Northwest, but this is meant to coincide with what is written on the pamphlet.

I should like to make a point with regard to the mining industry. The Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources has said that \$25,000 will be set aside for miners — pork-knockers — in the Mazaruni area. But, sir, what is \$25,000? Mr. Correia would know that \$25,000 can only buy ration for about six pork-knockers for about a week. Transportation costs are very high. Up to today I was informed that they are using American helicopters. These poor pork-knockers have to hire them. A 15-minute flight costs \$300. The Government should get helicopters so that the money could circulate in our country, rather than allowing the Americans to operate the helicopters, and charge people fantastic prices. Many years ago the Spaniards came to loot our country's wealth. That was when we were uncivilised. Today, we are more sensible and we are still allowing people to loot our wealth in front of our eyes. The Government is allowing this thing.

Today, our country is in turmoil. I should like to suggest to the Government that it should reconsider its policy. They said that there is equality of opportunity for all. That is what is mentioned in the Throne Speech.

But I believe that this equality will be shared only with the people at the top, not with the people at the bottom.

Mr. Chandisingh: I should like to discuss briefly certain aspects of the Government's housing programme as enunciated in the Speech from the Throne. First of all, I think it is generally agreed on all sides that there is a severe housing shortage. This is attested to by various reports and documents, and in the Government's Development Programme which states that 43,000 odd houses will be needed within a few years. But what we would like to know is whether there are any prospects for meeting these needs within the foreseeable future. In other words, is there any definite programme that the Government has in mind which will, on the basis of reality, indicate to us that this housing crisis is likely to be solved within our lifetime? What does the Government intend to do?

We know that the Government has stated in the Development Programme that something like \$7½ million will be spent over a period of seven years for self-help, and another couple of millions will be thrown in for houses for rental and so on. But I would like to observe that this Programme is very far from the actual needs. Even if this entire Programme is carried out, we would still be very far short of tackling this problem.

I know that the Minister concerned, if he had the opportunity to reply, would naturally concentrate upon the shortcomings or the alleged shortcomings of the previous Government. He would ask: "How many houses have you built?" in order to justify the lack of enterprise by his Government. In my opinion, a country such as ours needs a lot of development, not only in housing, not only in the social sector but also in the productive sector.



[ MR. CHANDISINGH ]

2.50 p.m.

What we need is basically a Development Programme that will offer the people, within a certain span of time, economic development, productive development, that will generate wealth within the state sector of the economy, which wealth could then be partly used for financing, within the foreseeable future, a housing programme; that is, on the basis of productive development, real economic development, to meet the needs of social development, whether it be housing, health or what have you.

It is in this respect that I say the present Government is merely marking time. It is putting forward certain projects which have the appearance of sprouting ahead. Seven hundred T.U.C. houses are to be built. But unless the Government faces the problem of productive development, particularly in the state sector, it will find that these are sprouts which perhaps have some electoral value, while the housing problem will become more and more severe.

As a matter of fact, we know that there are housing problems in many countries today. But in those countries which are tackling the basic social and economic problems by planned development there is the prospect that the housing problem will be solved within a foreseeable period of time. Far from the Government undertaking this basic productive development, most of the money is being spent in infrastructure development which, as we know, takes a long time before any tangible results, from money expended in such fields, are shown. We know, too, that much of the money that Government has been spending in the last two years or so, has been wasteful expenditure so that, combined with unproductive expenditure on infrastructure development and the decision not to go in for Government-owned industry and enterprises, this is likely to guarantee

failure to tackle the basic housing problem.

[*Interruption.*] Hon. Members are very quick at saying, "What did you do about it?" The point is that this Government has a wonderful opportunity that the previous Government did not have and, that is, the status of political independence. We were operating in a colonial environment with all the restrictions and ties to colonialism and imperialist powers that it entails. This Government has seen political independence, but far from using this political independence as a real weapon to transform the basic economy of the country and the social relations, it is merely sinking deeper and deeper into the quagmire of neocolonialism. That is the basic answer for all who want to understand this question.

Why it was, for example, that three thousand odd houses and not more than three thousand odd houses were built by the previous Government. This is the answer to that question.

I say that a genuine Government interested in the welfare of the people and utilising the power of political independence would be in a position to draw up a plan which would solve our housing problem within a reasonable time, whether in ten or fifteen years. The people must be in a position to know that the country's housing shortage will be met within their lifetime. The way the Government is doing, this, there will be a few window-dressing schemes, a few attempts to show that something is being done, in order to keep people hopeful that sooner or later they too will get houses. That will be all.

In dealing with the actual proposals in the Throne Speech I should like to point out that the first thing that strikes the eye is an apparent shift in emphasis on expenditure of funds for housing. It is stated:

“There will be an extension of the self-help schemes started some time ago in the rural and urban areas. ”

but we can see that, in practice, the Government has shifted emphasis from self-help housing. If one is to judge from the allocation in this year's programme for capital expenditure, one would see that the amount of money for self-help housing is very small.

We know from experience that the people who have the greatest need for houses are those who are most likely to benefit from self-help housing schemes, where the cost of the houses is very low, and where the people themselves are able to spend some time in labour and then find in due course, that they are the owners of houses. I must make it clear, however, when I say “people who have the greatest need”, that is not to say that there are not many people in higher income groups who are also having a hard time to get houses. We know, for example, of cases where unscrupulous landlords are raising rentals sky-high and are using the housing shortage to furnish houses with a few pieces of furniture so that they can charge double the original rent. So, it is not to say that we are only thinking of the lowest income group, because a lot of people need houses.

I think we should agree that persons who have the greatest need for Government assistance are those who have very low incomes. So far as I can see, both from the Speech from the Throne and also from the sum of money allocated this year for self-help housing, there is hardly any development in this respect. At least there has been none this year. We hope that perhaps in the future this may take place, but there is no indication that it will happen this year. What we see is a blanket statement in the Speech, namely:

“ . . . it is expected that a sum of approximately \$20 million will be invested in housing. . . . ”

We do not know who are the loan agencies. It has been hinted in some newspapers like the *Guyana Graphic*, which I think is very close to Government spokesmen, that the loans for financing housing programmes will come both from internal and external sources. Whether this is true or not, the point is that this type of investment in housing is more the type which will benefit not only those in the middle income group but even persons in the upper middle income group. From our experience in the past, it is hardly likely to assist those who need houses most, that is, persons in the low income group.

The T.U.C. Housing Co-operative, which started with a lot of ballyhoo, was to provide houses for poor workers, and lo and behold! The money which is being loaned from the United States trade union movement, and which this Government had a guarantee, carries with it a high interest rate.

3.00 p.m.

As a matter of fact, the interest rate rose and became high, compared with what the original estimate was. This meant that, because of the high interest rates etc., the income qualification had to be revised upwards so that, eventually, we were told that instead of people whose income was, I believe, not lower than \$130 per month being allowed to take part in the T.U.C. co-operative housing project, only persons whose income was not lower than \$170 per month would be allowed to take part.

This project will provide something like 500 odd houses and the Government would have to tie itself by having its credit-worthiness, so to speak, at stake by guaranteeing something like \$3½ million G in this project. If a project is being financed

**[MR. CHANDISINGH]**

by loans from another so-called Trade Union Movement in the United States, how much more should we not expect what the charges are likely to be when the final figures are reckoned, and how many people from the lower income category are going to benefit from this scheme? I ask these questions because, in connection with this \$20 million private scheme, there will be external and internal investors, financial sharks, some of them, perhaps, who want to make as much as they can out of the suffering of people.

We all sincerely hope that the poor people, the people who do not have so much, will benefit. But these are some observations that we must make in order to show what is likely to occur, in which case, this is not really going to help the working class.

There is another point to which I should like to draw attention in the same paragraph dealing with housing. This is what appears on page 4 of the Throne Speech:

“It is intended to introduce Legislation to provide for Government guarantees of up to 90% of mortgage loans, made to approved persons for home building, by public corporations and finance institutions.”

What is the reason for the insertion of the words “to approved persons”? Having regard to all the cases of partisanship that we have witnessed since this Government came into office — I need not refer to all the specific details again — we feel very much concerned over the insertion of such a phrase. It seems very ominous. Normally, one would have expected that it might have read:

“It is intended to introduce Legislation to provide for Government guarantees of up to 90% of mortgage loans, made to persons for home building, . . .”

But here it is stated “to approved persons” and, bearing in mind the Government’s past

and present record on this question, we are very much concerned that this is going to be used to continue to intensify the Government’s policy of partisanship and discrimination with respect to who will be eligible to participate in such a scheme.

I should now like to turn to a few more specific points that I feel the Government should look into and be made aware of. I should like to point out, as my colleague the hon. Member Mr. Wilson did, that up to now the Government has not done anything to provide house lots for the displaced persons. I remember — perhaps you will remember too — that when we were debating the Budget Speech earlier this year, criticisms were made from this side of the House and a Minister got up and read what were supposed to be minutes of a meeting of the National Rehabilitation Committee. On that occasion, when I rose to reply, it was ruled that we already had enough discussion on that question, so I take this opportunity to refer to housing for the displaced persons.

The Minister tried to give the impression, from those minutes, that the previous Government deliberately shelved the matter of giving the land first and then selling it to the displaced persons because it was something too hot to handle, perhaps. He read the minutes which were to the effect that, although certain officials of the National Rehabilitation Committee had recommended to the previous Government that it should purchase the lands at the price being asked by Bookers and other sugar companies generally, the Government continued to throw it back to the Committee and asked the officials to continue negotiations to get a lower price for the lands. They got a lower price but the Government was not satisfied.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member, you are questioning the conduct of a Minister.

Don't you think you should refer to the actual minutes? I am sure you can get a copy. You are speaking from your memory and you are challenging the conduct of a Minister.

