

THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
OFFICIAL REPORT
[VOLUME 3]

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

67th Sitting

2 p.m.

Tuesday, 20th January, 1970

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker *in the Chair.*]

Present

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

Member of the Government

His Honour the Speaker, Mr. SaseNarain, J.P.

Members of the Government

Ministers

The Honourable L.F.S. Burnham, O.E.,
Prime Minister

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

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

The Honourable M. Kasim
Minister of Communications

The Honourable H.D. Hoyte, O.C.,
Minster of Home Affairs

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

The Honourable Miss S.M. Field-Ridley,
Minister of Education (Leader of the House)

The Honourable B. Ramsaroop,
Minister of Trade

The Honourable D.A. Singh,
Minister of Housing and Reconstruction

The Honourable S.S. Ramphal, Kt., C.M.G., O.C.,
Attorney-General and Minister of State

The Honourable M.W. Carter,
Minister of information and Culture

The Honourable H. Green,
Minister of Works and Hydraulics

The Honourable H.O. Jack
Minister without a Portfolio

Dr. The Honourable Sylvia Talbot,
Minister of Health

Parliamentary Secretaries

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. C.V. Mingo,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Local Government

Other Members

Mr. O.E. Clarke, Deputy Speaker

Mr. J.N. Aaron

Miss M.M. Ackman

Mr. K. Bancroft

Mr. N.J. Bissember

Mr. J. Budhoo, J.P.

Mr. L.I. Chan-A-Sue

Mr. M. Corrica

Mr. M. Corrica

Mr. E.H.A. Fowler

Mrs. P.A. Limerick

Mr. S.M. Saffee

Mr. R.C. Van Sluytman

Mr. C.E. Wrights

Mr. M. Zaheeruddeen, J.P.

Members of the Opposition

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

Mr. Ram Karran

Mr. R. Chandisingh

Dr. F.H.W. Ramsahoye, S.C.

Mr. D.C. Jagan, J.P.

Mr. E.M.G. Wilson

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

Mr. M.Y. Ally

Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud, J.P.

Mr. E.M. Stoby
Mr. R. Ally
Mr. E.L. Ambrose
Mrs. L.M. Brance
Mr. Balchand Persaud
Mr. Bholu Persaud
Mr. I.R. Remington, J.P.
Mr. V. Teekah
Mrs. E. DaSilva
Mr. M.F. Singh
Mr. J.A. Sutton
Mr. R.E. Cheeks

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

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

Absent

The Honourable S.S. Ramphal, Kt., C.M.G., O.C.,
Attorney-General and Minister of State

The Honourable H. Green,
Minister of Works and Hydraulics and Supply

- on leave

Mr. M. Corrica
Mr. E.M. Stoby
Mr. R. Ally
Mrs. L.M. Brance
Mr. I.R. Remington, J.P.
Mr. M.F. Singh
Mr. R.E. Cheeks

- on leave

- on leave

STATEMENT BY MINISTER**Tragedy at Rose Hall Estate**

The Minister of Labour and Social Security (Mr. Carrington): Your Honour, following upon the tragic accident at Rose Hall Estate, Canje on 13th January, 1970, in which six sugar worker lost their lives, I wish to inform hon. Member that the Government has decided to set up a Commission of Inquiry to investigate the causes and factor involved in the accident and to make recommendations as to what step should be taken to prevent such an occurrence in future.

The name of the members of the Commission of Enquiry and the formal terms of reference will be announced shortly.

PUBLIC BUSINESS**MOTIONS****Suspension of Standing Order**

Mr. Speaker: I understand that the hon. Member the Deputy Speaker (Mr. Clarke) would like to move the suspension of the Standing Orders.

Mr. Clarke (Deputy Speaker): Yes, sir. I beg to move the suspension of the Standing Orders in order that the Motion standing in my name on the order paper at item 2 be dealt with first.

Question put, and agreed to.

Standing Order suspended.