Mr. Chandisingh: I am not challenging the conduct of a Minister, if you would get me right. I am merely saying that the Minister said that the previous Government shelved the matter and that on the 14th November, 1964, it issued instructions that no further action would be taken on the matter. This was to give the impression that the previous government did not want to do anything about it.

I should like, for the record, to remind hon. Members that the previous Government did not settle the matter because it was in the process of negotiations between the National Rehabilitation Committee and the owners of the lands, mainly Bookers, and we were trying to reduce the price of the lands. I think it was on the 14th November, 1964, if my memory serves me right, that instructions were issued to the effect that the project should be held up for the time being.

The significant thing about this is that this was only three weeks before the national elections of December 1964 and, naturally, Ministers of the Government had to undertake many other activities besides this particular one, including campaigning for the General Elections. In that atmosphere the question was temporarily held up because the previous Government felt that it could press Bookers and the owners of the lands to get a lower price for the lands. This is the whole matter and I should like to take the opportunity again to urge upon this Government to do something about settling this matter of the displaced persons. It is over 2½ years and there can be absolutely no excuse for this position.

3.10 p.m.

I should also like to urge the Government to see what can be done in order to terminate this question of house lots for sugar workers, those workers who are entitled to purchase their plots, according to the original agreement for one dollar a lot through the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund Committee. They should not drag their feet on this any longer.

I should also like to draw the attention of the hon. Minister of Health and Housing (Mr. Kendall) to the problem of house lots for people at Wismar in the Demerara River and at Christianburg. I recall that in our time, the previous Government had begun to lay out lots in the Wismar/Christianburg area for persons who wanted to build their houses, and quite a number of lots had already been laid out. This was at the time of the last Elections. My information now is that there is a certain hold-up in the area because, I think, the Government has some plans to give this site or certain portions of the area, which had formerly been promised to people, for a hospital. I have got this information and I should like to bring it to the attention of the Government but if it is not the case, it is all right.

With respect to the Rent Restriction Ordinance, we note that the Government says in the Speech from the Throne that steps will be taken, legislative and otherwise, aimed at wiping out the abuses, especially with respect to exorbitant rentals and resumption of possession, which now exist in the relationship of landlord and tenant.

Well, I should like to say that we on this Side of the House are prepared to give the maximum support and co-operation to this Government for any major step it may take, any appropriate measure it wishes to bring before the House, either by way of legislation or other measures as hinted in the

[MR. CHANDISINGH]

Speech. We would like to give every support and encouragement to finding ways of curbing the high rentals which are taking place today. We would like to see something done and the Government should not hesitate in this respect for fear that this Side of the House would criticise adversely. We will give support to any measure to bring down and curb rising rents.

We have heard before, very strong statements made by hon. Ministers of the Government, such as, taking action against the sharks who have sent up the prices of goods in the shops, and after it was felt that people had got used to the high prices, nothing came of it. I hope this is not another puff to create goodwill on behalf of the Government.

I should just like to turn briefly to some matters relating to labour and which have not been covered by my hon. Colleagues.

The first thing that meets the eye when one looks at the section, Page 7 of the Throne Speech, dealing with labour and industrial relations is, that in the whole paragraph, the whole section devoted to labour, there is absolutely nothing to benefit the working-class of Guyana. No slight improvement in wages or anything. The only thing mentioned in the section of labour is something which is intended to curb the working-class, to "put them in their places," and to prevent them, or to delay recourse to strike action.

There is nothing else in this section and I do recall — at times like these we must recall — the fact that on several occasions in this Chamber, in the past, the hon. Member on this side had used various opportunities in debating various matters, to challenge the hon. Minister of Labour (Mr. Merriman) representing his Government, to make a categorical statement that neither he nor his Government would introduce any anti-strike

law in this country. We asked him to make a statement, say categorically, that he would not introduce any anti-strike law, and on every occasion as far as I can recall, at least on three or four occasions, and I myself asked him on two occasions, every time he studiously avoided answering the question.

To a challenge made to the hon. Minister in question, he would say neither yea nor nay, to let us know what to expect sooner or later, in one form or another, and so the Government has tried in this Speech to dress, to wrap the package of anti-strike legislation in such a way as to make it acceptable to the workers through the labour bureaucracy and labour aristocracy of the T.U.C.

The Labour aristocrats of the T.U.C., the same persons who were so wildly opposed to the Labour Relations Bill of 1963, say: "We want no anti-strike legislation." So says Ishmael. "We will have nothing that is against the workers. We stand for them, but when you talk about arbitration, well, that is another matter."

This is hypocrisy of the highest order. You will remember the hon. Minister of Labour spoke very strongly yesterday. These leaders of the working-class [Mr. Merriman: "You cannot strike in Trinidad."] said that the Labour Relations Bill was designed to betray the working-class, but more and more people are beginning to realise what the Bill stood for. More and more people are beginning to realise that had the Labour Relations Bill been passed, there would have been no problem of having to find out whether the union which should represent longshoremen and mechanical workers should be the G.L.U. led by the hon. Prime Minister or the C.C.W.U. headed by Mr. De Peana.

3.20 p.m.

You will remember that the Labour Relations Bill had within it the main provisions to give the workers the right to vote, by

secret ballot, for any union that they wished to represent them. It was meant to give freedom of choice to the workers but it was distorted and in the confusion many honest workers were led to believe that it was something to attack them. You must remember that it had within its provisions to protect trade unionists from being victimised by employers just because they were trade unionists.

We have not seen the Bill but this is what is stated in the Throne Speech:

“After consultation with the workers and employers’ organisations, it has therefore been decided to introduce legislation to establish an Arbitration Tribunal to which recourse may be had voluntarily by either side. While any matter so referred to the Tribunal is under consideration, neither worker nor employer may take any action involving a strike or lockout.”

In other words, if workers are about to go on a strike, the employer can go to the Tribunal: Now workers can no longer go on strike. They have to wait until the Tribunal has thoroughly considered, discussed and digested the facts, written its Reports, etc., and then, perhaps, they can go on strike. Then, again, it may not be so. It may be that the Tribunal will make its decision and that decision will have to be abided with.

Now, we are not unclear as to who will benefit by all of this. Is it not the employer who stands to benefit from all of this? Perhaps the Government or the Tribunal will show its good faith on certain very minor issues. It might say: “Let them have the decision.” But on major issues my fear is that this Tribunal is likely to be an instrument of both the employers and the Government against the workers. Therefore, we are not seeking to know for whom the bell tolls. It tolls for the working class of this country and we will do everything possible to oppose such legislation which has as its

aim the shackling of the working-class people, preventing them from using the strike weapon to gain improvements in wages, in their conditions of work, in their hours of work, etc. This is a weapon of the workers that has been won in a hard struggle over many years, as you, sir, would most likely be aware. Therefore, we say that this is one of the most wicked measures contained in the whole Speech from the Throne, one of the most fraudulent measures ever introduced by this Government. It is perhaps even more serious for the working class of Guyana than the National Security Act.

This Minister is continually interjecting. He is asking whether people could strike in Poland, and so on. He should be concerned with Guyana. In any case, it would be very good if the hon. Minister could bring legislation from any of the socialist countries to show that people cannot strike. I do not want to be drawn into this but it is a very interesting question. In the socialist countries, when there is a dispute between the management and the trade union it goes through a certain procedure, but if it is still unsettled when it reached the final stage — if a decision cannot be reached willingly — the decision is given to the trade union and no one can be dismissed. In most of the socialist countries a worker cannot be dismissed unless the decision is given by the trade union. It would be very interesting for the hon. Minister to do some research on that matter.

We had a rather poor display by the hon. Minister yesterday. He was trying to justify what has been done, but in the long run he has shown that absolutely nothing has been done. If one were to look back over the past years one would see that various things were done in the interest of the workers — Workmen’s Compensation; introduction of holidays with pay for several categories of

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workers; regulation of hours of work for bakeries and so on. All these things were done during the term of office of the previous Government. Even the \$4 a day minimum wage for Government workers was a decision by the last Government. We must give the present Government credit for implementing this decision.

Let us now ask the Government what it has done with respect to holidays with pay, that is, the two weeks annual leave applicable to all workers in Guyana. Are you considering it? Have you shelved it or do you intend to do something about it now? Will the big employers look at such a decision with thanks? In any case, whatever may be the Government's feeling, we would like to see such legislation passed.

What about severance pay? What about the legislation which is to come forward here to provide severance pay for all workers who were retrenched for whatever reason? Is the Government working on this? I had hoped that the hon. Minister of Labour might, in his speech yesterday, have told us something about this. He, himself, has said it is long dead.

3.30 p.m.

What about the \$4 a day minimum wage? When is the Government, which alleges that it represents the working class – I am speaking about about the P.N.C. side of it – going to implement the \$4 minimum wage for all workers? This is something that interests working people; it interests us also. What about all the various wage-fixing committees, the advisory committee and so on, which have been appointed in the past and which issued their reports that were held up in our time because the Government had issued detention orders for several of our parliamentarians, making it impossible to hold Parliament for nearly a year. We could

not bring these forward because our members were in detention and Parliament was stymied. That is the only reason why we did not bring them forward.

We are not asking for any particular figure. Situations change. Three years have gone by and we feel that the figures that were recommended by those Committees – not by the Government, but by Committees – should be increased. I refer to recommendations for workers in drug, dry goods, and hardware stores, chauffeurs and filling station attendants.

We should like to propose that the Government should examine this question very quickly and, rather than resubmitting the matter to new committees, it has the power, in the case of Advisory Committees – [Mr. Merriman: "The Wages Council?"] – I spoke of "Advisory". The Minister is being a bit premature. From the point of view of an Advisory Committee, the Government has the power to vary its recommendations and one would expect that, after three and a half years, the time would be ripe for action. In order to save time, the Government can arbitrarily bring forward the figures that were recommended even if the matters have to be reconsidered. Bring them forward now. Raise the wages of all these persons. One or two reports have come out but these are only drops in the bucket.

Another question we should like to ask is this: Has this Government proceeded any further in its consideration of plans for ensuring that persons who are supposed to be paid minimum wages, actually receive those minimum wages and are not short-changed by signing as having received an amount which they are not, in fact, paid? I just wonder whether the Government plans to adopt any suitable method of ensuring that workers are protected.

I should also like to draw attention to the fact that many workers in the sugar industry

— I have come across many of them and perhaps there are workers in other fields in a similar position — are not liable to pay income tax. They are below the taxable income bracket, but nevertheless deductions are made from their weekly or monthly wages. Many of them have said that in some cases a year has gone by and they have not received refunds from the Inland Revenue Department. One person told me that he went to one of the officers and was told that money was not available to pay refunds to workers from whom income tax is deducted when they are not liable to pay. One can imagine three or four months elapsing before the refund is given but it is not good enough for one year or two years to pass without people knowing where to go or what to do to get a refund of money taken by the Inland Revenue Department. I draw the Government's attention to this.

Some workers, furthermore, say "When we own the Government income tax we are asked to pay interest, but Government is not paying interest for our money. It is using our money that was taken as income tax and has not refunded it. "This leads us to be more fortified in our conviction that the Government, despite its talk about being in a good financial position, is in a bad way. In fact, we can say this is a forced loan from poor working people who are below the level of paying income tax. [Interruptions.] It is a compulsory loan, because, had it been a saving, interest would have been paid on

their savings. If these people had put their money in the Post Office they would have earned interest and some workers would not have minded, but when it is forced from them and they do not know when, or if, they will get their money back, this is certainly very bad.

I realise that time is going and there are many other points to which one can draw the attention of the Government. For

instance, the figures given by the Minister of Labour on the number of people employed. These are fantastic and we cannot accept them until the hon. Minister can bring to this Assembly a detailed break-down of the persons given employment showing in which departments and for what period. We wish to know the man hours, so to speak, because without that we are inclined to believe that the figures given merely represent persons who were employed through the Labour Exchange at one time or the other, whether it was for one day, three days or three weeks. Each is counted as one person given employment. In some cases there may be one person who was employed for three days, laid off, employed again for another week and then employed six months later for three weeks. That person would be counted as three people, whereas, in fact, this one person was under-employed for the whole year and unemployed for most of the year. We should, therefore, like the Minister to bring the figures in order to convince us.

We have seen a lot of retrenchment taking place. I do hope that the Government will not be too severe at the R.M.B. where, we understand, a decision has already been taken by one side of the Government to retrench 30 per cent of the workers. Thirty out of every hundred workers at the R.M.B. are likely to be sent away. We would urge the Government to look very carefully into the situation before making any move to retrench more workers.

In conclusion, I should like to refer to what I said earlier in relation to the Arbitration Bill that will be brought before Parliament. I should like to appeal to this Government to strive to use the opportunities it has to assist the working people and to free them from the shackles used by big business and the imperialists to bind them.



3.40 p.m.

**Mr. Chase:** As this debate moves inexorably to a close, I confess some disappointment with the replies which so far have been attempted by Ministers of the Government to the issues raised on this side of the House. Unfortunately, most of the speakers on the other side of the House dealt with shadows which were raised rather than with the substance of the objections and criticisms which were made on this side of the House.

I was particularly disappointed that no Minister got up to reply to the rather penetrating analysis which the hon. Leader of the Opposition (Dr. Jagan) made in dealing with the Speech which is now before us. I was rather disappointed too that no one has attempted to reply to the criticisms made of the economic content, whatever economic content there is, of the Throne Speech. A number of questions which have been raised remain unanswered and I should hope that we will yet be afforded the opportunity to hear the answers which will be given.

In particular, it was pointed out that our balance of payments situation is in jeopardy. It was pointed out that the figure which was given as the real growth of this country was unduly inflated and that a more realistic figure is the true position and that the true position is not a satisfactory one. Our currency position was also gone into and questions were raised as to the reserves and backing for this currency which are also in jeopardy.

Many matters were raised – the high rate of unemployment; rising prices, lack of any proper programme of industrialisation and diversification of agriculture; – but no answers were given. Indeed, at one stage of this debate, I rather got the feeling that the hon. Members on the opposite side were

making a reappraisal of the P.P.P.'s term of office rather than seriously getting down to grapple with the Government of the day and with telling us exactly what they propose to do. After all, this is a debate on a Throne Speech which is supposed to contain the programme of the Government for the next twelve months and there should be some insight into the policy of the Government in the immediate foreseeable future, but alas, this was not to be.

The Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources (Mr. Jordan), in a rare fit of relevance in the course of his long and wide speech, expressed the opinion that the Throne Speech was merely the bones and that they were going to fill in the flesh around these bones. But that has not been done, at least not yet.

An examination of this Speech discloses that it is diffuse, vague and almost empty. Under the heading Health and Housing, it is stated that as a result of negotiations, it is expected that a sum of approximately \$20 million will be invested in housing. I ask: "Negotiations with whom?" Where is the finance coming from? What are the terms under which this money will be raised. These are pertinent questions which should be answered.

Under the heading "Local Government," it is stated that a Municipal and District Councils Bill will be presented before the end of the year and that new arrangements for Local Government reform will be contained therein. I would have thought that the opportunity would have been taken to let this House and the nation know what form these Local Government reforms will take in this important Municipal and District Councils Bill which is soon to be published.

Local Government reform is a very important subject and, having regard to the fact that the Government has taken so long to produce one single Bill on this subject, it

shows that either decisions have not yet been made on this matter or that such decisions as have been made are not yet ready to be disclosed to the people of this country; but I would have thought that the opportunity would have been taken for us to know what form these reforms will take because the Marshall Report is, in some respect, outdated and important decisions have to be taken varying some of the recommendations contained in that Report. It was only fit that the Government's thinking on this issue should have been disclosed at this time, so that the nation should begin thinking of the reforms that are intended.

On the question of agriculture, for example, it is stated that a programme of increased agricultural production and diversification is to be proceeded with. What diversification does the Government have in mind? I thought the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources would have told us what the Government has in mind about diversification. It is no point using fancy phrases without proceeding to explain the contents of those phrases.

The banana project, as I understand it, is virtually overboard. Cabbages are not being grown any longer in productive quantity. The coconut crop is in jeopardy. [Mr. Cheeks: "Why?"] Because people are stealing the coconuts, because of caterpillars, and because people are drinking more water-coconuts. That is what the Minister told us. So that none of these is likely to be expanded. The poultry section is put in jeopardy because of the increase in the price of feed. Coffee prices are depressed, so that coffee cannot be the basis on which diversification is to take place. I ask again, and I hope I can get an answer, what does the Government have in mind when it talks of diversification of our agricultural production?

Next it was said that the Guyana Marketing Corporation is being reorganised. I ask, and I hope I can get an answer, what form is this reorganisation going to take? I should have hoped that the appropriate Minister would have told us when he got up to speak what form this reorganisation will take. Is it aimed at economies in the Marketing Corporation? Is it aimed at giving farmers better prices for their produce?

3.50 p.m.

What aspects will be re-organised? That is what we would like to know and we hope we can get an answer beyond the vague statement which is made in this Throne Speech.

Under industry, we have the ambiguous statement that this Government is committed to a mixed economy. This Government is committed to a capitalist economy and the capitalist Minister of Finance has shown in no uncertain terms that his philosophy is the philosophy of capitalism, and therefore to stick this in here is to attempt to fool the public. If the Government wants to say there is a mixed economy, I hope it will assay an explanation as to what it means by a mixed economy.

The Speech says that several of the youths will be trained in a diversity of skills. What does this mean? I would have thought that the Government would have concentrated on a basic skill which is needed in this country for a particular purpose rather than diffuse its energy over the different fields.

I shall skip for the moment, the section dealing with Home Affairs because I should hope to return to it in greater detail in a little while.

On the question of external affairs, it is stated that the Government's foreign policy has earned the respect of the international community. With this we respectfully disagree. You have heard from the hon. Leader of the Opposition that this is not so,

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that there is no independence at all in this Government's policy. It is a policy which is completely subservient to the United States' policy and therefore, to talk of earning the respect of the international community for such a policy is actually to deceive oneself.

But let me return to the conclusion that one can draw from a Throne Speech which, as I said, is so diffuse, so vague and so empty. It is the conclusion that this Government is floundering from one point to the other, tackling and turning its course as situations arise from time to time. It has no clear-cut decisive policy because if it did, it would have put the Throne Speech in much more precise, clear and unambiguous language than it is.

No one on that side has attempted an answer to the cryptic comparison which my learned and hon. Friend, Mr. Luck, made when he took up the last two Throne Speeches and was able to show, Throne Speech after Throne Speech, that vague promises were made, promises which have, up to this date, not been fulfilled.

The object of such a Speech is to give an indication of many other things, the Government's legislative programme for the coming year, and the fact that the Government has fallen down on those Throne Speeches and the assurances given in them is an indication that it is also likely to fall down even on the little that is mentioned in this Throne Speech.

In dealing with the very first line in this Throne Speech, the Government says that the Seven-Year Programme launched a year ago has had some initial difficulties, chiefly because of a shortage of skilled personnel.

This is a confession of failure. This is also a shedding of crocodile tears because what is happening to the Government is that its policy is now coming home to roost. What it has sown it is now reaping.