Arrangement for Special Sitting of the National Assembly on Republic Day

“Be it resolved that this National Assembly approve for the appointment of speaker, of a committee comprising of Members of the National Assembly and such other persons as His Honour thinks fit, to assist in advising him on arrangements to be made for the Special Sitting of the National Assembly to be held on Republic Day, Monday, 23rd February, 1970.” [Mr. Clarke]

Mr. Clarke: The Motion standing in my name on the Order Paper not a controversial one. I think the hon. Members agree that it is important that for the occasion of the special sitting of the National Assembly on Republic Day certain/practical arrangements must be made before and in the past, I am told Your Honour and your staff considers these matters but it is your wish, I believe, that all parties in the National Assembly should be afforded an opportunity of making suggestion which would inform your consideration of the special arrangements for this sitting. I believe that in addition to the hon. Members of the House and members of your staff, you may also wish to invite other technical persons to serve your Committee. Since hon. Members will, through this committee have an opportunity of suggestion for practical arrangements they would like to see in the plans for the sitting on Republic Day, I am sure that all hon. Members will agree that this Motion is quite appropriate. I believe that you also want to discuss the matters in this committee and also, perhaps, appropriate changes in our prayers.

I believe that since you have so intimated and since this Motion has been brought to the National Assembly with your recommendation, hon. Members will be pleased to support it. I now move the Motion standing in my name.

Mr. Ram Karran: I beg to second the motion moved by the hon. Member the Deputy Speaker, Mr. Clarke.

Mr. Speaker: Do other hon. Members wish to speak to the question? [After a pause.] I think that the hon. Member the deputy Speaker has covered the subject very thoroughly. Hon. Members will know that there are quite a number of matters which need consideration and

review as I explained in the letter which I circulated last evening. I shall therefore put the question.

Question put, agreed to.

Motion carried.

Mr. Speaker: May I at this point of time invite the following hon. Members to serve on this committee with me.

The Hon. H.D. Hoyte, Q.C., M.P., Home Affairs

The Hon. Miss S.M. Field-Ridley, M.P, Minister of Education (Leader of the House)

The Hon. M.W. Carter, M.P, Minister of Information and Culture

The Hon. H. Green, M.P., Minister of Works, Hydraulics and Supply

Mr. O.E. Clarke, M.P, Deputy Speaker

Mr. N.J Bissember, M.P.

Mr. Ram Karran, M.P

Dr. F.H.W Ramsahoye, M.P.

Mr. M.F. Singh, M.P.

May we now proceed with item 1 on the Order Paper.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

MOTION

APPROVAL OF ESTIMATE OF EXPENDITURE 1970

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply to resume consideration of the expenditure for the financial year 1970, totaling \$173,448,058.

Assembly in Committee of Supply

The Chairman: Hon. Members, as you know, I was not here with you last evening and have learnt that only a few heads were completed. I was rather disappointed because I was under the impression as the hon. Member Mr. Chandisingh indicated to that there would have been little discussion on the other heads so that we would have been able to save the position.

As you will notice from the paper circulated we are behind by 245 minutes which is roughly four hours. It means that the time which has been allocated for the remaining Heads could not be taken as allocated. Unfortunately, I will have to use my power of cutting down on the discussion on these Heads and hon. Member will be able to help me if they would realise that this is not a Second Reading debate and therefore get head with their comments, making them as short as possible and direct as possible to save time.

Page 212, Head 54, Ministry of Health, Analyst.

HEAD 54 – MINISTRY OF HEALTH

ANALYST

Questions propose that this Head stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Hon. Members, please indicate what they wish to speak on.

Mr. Chaudisingh: Subhead 1, item 1 and subhead 6.

The Chairman: Does any other hon. Member wish to speak?The hon. Member Mr. Chandisingh

Mr. Chandisingh: Mr. Chairman, on the question on Government Analyst Department, I would like to raise a question on Food and Drugs Act which has been taking a very long time to come from the Ministry. As I seem to recall some years ago the basic preparation had been made; then the stage had been reached where one could have expected that the complete Act would have been ready. However, we appreciate the problems and difficulties connected with this Food and Drugs Act. Nevertheless, we would like to urge the hon. Member to get ahead with this and to find out what stage has been reached with the preparation of this Act.

In the same connection I note that when we discussed the estimates on the Ministry of Trade that a National Specifications Board was being established. I merely wonder whether the National Specifications Board in the Ministry of Trade will be all embracing in covering the sort of thing which we have been envisaging for so long.

The Bureau of Standards, [of course, this is just another name for the National Specification Board] is expected to do the same sort of thing, that is, not only setting standards for the locally produced commodities for export, but also checking the items which are imported into the country. For example, may I draw the hon. Member's attention to the fact that even certain brands of corn beef that come into the country would seem as if they passed a whole cow through the milling machine, and that is why we are urging that close co-ordination be had in the Ministry of Trade and the Government Analyst Department in this matter.