It is true that generally speaking, there is bound to be a shortage of certain skilled personnel, but in our Country, we are having shortages of both administrative and technical skills and we are seeing a situation in which there is an unhappy exodus of skilled personnel from several Government departments, such as, Inland Revenue beginning with the head, the Medical Department, the Police Department, in Agriculture and in Labour. Highly qualified personnel are leaving and they are not leaving just for more money. Do not let anyone fool you with that. There is more in the mortar than pestle.

I want to suggest that there are four basic reasons for this exodus. Firstly, there is too much political interference by certain hon. Ministers of the Government in the day to day administration of certain Departments of the Government and in spheres which are generally within the purview of civil servants.

Secondly, there is widespread dissatisfaction in the Public Service with certain appointments which have been made by the Public Service Commission.

Thirdly, there are appointments which clearly have their foundation in Party loyalty and in Party connections rather than in ability. It is clear that favouritism and nepotism have crept into the making of appointments in this Country rather than ability and merit.

The fourth reason is that there are many qualified Guyanese, who are competent and quite able to carry out the tasks in the Development Plan, but who cannot secure employment with this Government because they do not have a Party card or cannot or would not say that they would remain politically subservient to the Government.

So, certain people, no matter how qualified they are, who do not have party connections and Party loyalty to the

Government of the country, cannot obtain employment.

The question of political interference with the Civil Service has gone very far indeed. The question of people being employed in a very low category – manual labour – is one issue in which hon. Ministers frequently interfere. Hon. Ministers are interfering with the statutory duties which befall certain Government officials.

Is it surprising that even the Civil Service Association has had to speak out against what is taking place and against some of the appointments which are being made? The Civil Service Association has said that it has no confidence in the Public Service Commission. It has called for the appointment of an Appeals Board which would assist considerably in reducing frustration in the Service, and also in restoring some confidence in the integrity of the Public Service Commission. These are very strong words to come from the Civil Service Association. They are not the words of this Opposition, nor are they my own, but they are expressed in a memorandum which the Civil Service Association has sent to the Secretary of the Public Service Commission and in which it calls for the appointment of an Appeals Board.

4 p. m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: This sitting is suspended until 4.30 p.m.

*Sitting suspended accordingly at 4.01 p.m.*

4.40 p.m.

*On resumption –*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mr. Chase.

Mr. Chase: The demand by the Civil Service Association for an Appeal Board is frightfully disturbing as it shows that there is profound concern by a large body of civil servants in appointments which had been made. The Civil Service Association in its

memorandum to the Public Service Commission said it felt that if industrial stability is to be preserved in the Public Service, justice on the part of the Public Service Commission must not only appear to be done but must be seen to be done. I think that we are moving to the point where we may well have to consider, in this country, the question of administrative tribunals as they have in France and in Germany, where the acts of the executive can be reviewed by these bodies, and where those who suffer from certain administrative and executive acts can go to have justice.

The police are also in a similar position in that there is considerable dissatisfaction with certain recent acting appointments which had been made. Let me say at once that I congratulate the Acting Commissioner of Police on many of the on-the-spot promotions which he has made because a number of deserving persons who had long been overlooked, have secured promotions. But these promotions must be viewed against the background of the composition of the Force as a whole, and having regard to the criticisms which have been made by this side of the House from time to time, I would have thought that the Government would have taken the opportunity to restate its point of view that it would carry out faithfully the recommendations of the International Commission of Jurists.

The promotions must be made in relation to the overall composition of the Force otherwise the recommendations in themselves will not have much value. We have had occasion to express concern over recent appointments which were made in the upper echelons of the Police Force where certain officers with recognised and outstanding ability were bypassed by the juniors. It was clear that in those cases ability was not the criterion for the appointments. It is my view that if this continues it is bound to affect the morale of

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the Force and lead it to a lowering of efficiency and standards.

The most startling case in August was the appointment of the Acting Deputy Commissioner two days after he was appointed to the post of Assistant Commissioner. Indeed, this appointment was a bypassing of the most senior Assistant Commissioner whose competence is widely acknowledged. I do not like to descend into naming persons on these occasions but I think that the individual to whom I am referring is well known to the members of the Government, and I think that something should be done in this matter. It is true that in some of these appointments the Prime Minister has a certain amount of constitutional authority, but my view is that the Prime Minister's powers must be tempered with fairplay and justice. They are not powers to be used arbitrarily. They must be used with fairness, and justice must also appear to be done in these appointments.

If there is going to be favouritism in Government appointments, the Government will forever be short of skilled personnel to carry out any sort of development programme. It is well known that there are a number of highly placed Government officials who are now asking that they be allowed to leave at the earliest possible date. Something is seriously and radically wrong, and it seems to me that some examination ought to be made of this situation. Let me refer to a unique case, — the case of the Inland Revenue Department. I have had occasion to table in this House, questions relating to the number of resignations that have taken place in that Department, and I would have thought that those questions would have given an indication to the Government that all was not well in that Department. The situation that we have today is that the substantive head of that

Department is no longer there. One or two persons from abroad — I suppose they are Guyanese who answered the Prime Minister's call to return home — were put in that Department and they fell down on the job, and the local boys who have stayed on at \$450 a month are doing a better job than those who were brought from abroad with qualifications but without any experience whatsoever in this particular field.

Then, you have the position in which the Department is being used as a training ground by those who wish to do post-graduate work. They go into the Department, get all the connections they wish to get, and in a short time they leave to go into private practice where they use the knowledge which they have gained to considerable advantage. It seems that inasmuch as we are looking for academic qualifications, this is a field in which persons with long training and long experience can do a good job. I note that recently an advertisement was made to fill the post of Head of this Department. It is astounding that the advertisement has been so fixed as to fit the cap of one particular individual as well as to exclude every other officer in the department from getting an opportunity to apply for the post. If we are going to have fixing such as this, we are certainly not going to encourage men of ability to stay and work in this country.

4.50 p.m.

It is a shocking situation that the Civil Service Association should be making the comments it has made on the Public Service Commission when, indeed, the Chairman of the Commission is an erstwhile President of the Association, I understand there is not much grumbling about the Chairman himself, except perhaps that the functions of the Commission seem to be dominated by one individual on the Commission who

seems to be a direct conduit pipe from the Prime Minister to the Commission.

When we talk about interference, it is interference at that level, not that written instructions are being given to the Commission to appoint "X" or "Y", but there is domination, and there is usurpation of power by this individual on the Commission. This is resulting in people being fixed in jobs and creating grave dissatisfaction in the Public Service. This is certainly not good enough and it will certainly always result in persons with academic qualifications, persons with experience, leaving the Public Service and going abroad, or leaving the Public Service and going into their own private practice or into commercial firms.

It seems to me that the situation in the Inland Revenue Department is perhaps the most shocking of all. I would like personally to call for an inquiry into that Department, an inquiry for the good of the country as a whole, an inquiry by people who have knowledge of operations of Inland Revenue Departments, even if they have to come from the United Kingdom or elsewhere. All is not well there; it is a classic example of a Department which has been run down because of the policy of interference, the policy of appointments not being made on the basis of merit, and the other policies to which I have referred.

Let me now turn to the section of the Throne Speech which deals with Home Affairs. I will reserve my comments on the Citizenship Bill for the occasion on which the debate on that Bill will take place. I merely wish to say now that there are certain aspects of that Bill which will meet with very stiff opposition from Members on this side of the House.

In the Home Affairs section it is stated that legislation will be introduced to make provision for "a comprehensive system of

permanent national registration and electoral registration". I repeat: We were told that what is stated in the Throne Speech is merely the bones and we are going to get the flesh from the Minister. We have not had an ounce of flesh on the comprehensive system of permanent registration. Indeed, all that we know is that in the last Estimates a sum of \$100,000 is allocated to National Registration. My recollection is that when I questioned the Minister on this, the impression was conveyed to this Assembly that this was money which was to be used in connection with registration for purposes of an election. Now it seems that this is not so at all and what it is sought to set up is a permanent national registration, separate although not wholly connected with electoral registration.

I should like the Government to state what is the urgency, what is the necessity for "a comprehensive system" of national registration at this time. If you put matters in terms of priorities, could not the money which is going to be used on such registration be better devoted to starting some kind of secondary industry to provide employment for people rather than carry through this exercise which, in terms of priorities, however much it may be needed, is not something that is urgently required!

What is worse is that this whole business of national registration is being clouded with an air of secrecy. A lot of secrecy surrounds the operations of the national registration centre. There are police and security guards there. Persons who seek to get employment there have to be thoroughly investigated by the Security Department. Persons who have any semblance of connection with the P.P.P. do not have a shred of hope of getting a job with the national registration centre, even as typists. Why is there all this secrecy around national registration, which was pushed very surreptitiously into the last Estimates and on

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which no explanation was given as to what it was all about?

Indeed, we have heard that there are Americans operating at this national registration centre. We have evidence that the Shoup Corporation, a corporation which is notorious for rigging elections in Vietnam and in other parts of the world, is installed in the national registration centre. It seems to me that what the Government is doing is laying the foundation for fraudulent elections through this business of a permanent national registration. It is very surprising that members of the Election Commission according to the statements made by certain members, have not even been consulted by the Government in regard to the national registration, which we understand impinge in some way on the question of electoral registration.

Under the Constitution on this country, the Elections Commission has certain authority with regard to the electoral process and it seems to me a very unsatisfactory state of affairs where members of this commission do not have a clue as to what the Government is doing with regard to electoral registration or the permanent national registration.

What was certainly needed was a statement of policy by the Government on this question of permanent national registration. Perhaps the hon. Prime Minister in his reply may say something about it, but this is not good enough. This is the sort of thing I have criticised over and over in this House. When something has to be said about any matter in this House in the course of a debate, it must be postulated early in the debate so that members of the Opposition can have an opportunity to criticise or support that particular objective which the Government has in mind, rather than to

bring it at the tail-end when nobody can have an opportunity to make any comments on it in the debate.

It is sufficient to say that we have very grave misgivings about this system of permanent national registration which in terms of priorities, I repeat, is not properly placed and, secondly, where it seems to be the foundation and the basis for having fraudulent elections in this country.

5.00p.m.

Let me turn now to this question of Local Government reform. After years of waiting, all we can get is a Bill dealing with elections but the important Bill – [Mr. Cheeks: “Do you want elections?”] We wanted them long ago but you do not want them. Are you afraid of them? The important Bill which will set out the functions and authority of the new Local Authorities and which will also indicate what powers they will have, has not yet been presented. I noticed that it is stated in the Throne Speech that there will be consultation with regard to this matter. I have noted too that in publishing the Local Government Elections Bill the intention of the Minister is that there should be consultation. Let me pause to congratulate the Minister of Local Government in allowing the public an opportunity to express its views on this Bill. This is quite contrary to the normal pattern of behaviour of the hon. Gentlemen on the opposite side.

The question of consultation is one which should not end with this particular Bill. It is one which should transcend the whole field of Government operations and it is necessary also that, in dealing with its employees, Government should also carry out and demonstrate this principle of consultation which it so often adumbrates. The Civil Service Association has had some very unhappy experiences with this Government on the question of consultation.

While the Government was negotiating with the C.S.A. on the question of the integration of the Aerodrome Fire Service at Atkinson Field and the Fire Brigade Service

in Georgetown, the Government took a unilateral decision while the negotiations were actually in progress, even after the Government had promised the Association that there would be full consultations before it took any final decision in this matter. This is a serious matter. Having promised the Association that before any final decisions were taken in the matter there would be consultations, in the midst of consultations the Government took a decision and has given the men a relatively very short space of time to decide whether they will opt out of the Service or whether they wish to join the new Brigade Service which is going to be set up.

It has already been remarked that the Throne Speech is also significant for the

number of things which it has omitted to mention. I should like to refer to a letter from the Ministry of Communications addressed to the Civil Service Association on this subject. It is dated 14th March, 1967 and paragraph 4 reads as follows:

“It is essential that these matters be decided so that positive steps can be taken towards implementing the decision for integration of the Fire Services. I should be grateful if this matter could be given urgent attention so that the necessary draft legislation could be revised in the light of such agreement as may be reached.”

There is no mention in the Throne Speech of the probability of bringing forward any such legislation before this House. If no such legislation is indeed necessary, then why was the C.S.A. told that such legislation was contemplated? Secondly, if no such legislation is again necessary, why did the Government proceed to make a decision in the midst of negotiations with the C.S.A. before the introduction of any such legislation?

I say that consultative democracy must not be an empty phrase as it seems to be so far as the hon. Gentlemen on the other side

are concerned. It must be something which should be translated into positive action. It is quite clear that the Government has taken this unilateral decision in regard to the Aerodrome Fire Service personnel in the course of negotiations, simply out of spite because those firemen, in the course of a strike early this year or late last year, forced this Government to engage in strike-breaking tactics of taking the Fire Brigade men in Georgetown to do the work of the Aerodrome Fire Service men who were on strike. It is a very despicable act for any Government to seek to break a legitimate strike of the Aerodrome Fire Service men and it is clearly out of spite that the Government, while negotiating with the C.S.A. on this matter, unilaterally took this decision.

Hon. Members on this side has referred to other aspects of this Throne Speech on which I have said we still have not had any answer. The Government must be aware that its decision to introduce or to establish an Arbitration Tribunal, to which it says that recourse may voluntarily be taken on either side, is merely a smokescreen, — is nothing but another attempt of Government to suppress the rights of the workers to go on strike when they have legitimate causes. However much propaganda may be put out by the Government or by the T.U.C. on this aspect of the Government's programme, and however much this may be decorated, it is clear that what the Government contemplates is a taking away from the workers and from the trade unions their solemn right to go on strike in the interest of legitimate grievances.

The thing that worries me is that while the Government is making all these concessions to the capitalists of this country, while it is trampling the rights of the working people of this country, it is in no way interfering with the freedom — if we



[MR. CHASE]

may call it that in parenthesis – of the property owning class in this country to treat the workers' trade unions with disrespect, to pay wages below those which are prescribed, to pay wages below subsistence level and, in other ways, to prevent them from circumscribing the legitimate aspirations and rights of the working people of this country. When we accuse the Government of being pro-capitalist and anti-working class, it is instances such as this that we have to bear heavily in mind.

The Minister of Labour and Social Security (Mr. Merriman), in a rather vain attempt yesterday to refute some of the points which have been raised by my hon. and learned Friend Mr. Luck, sought to refer to the number of man-days which were lost in strikes in 1963 and 1964 and to compare them with the position of 1965 and 1966.

5.10 p.m.

This is not a fair comparison because I think it will be readily conceded that the strikes of 1963 and the disturbances of 1964 were political in content. They were both a strike and a look-out. What is happening in this Country today is that workers everywhere and the unions in increasing numbers are, from week to week, going on strikes and calling strikes over industrial demands.

These strikes cannot be compared with what took place in 1963 and 1964. What the hon. Minister of Labour should really tell us is about the number of strikes in 1963 and 1964 as compared with the number of strikes in 1965 and 1966.

The comparison would speak volumes because we have been having a record number of strikes and industrial disputes in this Country in 1965 and 1966, and it is no consolation to the Government to seek to compare man-days lost in 1963 and 1964

with 1965 and 1966. It is really begging the question because these strikes which are taking place point to something chronically wrong in our industrial set-up, in the Government policy, about the way the cost of living is rising in this Country, about the way in which employers are treating trade unions in this Country, and that is what the hon. Minister should examine, not seek to hide behind comparisons which are not equal or fair comparisons.

I was surprised when the hon. Minister of Labour (Mr. Merriman) sought yesterday afternoon to read from the Hansard, the number of P.P.P. legislators who were absent at the time when a statement was made in the Throne Speech, that certain reforms were to be made with regard to a certain piece of labour legislation, to wit, the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance. The hon. Minister said that because the P.P.P. Legislators were not present at the time when the Speech was made and because the P.P.P. was boycotting this House, we could not raise it now.

What is mentioned in the Throne Speech is the intention of the Government in so far as its immediate legislative programme is concerned, and the Government cannot escape the fact that it has fallen down, year after year, on those promises, by alluding to the fact that the P.P.P. was boycotting the sittings of this National Assembly at the time when the promise was made.

Here we are in the position in which the figures from the economic point of view show that things are stagnant, employment is scarce, money is scarce. We are in a position where the red light is showing on all economic fronts.

I call on the Government to re-examine its economic programme because it is clearly not raising the standard of living of the people of this Country, nor is it generating economic activity so as to pay for the heavy

loans to which this Government is committing generations yet unborn. Serious re-arrangement of this programme is vital we are to get out of the economic morass into which this Country is fast slipping.

I call on the Government to re-examine this matter and to state positively and clearly what is its policy. A policy which shifts as situations develop, a policy which changes from time to time, a policy which is not coherent, is no good for a young and developing Nation such as this.

We must know where we are going, how we are getting where we are going, and to understand how this Nation is to go forward on the vital economic fronts.

The Prime Minister: As has been the custom in this House over the last six years, this Throne Speech is not the document in which one finds the entire Government policy spelled out, not does one find in such a document the full list of all the measures to be undertaken and the legislation to be introduced. In the Throne Speech, a list of the more important and significant measures, legislative and otherwise, is set out giving an idea of what the time-table is going to be and also giving an opportunity to Parliament to discover and discuss, on the basis of the priority fixed by the Government, the tactics and strategy of the Government during the ensuing Session.

We have done that in this case and I hope to show that a careful examination of the Speech would give some idea of what Government proposes to do and where the particular emphases are to be placed.

However, during the course of this debate, there have been some remarks, some quotations of figures, some manufacturing of statistics, aimed at conveying the impression that the state of the economy is dreadful and desperate. It is therefore necessary, perhaps, for the record to deal

with some of these figures and to deal with some of these inferences masquerading as statements of facts.

The Report of the Bank of Guyana has been drawn upon quite rightly, but for instance, was it noted that the Report of the Bank of Guyana, the accuracy of which has not been questioned or assailed, discloses that the gross domestic product for the year 1966 increased by 8%? Has it been noted, for instance, that in the Report of the Bank of Guyana the production of rice in 1966 reached a record level of 202,000 tons, which was substantially above the average production for 1959 through to 1964 of 124,000 tons? Has it been noted that the livestock production has increased considerably, according to the Report of the Bank of Guyana at page 13, by those not too illiterate to understand? Has it been noted that the forestry output rose substantially in 1966, compared to 1965, and even to the production peak of 1961 which was substantially exceeded? These, sir, appear in the Report of the Bank of Guyana to which reference has been made time and again. It is only fair that these facts should be known because, unfortunately, the Report of the Bank of Guyana is not a book or a document which is widely read, and one may come to the conclusion that the statements made, purporting to be extracted from the Bank of Guyana Report were accurate in every respect.

5.20 p.m.