May I use the opportunity to ask the hon. Minister these questions since I do not think we have the direct reply on this. What is the hon. Minister's reaction to the call which has already been made for the establishment of a system for price control of drugs? I do not want to repeat

the whole statement again but merely to point out that this question obviously meets with great public approval wherever I have been in the past few days. Many people have approached me and said that this is something that they would really like to see. One person showed me a foil of drugs which I was told only few days ago was being purchased at eighty or ninety cents whereas now the person has to pay \$2.95. The same thing will apply to all the drugs which are necessary for infants, children, like Benadryl and various cough syrups.

I merely wish to have the hon. Minister's reaction and I wish her to state whether in her view action on this matter can be taken urgently.

Subhead 6, Research Fund, \$1000. This amount is being voted this year to provide for research on local foods. When the Supplementary Estimates were being discussed last year, the hon. Minister said that a certain officer attached to the Analyst Department was giving travelling allowances in order to go around the various supermarkets to select food for checking

2.25 p.m.

I wonder whether the research establishment here is in a position to check the foods and drinks which contains certain suspect ingredients, such as cyclamates. We have asked a question on this and have not yet received an answer. Perhaps the Minister would like to deal with this in her reply. What is the ministry doing in respect to the cyclamates in various artificial sweeteners? In England and, I think, in the United States and several other countries, action has been taken on this matter.

I do not have the time to deal more extensively with this question. I know the Minister is aware of these things, so could we have an answer to this question, namely Government's attitude to the use of cyclamates taking into consideration the tentative findings in other countries.

The Minister of Health (Dr. Talbot): Mr. Chairman, I made it abundantly yesterday that the Food and Drug Ordinance has been revise and at the moment we are engage in working out a practicable mechanism for administering the ordinance. The Bureau of Standards will deal essentially with locally manufactured goods, but the potential for other items of concern is there, and its objective will always be review.

Drug Price Control: I would like to reiterate what I said yesterday. We are actively engage in examining the problems of exorbitant prices being charged for drugs and the time is now far away when we will be able to exercise the necessary control.

The Question about cyclamates, which the hon. Member raise a week and a half ago, is being dealt with in the usual manner and will be brought to this House when a detailed answer will be given.

Head 54, Ministry of Health, Analyst - \$134,791, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

HEAD 55- MINISTRY OF HEALTH

REGISTRATION, IMMIGRATION, BIRTHS, ETC.

Question proposed that this Head stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. R.D. Persaud: Sub-head 1, item (6). I would like to say a few words with respect to the immigration section which falls under this Head.

The Chairman: Does any other hon. Member wish to speak?

Mr. Chandisingh: I would like to ask a question on item (3).

Mr. Persaud: Mr. Chairman, this department is becoming increasingly important in Guyana because so many things are dependent on birth certificates, death certificates and marriage certificates. While I have notice some improvements in the issuing of these certificates, there is still a great delay when one tries to obtain the various certificates I have referred to. I am one of those persons who holds a very firm view that this department is understaffed and there is need for more clerks to cope with the increased number of applications for various certificates.

With respect to sub-head 1, item (6), 1 Class I Clerk, this officer really performs the duties of the immigration agent. Originally there was an Immigration Agent who used to be paid for the functions he performed. This, officer is designated a Class I Clerk and I am reliably informed that this is his last year as he will retire at the end of the year. I want to suggest to the Minister that she look into this matter sympathetically and see whether this particular officer, who has served this department so faithfully for so many years, can be promoted during the course of this year to the post of Senior Clerk. This is merely to remunerate the officer for the work he has done for the department.

In addition to this point, senior officers who have served in this department in the past have been transferred to other departments. I know two who are now working in the Ministry of Housing and Reconstruction. This is because there are no promotional facilities in the immigration section. There is still need in this country for experienced officers to serve in this department and, with the departure of this officer, who is the senior; it will mean that very junior officers are going to be left in the department.

I know at the moment the Registrar General realizes that, since marriage certificates and certain other certificates are prepared outside and checked by the senior officer, whom I referred to earlier. If the position of Senior Clerk is provided - it is just one step above Grade I Clerk - I think efforts can be made when this officer leaves the department to bring back one of the two senior officers who served in the department previously.