I was trying my best to understand what my hon. Friend Dr. Charles Jacob was getting at when he said that consequent upon and due to the accession of office of this Government the prices of commodities which we export have fallen; most interesting as an asseveration, completely unsupported by the facts. The price of sugar did fall. In 1963, the price of sugar was

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\$344.16 per ton on the average. In 1964 the price of sugar was \$245.35. In 1965 it was 103.25. In 1966 it was 85.79. There are some people who indulge in illogical reasoning. Undoubtedly the price of sugar has fallen, but according to the Opposition, *post hoc logo propte hoc* because this happened after the accession of office of this Government the Government is responsible. By what stretch of the imagination does the Government of Guyana, this, or its predecessor which was the Government of British Guiana, control the world price of sugar? That is why this Government, both in and out of this House, and in many places, has stressed the necessity for us to embark seriously on diversification, not only in agriculture but in the economy as a whole. That is why, for instance, when the question of Associated Overseas status was being discussed in the Caribbean, the Government of Guyana said it was prepared to consider A.O.T. status but its attitude quite clearly was that A.O.T. status can only be, at best, a short-term solution and a holding operation, because, today, you are dependent upon British preference not to lose too much; tomorrow you will be dependent on the European Common Market not to lose too much, or to make a profit on sugar.

Sugar is intrinsically a product in the present circumstances of today, the price of which is dictated not by the producers but by the purchasers, and it is subject to a number of international arrangements, on many occasions to the caprices of some who are growing old. Therefore, let us be realistic and let us admit that though the price of sugar has fallen, it was not within the competence of the Government to alter that price — [Interruption.] I know that the Opposition fears the Government so much that it credits it with superhuman and

supernatural powers, but certainly there is a limitation to our human capacity.

Now, when one comes to consider the value of trade to us during 1966, one immediately recognises that there has been an impact on the economy of the lower price of sugar, and that contributed noticeably to the balance of payments. It is simply that if there is a drop in price and value of the major crop which, in spite of seven years of a soi-disant socialist Government continues to be sugar, the total value of our exports will drop, and unless we are able, *pari passu* with the drop in that price to reduce both the volume and the price of our imports that drop in price must necessarily be reflected in our balance of payments. [Interruption by Mr. Luck.] It is a long time since I have ceased to be a teacher but my pedagogic background causes me now to give a little lesson to Mr. Luck. The balance of payments has to do with exports and imports; it has nothing to do with the purchase of local services and locally-produced supplies. The purchase of locally-produced goods does not affect the balance of payments. The balance of payments is a relationship between the value of what you export and the value or cost of what you import. Lesson 1 having been completed I will now proceed.

5.30 p.m.

We proceed now to consider the present position of our balance of payments. From the Governor of the Bank of Guyana, who has become an authority to the Opposition, we have in a speech which he made on the 29th July, 1967, to the 34th Annual Meeting of the West Demerara Union of Local Authorities an observation to this effect:

“A potentially dangerous development in 1966 was corrected towards the end of the year and since

then a high degree of stability was maintained although the situation requires further careful watching.”

When you read the monthly statistics, what that in fact means is, that subsequent to October 1966 there has ceased the downward trend or the increased deficit in our balance of payments. There have been changes from time to time, but there is not that steady downward trend.

Yesterday afternoon, when this Assembly suspended its Sitting, I had an opportunity of having a discussion with an official from the International Monetary Fund and he said that (a) the stand-by arrangement – and I shall explain the stand-by arrangement later – was not used by the Government of Guyana during the year; and (b) the I.M.F. has noted with pleasurable interest the improvement insofar as our balance of payments is concerned. [Mr. Luck: “A testimonial from an unnamed person.”] The testimonials on your behalf have always been signed by me, even the one for the Civil Service. The one for entry into Canada was unsuccessful.

Let us not indulge in airy-fairy statements. Say the members of the Opposition, “There is an increase in food importation.” The figures for 1967, from January to June 30, show that there has been a decided and clear decrease to the tune of over half a million dollars as against the same period in 1966. [Mr. Ram Karran: “What are you talking about?”] You would not understand this: it is not Gimpex money.

Even if it may be argued that this trend may not be continued during 1967, that argument would bear some stamp of incipient logic, but to say categorically that the importation of food has gone up is to be either incapable of reading figures, incapable of understanding what is the truth, or to be

without the figures at one's disposal and, therefore, according to the legal concept which the hon. Member Mr. Luck would understand, it is to be criminally reckless as to what one says on a particular situation.

The figures are there to the effect that there has been in the first six months of 1967, as against the first six months of 1966, a decrease in Importation of food. [Mr. Luck: “1966 was a bad year.”] This is one opportunity to have your voice taped for broadcast, but you will be unidentified or unidentifiable.

It is the Government's contention that there is nothing in the statistics to support the statement that the economy is showing a downward trend. [Dr. Jagan: “Why don't you read the Economic Survey Report?”] Stick to dentistry. If there is anyone who wants to dispute figures they can be had from the monthly statistical reports. One finds, for instance – and this is where a little learning is a dangerous thing – [Mr. Luck: “That is why you got into trouble with that diamond.”] Naturally. I can see that I, too, have experienced the danger of a little learning. I am sufficiently humble to admit my faults, but I shall not admit that I cannot sound my aspirates.

We find in the statistics of 1967 that there is an increase of \$18 million. [Mr. Ram Karran: “What are you reading from?”] *Guyana Foreign Trade*, Bank of Guyana Research Department. It is extracted from the monthly statistical reports. [Mr. Luck: “You should make that available to all Members.”] No; you have to be able to read. We find that there is an excess of \$18 million for the first five months of 1967 as against the first five months in 1966 in imports.

Now, this can be found in the statistical report. It is read by some and it is concluded that this represents food, but if one goes further down the Table and completes the

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reading of the analysis, one would find that whereas the whole increase is \$18 million, the increase on machines and machinery alone is \$15.4 million.

5.40 p.m.

The increase in machinery and transport equipment is 72.9% for 1965/1966 and if one further analyses the figures one will see that a considerable part of this consisted of machinery brought in by the two bauxite companies for their operations and, further, that this \$18 million increase which represents only an increase of 23.2% over 1966 as against the \$15 million on such increase which represents 72.9% in the field of machinery and equipment alone, does not particularly affect the balance of payments position because the greater part of the machinery was not purchased out of Guyana's external reserves but represents, in fact, purchase from outside funds.

There is a lot of difference between the visible trade balance and the balance of payments situation which latter being dependent upon the use of your external reserves. [Mr. Ram Karran: "A little learning is a dangerous thing."] A little learning, as my friend very wisely remarks, is a dangerous thing. Therefore, since there can be no answer to the figures properly interpreted – [Mr. Ram Karran: "Did you give anybody a chance to answer?"] I have waited five days to answer – they cannot be controverted and it is necessary for us to put on the record and bring to the attention of the public the fact that these statements about the state of the economy are as irresponsible as those who uttered them.

Let us consider more positively some of the things planned and some of the difficulties inherent in our situation. The seven year Development Programme during the fiscal year 1966 was responsible for the

expenditure of \$30.9 million. Most of that money was spent on the infrastructure - [Mr. Luck: "All was spent."] – but that is one of the problems that developing nations have to face. You cannot start building from the roof. You must spend on the infrastructure – whether it be roads or air transport – that is where you have to start spending.

It is expected that this year the expenditure under infrastructure and in other fields will be greater than it was in 1966. But we hear the criticism that money is spent on infrastructure. But let us face certain facts: either you spend it or somebody else spends it for you. Nobody else is going to spend on the infrastructure of Guyana but the Guyana Government.

Then we hear further that all the expansion during 1966 is traceable to two things: public spending and bauxite. True; who doubts that? That is to show a marvellous insight into the perfectly obvious. The Opposition is going to complain of Government's expenditure in the public sector. As a matter of fact, when there is nothing to criticise, merely focusing attention on the facts is considered a deep or acute criticism.

Even though, according to the Bank's Report which has now become the Bible of the Opposition, the manufacturing sector, excluding the processing of the sugar-cane and paddy, has grown by about 10% in 1966 and has steadily increased in its relative share in Gross Domestic Product, and even accepting further that exports of manufactured goods are on a small scale, let us admit that the supply from these industries has, in most cases, completely replaced imports so that further growth of sales in the home market is dependent on the rise of incomes: even admitting that, one has also got to admit that there has been no dramatic expansion of the manufacturing industries. [Mr. Luck: "None at all."]

You say "none", the research economists of the Bank of Guyana, better qualified than a non-graduate, have said that there has been a 10% increase. No one denies that, but what is the moral we must draw from it? This Government draws two morals: one is that it is agriculture which is going to be responsible for a large part of our growth. [Mr. Luck: "This is very expensive education; you took two years to learn that."] You took seven years and still you did not learn it.

Let us indulge the Opposition and discuss the question of industry. Manufacturing industry, being capital intensive cannot make a really decisive impact on unemployment. It would require billions of dollars if we were to find a job in manufacturing industry for every one of our unemployed.

5.50 p.m.

In the Development Programme, we have been able to undertake the expansion of our internal air services. Kwakwani now has a regular service. The Corentyne will soon have a regular service. Airstrips are being constructed at Kurupung, Enachu, Chitty Yoking, and a number of places to which you can fly as a result of the increase in the fleet, more particularly, by the Twin Otter de Havilland aircraft.

The Government recognises that it is impossible to build the roads to these parts immediately, and consequently, the emphasis has to be in the meantime on air transportation to the more remote parts of our Country. This is recognised and the work is proceeding.

Meanwhile, apart from the Atkinson/Mackenzie road, Government proposes to embark on further construction on the Corentyne, in Black Bush Polder and in West Demerara. [Mr. Luck: "What about

the road to Mara and the Essequibo Road?"]

It is recognised that the Essequibo roads are bad and I do not want to deny that, but when our predecessors left office, the foundation of that public road had been deteriorating for fifty years and it is no point in our saying that we were preceded by incompetents. It is our duty to undertake this task during the next year. Before this Session ends, we are undertaking construction work on the Essequibo roads. It was impossible for us to have done it *pari passu* with the other forty miles, and this assurance has already been given to the Union of Local Authorities on the Essequibo Coast.