My other point is this - you will notice I am being brief, sir. I want the Minister to consider sympathetically how to improve this department because it is a department that does great service to the community. I know certain improvements have been made in the marriage section. I know what is taking place in this department. I hope this better trend will continue because I know that marriages are being performed by the Registrar himself. I wonder if the Minister can look at sub-head 5, Fees, Divisional Registrars, Marriage Officers, etc. and consider whether it is still fair to pay marriage officers the paltry sum of 40c for performing marriages under the Marriage Ordinance, Chapter 164. Speaking for myself, I have not collected one cent although I am entitled to collect. For nine years I have never collected anything but Marriage Officers deserve much more than 40 cents. This amount has been fixed for donkey years now.

My last point: Immigration comes under, this department and falls directly under the Minister. A Committee was set up to examine how the Immigration Fund could be utilized for the benefit of the Indian community solely. This Committee made certain recommendations. Because there is a great deal of confusion at the moment, I would like to read the recommendations:

- (a) " the creation and maintenance of at least one centre in each county of Guyana, of the culture of the country of origin of the East Indians in Guyana, the total cost of construction of the centre's not to exceed fifty per cent of the capital sum available to the Trust;
- (b) the granting of scholarships for the study, both locally and abroad, of dancing, music, art, domestic science, languages and the sculpture of the country of origin of the East Indians in Guyana;
- (c) the helping of indigent indentured Indian Immigrants as the Trust thinks fit;
- (d) the promotion, advancement and dissemination of Hindu and Muslim Culture, Religion and Education."

The position is that the Government has ignored completely the recommendations of the Immigration Fund Committee and, without even consulting with the Committee appointed,

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National Assembly

2.25 - 2.35 p.m.

without consulting with the organizations concerned, unilaterally made a decision to use this, money for the building of a National Cultural Centre in Guyana. I have no objection to a National Cultural Centre, but I feel that this money should not be spent on a National Cultural Centre.

I do not wish to be long, but I am in possession of all the various reports, dating back from 1943, of all the Committees set up from time to time to examine how the Immigration Fund should be spent and it was decided time after time that the money should be spent on some project whereby the Indian Community could share the benefit of the Fund because, basically the Fund was started for their benefit. But Government has ignored completely all these recommendations and has actually written to the members of the Committee thanking them for their services and telling them what will be done with the Fund.

2.35 p.m.

I think this is very unfair and it is a breach of faith between the Government and the people directly concerned.

I want to ask the hon. Minister, in view of the very strong representations made to her by the various organizations with respect to this Immigration Fund, whether she is reconsidering the matter, or whether her mind is made up *as to* use the Fund for the establishment of the National Culture Centre, I have no objection to the establishment of the National Culture Centre, but the Minister must take into account that, basically, the money belongs to the Indian community. As recent as 1966 the final report suggested that a trust be set up, the Fund be transferred and the money be used for cultural purposes particularly. We are moving towards a Co-operative Republic and if there are funds to enable us to examine our history with a view to reporting to the Guyanese nation on our culture, our art, our drama, why is the Government opposed to this? It should be a cultural contribution to the development of this country.

The Chairman: I think the hon. Member has dealt with that sufficiently now. The hon. Member, Mr. Chandisingh.

Microphotographer

Mr. Chandisingh: I wish to ask a question in connection with the Microphotographer. How up to date is the work of the Microphotographer's register?

Minister of Health (Dr. Talbot): To answer the last question first, our Microphotographer has been able to get his records in order between 1913 and 1968. There is a broken period between 1885 and 1913.

With respect to the Immigration Fund, I do not think that any real question was asked of me and it is inappropriate, at the moment, to deal with that since a Question has been submitted for my attention and it will be answered at the appropriate time.

Head 55, Ministry of Health- Registration, Immigration, Births, etc.- 116,477, agree to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Hon. Members, please turn to page 123, Division XX, Ministry of Health.

DIVISION XX- MINISTRY OF HEALTH

Question proposed that this Division stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chandisingh: I should like to speak on subheads 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 14 and 16.

Mr. Ramsahoye: I should like to speak on subheads 6 and 7.

Mr. Wilsons: I wish to speak on subheads 1, 6 and 8.

Mrs. DaSilva: May I speak on subheads 3 and 6?