We hear about the increased part which the co-operative movement is playing in the economy, but then we hear the Shibboleths. May I say that during the years 1965, 1966 and 1967, the amount of co-operative capital has more than doubled and now it has passed \$4 million.

The Government proposes, with the co-operation of the Co-operative Department and the co-operators, to reconstruct the co-operative movement into a sort of pyramid. The head of the pyramid will be the co-operative Council. There will be national co-operative councils and district co-operative councils.

Co-operative education has been undertaken — witness the institute in Lodge, another institute being built on the basis of self-help at Henrietta, another one to be built at Mackenzie and another one proposed for the Corentyne. There, it is further proposed not only to give instructions in what are considered co-operative subjects but also in business management, because the Government is convinced that if the co-operative movement is to make its impact and to jostle with other owners of commercial houses and industry,

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it must be seized of management skills and both in Canada and Israel, we have persons who are being trained. I am hoping that by the time the next Session reconvenes, we shall be able to report more positively on the accomplishments in the field of co-operatives.

There has been put into the Throne Speech an outline of Government's programme for the establishment of a Youth Corps. Briefly, the proposal is that recruits to the Corps should go through a two-year period of training starting with a three-month orientation course. The site of the operation of the Corps has been identified as Tumatumari.

There, they will not only be taught to live together and encouraged to do so, they will also be given instructions in what are called the technical skills, and Tumatumari is an ideal site for this because there is a great deal of machinery and electronic equipment which the Government is taking over when it begins to use the site.

It is hoped that the first recruitment will be about sixty but it is also hoped that during subsequent years, the numbers can be increased after we have been able to assess some of the difficulties and attempt to make some evaluations for their correction.

I was particularly interested in Mr. Stoby's proposals that the North West or some part of the North West may be identified as a site for one of these camps on which the Corps should be sited. Careful consideration was given to that and though Tumatumari will be the first site, it is proposed to expand eventually to places, say, in the Northwest and the Berbice River as well. The Government is indeed grateful to my hon. Friend Mr. Stoby for attracting our attention to the Northwest, which we already had in mind, and it is a fortunate circumstance that on this particular

question the Opposition and the Government are *ad idem*.

6.00 p.m.

There is no necessity for us to deal at this stage — I think the Opposition recognises this — with education because a White Paper will be published and then, on a Motion, it will be fully debated in this House.

There is nothing that we need say about agriculture because that has already been dealt with by the hon. Minister, though I cannot help reiterating in one respect what he said and that is: It is a little astounding to find that the Opposition shouts with glee because no oil has yet been discovered as if oil is going to benefit only the members of the Government party or only this section, as if the road programme is going to benefit only our section. How far can one get in one's lack of patriotism out of the necessity to say something opposite?

On the question of the Workmen's Compensation, let it be admitted that in a previous Throne Speech the Government did allude to its intention to amend the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance. But it has been recognized that that is neither sensible nor practicable at this stage if we are going to introduce a National Insurance

Scheme, because, certainly the two impinge on each other. It is true that, perhaps, in the Workmen's Compensation legislation there are certain things which ought not to come in the National Insurance Scheme, which would not belong there, but there are certain areas in which there is overlapping and Government proposes to amend comprehensively the Workmen's Compensation legislation after we have worked out the details of and introduced the national Insurance legislation.

I was interested to hear such acid criticism of the proposed tribunal for the settlement or the resolution of disputes between employer and worker. If one looks at what is

said about it in the Throne Speech, and in sum, that is what is proposed to be put to the House and it is for the House to decide, one will see that this Tribunal is being set up so that either side to a dispute may apply to the Tribunal for the resolution of that dispute. We have found that, and this is our analysis, one of the problems recurring in industrial relations is the indecisiveness of the terms of, or the conciliation which may lead to, resumption of work. Therefore, we thought it necessary to set up some body which can make a final decision and which is not a body for conciliation. But neither side need go there if they do not want to go. But once one side goes, and we say this unapologetically, the matter is in abeyance and this operates in the nature of an injunction which one gets in the High Court. If that is suppressive of democratic rights, certainly an injunction in the High Court is suppressive of democratic rights.

cannot understand the hypocrisy because all of us know that the legislation which is being proposed in Guyana has a voluntary element which one does not find in the legislation in Zambia, in Singapore, in India, in Trinidad and in most of the developing countries faced with this

problem; the approach has been, in other cases, to make calling of a strike illegal. They know it, but you will hear them parading that this is a suppression of democratic rights! It is voluntary approach but once one side approaches in the case of a dispute, there can be no strike or lock-out on that dispute which is engaging the attention of the Tribunal.

It is the epitome of insincerity to describe such legislation as is proposed as being in any way suppressive, in view of the difference between it and other legislation on industrial relations throughout the world, The T.U.C. and C.A.G.I. speaking for workers and employers respectively have accepted the prin-

ciple, the draft will soon be sent to them for their further views and then the legislation will be introduced in this House.

We come now to consider what has been concerning the minds of a number of people in this country as a result of the publicity on the question in the Press — the relations between Government and the Civil Service Association. The Civil Service Association, which is a trade union and as such is entitled to its point of view, has made an issue of the question of the integration of the Fire Services. In 1964 it was represented to Government — not in our time — that the firemen at Atkinson desired to have an integrated fire service, of which they at Atkinson were to be a part. Therefore the question is not whether they are to be integrated or not: that is not a question.

Government decided that integration would be implemented: this is Government's right. Now, the workers have rights. Their rights, which they knew of before, are these: Either they may opt to come into the integrated service or they may opt to retire, being given all the benefits which are prescribed in the Regulations under which their service has operated. A great deal of political drum-beating is taking place over a

simple issue. The decision has to be made by the firemen and then in January of 1968 the integration will take place. Government certainly has a right to give them a time limit within which to opt. Government is not telling them. [*Mr. Ram Karran*: "One week."] am not interested in going into the details because we shall have to deal with this matter when representations are made, but it is about time it was understood that the Atkinson firemen desired integration in 1964 and that the carrying out of the integration by Government is in pursuance of their request and representations, and



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that all that has arisen is Government's telling them, "You have to make your decision within a given time", because if 100 per cent of them opted to join the integrated service no great difficulty arises, but if 100 per cent, or even less than that, opted to retire, Government will have to carry out recruitment.

We hear now that an Appeal Board is desired for the Public Service commission. If that is the proposal of the Civil Service Association, Government will consider it when it is formally made and I am not free to state in advance what the Government will do. It is the very antithesis of good industrial relations for one side to take up a firm and unmoving position before the matter is even discussed. Of that I will say nothing more.

The opportunity has been taken to make references to the Public Service Commission and to the Police Service Commission. It has been suggested, of course, that one man dominates a Commission of five persons. Congratulations to such a genius! How can one man dominate five? The Chairman is an ex-President of the C.S.A., a retired civil servant of the highest reputation and integrity. The Vice-Chairman is the President of the Hindu Maha Sabha, an outstanding solicitor and an outstanding citizen of high integrity and moral rectitude. The next member is a trade unionist of long experience, who was nominated to the Public Service Commission by him who is now Leader of the Opposition. The next member is an Accountant and businessman, whose appointment I looked at carefully in the files yesterday and discovered that it was made by him who is now Leader of the Opposition and Sir Ralph Grey. The file is there.

Now, we have the Chairman, an ex-president of the C.S.A., a man whose

integrity you cannot question unless you want to do it within the confines and privileges of this Assembly. Then there are two other persons whose terms of office were merely carried on, having been originally chosen by my hon. Friend. There is a third person who, according to the report, is the President of a distinguished organisation whose secretary sits on that side of the House.

In all fairness, how can it be said that one man dominates all these four? What are they? [Mr. Luck: "Who is the last man?"] Let us hear his qualifications."] ]

I have pointed out to this Assembly before that members of the Public Service Commission cannot be removed by the Prime Minister or anyone. There has to be long investigation and report back. They are as irremovable as are the Judges of the Supreme Court. What the Opposition does not understand is this: I have been hearing a lot about this and let us get certain things in true perspective and straight – under the Constitution the Prime Minister posts Permanent Secretaries. A Permanent Secretary is appointed after consultation with the Prime Minister and therefore if "X" becomes a Permanent Secretary and there is a suggestion that it is because of the Prime Minister's views, there is nothing wrong in

that. That is in the Constitution. Even Jagan has that right which he used when he made a man who had no administrative experience, in my opinion, Permanent Secretary, and I raised not a cry because that was his right. How far are we going to take this democracy? The Prime Minister has a right under the Constitution, but according to the Opposition he must exercise it cautiously after elaborate consultation. I am not asked by the Constitution to consult on this and I will not.

6.20 p.m.

So far as the Police Service Commission is concerned, that is a body whose members are irremovable also. So far as the Commission and Deputy Commissioner of Police are concerned, they can only be appointed not after consultation with but with the concurrence of the Prime Minister. It is my decision and I make it. I may be wrong but I am entitled to err and not be corrected by my political opponents seeking to achieve their own ends and promotion for their friends. It is my business and never will the Opposition prevent me from exercising my power. I am not Jagan who was afraid to use even the little power he had. He told me that.

There is in the Throne Speech the proposal for introducing legislation dealing with permanent registration. When that legislation comes up I am sure it will be fully debated. Legislation providing for electoral registration will also be introduced. The Opposition is perfectly in order to question whether or not permanent registration should enjoy such high priority. It is entitled to do so. The Government, on the other hand, is entitled to fix its priorities subject to the wishes of Parliament. If Parliament desires that that priority ought to be observed it will vote accordingly.

I may say that we consider permanent national registration necessary as an adjunct to the Manpower Survey which has been carried out and which is being revised and brought up to date from time to time. It has been considered by the Government that the review and evaluation of our survey annually would be made easier if we also had an exercise registering all persons of working age. That is why we have started from as low as 14; we could not be wrong. If we had started from 15, there might have been questions of 15-year old persons working.

You attend school up to the age of 14. That is one matter.

Now electoral registration is necessary if we are to have elections — and we are going to have elections. But what has happened is that consciously, wickedly or ignorantly some people have misunderstood what the powers of the Elections Commission are under Article 69. Now the function of the Election Commission, in this context, is to exercise general direction and supervise the administration. Throughout the world — and if there is anyone who wants to dispute this let him give me an example — it is the Legislature, the Parliament that passes the law and then the Elections Commission supervises the administration.

The only impediment that can be placed in the way of this Parliament in passing this legislation, or any legislation of this type, is the Constitution. The Constitution provides for the court to rule whether the legislation measure is *intra vires* or *ultra vires*, so to come here and say that the Elections Commission has not been consulted is to raise the Election Commission to a very high status above that status enjoyed by a sovereign Parliament, and I am surprised that a lawyer of undoubted competence has raised this point. You do not have to consult the Elections Commission.

I understand that the Minister has agreed to make available to the Elections Commission the draft legislation when the time is ready, but the Elections Commission has no more interest in the formulation of the legislation than any citizen who has a vote. When the legislation comes before this House for consideration and debate the Opposition would have an opportunity to propose Amendments, but what is quite clear is that the powers of the Commission are limited to supervision and administrative conduct.

[THE PRIME MINISTER]

The Government does, as was remarked by the hon. Member Mr. Chase, face certain difficulties with respect to technical and professional staff. The hon. Member Mr. Chase referred to the situation in the Inland Revenue Department. He remarked that it was during this term of office that the last Commissioner of Inland Revenue, who has now voluntarily retired, was appointed after having been acting for a long time during the previous Government's time. He remarked that there has been no suggestion by the gentleman that he has not been promoted. He was at the top.

**Mr. Luck:** I rise to a point of order. I wish to draw your attention to Standing Order No. 9.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I know what you are going to refer to. I had just intended to ask hon. Members to agree that we go on until such time as this debate is concluded. I am asking them now. Thanks for referring to the Standing Order.

**Mr. Luck:** In continuation of my point of order I wish to say that Standing Order No. 9 does not provide for the Speaker to make this request. In view of that, this request is outside of your function. The Standing Order does not give you the authority.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** There is another Standing Order that gives me the right to control Parliament.

**Mr. Luck:** If this - -

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Let me appeal to the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr. Luck:** All right.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I am speaking to the hon. Leader of the Opposition (Dr.

Jagan) and the hon. Leader of the House (Mr. Bissember). I am beseeching that both of you agree that we continue until the debate is concluded.

[Dr. Jagan and Mr. Bissember indicated assent.]

6.30 p.m.

**The Prime Minister:** There has been no suggestion that there were any acts of discrimination against the last Commissioner of Inland Revenue but there is this fact that the last Commissioner of Inland Revenue is a highly competent accountant and in his conversation with me, he told me quite frankly that in private practice, he could make much more than he makes as Commissioner of Inland Revenue. That is a problem which is facing not only the Inland Revenue Department but also other departments and it is a problem which has been referred to the newly-established Public Service Ministry to consider what attractions or incentives may be meted out.

His penchant for opposition allowed my good and learned Friend Mr. Chase to criticise the appointment at an attractive point in the scale, of Guyanese returning from abroad. I do not join issue with him on the question of their experience but unless we are able to appoint them at an attractive point in the scale, even those will be lost.

There has been no suggestion by the individuals concerned, in no case has there been any suggestion by the C.S.A., with respect to the Inland Revenue Department

other than that the salaries do not compare favourably with salaries of those working in private industry. [An hon. Member: "people are still going away."] Private industry had nothing in 1963. What people did in 1963 was to put on their shoes and go out of the Country. [Mr. Luck: "It was a charwoman who made Gangadin resign."] I do not

discuss the names of officers in this place and I should have thought that Mr. Luck, in spite of his aberrations, would know that we do not discuss names in the Chamber and therefore, this should be hardly a point of criticism.

There should be understanding, on both sides, of the problems which is faced by Government, a problem which cannot be easily remedied by Government unless we are in a position to appoint these people on special scales. That is why it is being carefully considered now by the Public Service Ministry because if the Government did it for one person, the Government would have to do it for others, who may have or claim to have the same rights or complaints.

What has been our external policy over the last year? I have no desire to be repetitious. What is very interesting is the sort of naive approach which one finds coming from the Opposition on this question. I noted that it was considered contrary to the policy of non-aligned nations for the Guyana delegation to have voted for the Latin-American resolution on the Arab/Israel conflict. [An hon. Member: "What was the difference between the two resolutions?"] What was the difference between the Latin-American motion and the Yugoslavia motion? The difference was that the Yugoslavia motion called for a withdrawal and the Latin-American motion called for a withdrawal and an end to belligerency.

So far as Guyana was concerned, we felt that not only should there be a withdrawal but also an end to the state of war on both sides and we are entitled to think so. Why did the Rumanian delegate flout Kosygin's instructions. He did not vote with the Russian bloc. Therefore one sees that the Opposition's description or definition of non-alignment is that one must never vote with any Western nation. What explanation

can one give? [An hon. Member: "Give two."] Yes. One to the Israelis and one to the Arabs.

Russia voted in the Security Council for referring to the motion to the United Nations General Assembly. Moses would say the right thing. He would say both sides are capable of betrayal and if both sides are capable of betrayal, either side is capable of imperialism and either side is capable of all the "isms" in the book, but it is about time that we become a little more sophisticated and understand that non-alignment is not described in terms of voting with the Eastern bloc and the Western bloc.

6.40 p.m.

As I have noted — [Dr. Jagan: "What about the Yankee puppets in the South, the non-aligned bloc?"] Are you talking about Monrovia? [Dr. Jagan: "Name a few."] You have the record. I have not got the time. If my hon. Friend wants to vote with the eastern bloc it is a matter for him. But so far as this Government is concerned, it will vote according to its analysis and its interests. [Mr. Bhagwan: "Tell us about Nyerere."] Tanzania abstained on two of the operative paragraphs and the Russians voted for one, abstained on the Latin American and voted for the non-aligned. [Mr. Luck: "Oh, so they had a non-aligned resolution and you didn't vote for it."] What was called the non-aligned.

You will find, for instance, that France at one time would be found voting as a non-aligned, and at another time it adopts, to my mind, an obscurantist and a reactionary position on the question of Rhodesia. If one could only recognise that a country has to exercise its own judgement and that not all the wrong is on one side nor all the right on one side, one would understand these situations much more readily.

[THE PRIME MINISTER]

I come now to deal with the section in the Throne Speech which sets our position in the Caribbean. Here, again, there can be no doubt that this Government has at one time improved the image of this country in the Caribbean, and made a serious attempt at securing regional co-operation and eventually, integration. As I had occasion to say elsewhere, it is our conviction that in so far as regional groupings are concerned, the future of Guyana is with the Caribbean. [Mr. Luck: "What about the OAS] This Government makes no bones about it. It recognises the difficulties which face the territories and nations in the Caribbean in so far as working out the details for integration are concerned. But we do feel that a solution can be found. We do not feel that the grouping must come into being with us outside. There is a lot of hypocrisy on this matter. People stay out of the grouping. They do not attempt to make a contribution. They indulge in a number of ideological clichés but they make no contribution.

It may be that soon we shall see West Indian regional grouping as a reality. It may be that we will not, though my hope is that we will, and my conviction is that it is likely to come in the not distant future. There can be no disputing the proposition that the Caribbean territories as separate entities cannot hope to survive effectively, cannot hope to provide for their people a satisfaction of their aspirations. The only hope, therefore, for us is to get together as one. The resources of Guyana and its hinterland can be put at the disposal of the entire region and we can offer a significant contribution to a strong West Indian nation.

I should have been interested in a full discussion on this topic because it is of much more immediate and significant interest to us than the East and the West. This, to my

mind, is a matter of urgency, and this Government is prepared to stand by its attitude regardless of what anyone may say — that Guyana's entry into the West Indian regional structure is for the survival of Guyana and the rest of the Caribbean.

We hope, during the course of this session, to have a number of debates. We would expect that all of the legislation would be fully debated. May I crave your indulgence however, for one moment, to deal very briefly with a point that was raised by the member of the Opposition, where I think there is no difference of opinion between us and them. There has been allusion to the steep rents which are being charged. There has been a reference to the capricious resumption of possession by landlords and the eviction of tenants. [Mr. Ram Karran: "Isn't the P.P.P. responsible for that?"] That is quite true. The P. P. P. landlords. The Government is very concerned about this and has reached the position where it thinks that there is not enough in the extant Rent Restriction Ordinance to deal with the situation and as a result, legislation on this matter will be introduced early in this Session. I make this point particularly so that the obvious community of attitude existing between the Opposition and the Government will give us an opportunity to pass this legislation without lengthy debate so that those who are now suffering may have some assistance brought to them.

There you have Government's legislative programme, there you have some of the facts, but as far as I can see, this House should not be misled into believing that the list of legislation in this speech is comprehensive.

6.50 p.m.

We have paid particular attention to some of the other legislation and I may, for instance, say that there will be legislation on land holdings, legislation intended to provide

greater credit to co-operatives and to farmers, so that my hon. Friends need have no worry about the activities which will take place in this House, because during the year 1967 the programme will be heavy, the activity great, for if we are to make vital changes in our economy and our social structure, this must be. [*Applause.*]

*Question put, and agreed to.  
Motion carried.*

### ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, "That this Assembly do now adjourn until Thursday, 24th August, 1967 at 2 p.m." – [Mr. Bissember.]

*Adjourned accordingly at 6.52 p.m.*