Rural Hospitals, Health, Centres, Dispensaries

Mr. Chandisingh: Subhead 1: We see that \$100,000 is being voted for Rural Hospitals, Health Centres, Dispensaries. I note, however, that although \$100,000 was approved for last year, according to the revised estimate, it seems as if a much smaller sum was spent, and the figure given here is \$20,000. I hope that the hon. Minister is not going to use the same sort of facile replies that she used yesterday when answering many questions which were asked by the Opposition, that the revised estimates have to do with the middle of the year, and thus they have no bearing on the true estimates. If these are just "Guestimates" and they are so far out, well then I wonder how efficient is the work in preparing these Estimates. Nevertheless, I do happen to know something about this and I would feel that, in most cases, the revised Estimates are pretty close to the actual expenditure, unless some usual circumstances arise where the Estimates are out.

I should like the hon. Minister to tell us exactly how much was actually spent in, 1969, if not the meagre sum of \$20,000. What I should like to know specifically is why so little seems to have been spent last year. Was it not possible to utilize the funds provided, bearing in mind the great needs in rural hospitals, health centres and dispensaries? I should like to know in this connection what is intended to be done with the \$100,000 which is being voted this year. In other words, specifically, what work is intended?

Suddie Hospital and Parika Health Centre

Under subhead 2, Suddie Hospital and Parika Health Centre, again I note that it seems that less money was actually spent last year than was Voted and this year we see nothing on the

Estimates for Saddle Hospital and Parika Health Centre. I wonder if the Minister is aware that, although an extension was made to the maternity wing of the Suddie Hospital, patients in this Hospital are being washed away every time there is heavy rainfall, particularly now when there is the rainy season, and that patients have to help to move themselves, move each other, to drier spots in the main section of the Hospital. I am not talking of the rebuilt or the extended section of the Hospital. I wonder if anything will be done to improve the situation by carrying out some reconstruction work at the Suddie Hospital. Certainly, I imagine, that the hon. Minister would move that a certain sum of money be inserted in subhead 2 so that some work can be done to improve conditions for patients at the Suddie Hospital.

Georgetown Hospital Improvements

Subhead 4, Georgetown - Hospital Improvements: We are now being told that the sum of \$9 million under the Development Programme in respect of subhead 3, New Hospital, Georgetown, is no longer required in view of new thinking about a new hospital as such. In view of the fact that this reduces the whole amount under the Seven-Year Development Programme and also in view of the fact that it seems that the Government is now thinking of reconstructing the existing Georgetown Hospital, I should like to know what exactly is the plan for the Georgetown Hospital. Is it just a matter of reconstructing the Georgetown Hospital as is indicated here, or is it a question of an entire rebuilding process starting in various phases so that, eventually, we may have a completely new hospital? If the latter is the case, I should like to know what is the time range that has been set for the complete rebuilding of the Georgetown Hospital at the present site. Certainly, there must be some goal; some aim in mind, even though this may be a bit vague at the moment.

I should also like to know, in the same context, what would be the complement of beds at the reconstructed hospital. I ask this question because when I made the point during the Budget debate that there was a like 2,500 beds, or at least we should aim at this in the near future, we got the reply from the Minister that this was a fantastic figure.

To recall the words she used, "If we had this figure of 2,500 beds, we would be having more beds than houses." I do not know if the Minister misunderstood the figure. This does seem excessive. If the hon. Minister feels this is an excessive number of beds for a hospital, we would like to know what the Minister sees as the optimum number, not only for present needs but future needs of the hospital.

I should also like to ask, what about the money that is derived from the Radio Bingo? We are told in the press and various releases that the sum is now \$600,000, and the complaints were made that this is still a small amount to build a hospital, the public is not responding sufficiently to the appeal to buy these tickets and requests have been made for the public to respond more suitably. The thing that amazes me is that if you have some money, roughly \$600,000, why spend only \$150,000 to begin the phased programme of reconstruction? Is it not possible to get ahead faster with this work? What is the problem? Are the plans not there, builders not there? This leads me to wonder, is the money there? Has it been used up for other expenditure and this sum of \$150,000 is just a sum provided generally from government funds without any regard to the funds which were already raised? I should like the hon. Minister to answer these questions.

Turning to subhead 5, New Amsterdam Hospital Improvements, we know that the New Amsterdam Hospital is very old. We know that one of the wards has recently been extended or is in the process of extension, but on the whole, there is need for improvements here, and so I am amazed again that although a sum of \$40,000 was approved last year for improvements to the New Amsterdam Hospital - for renovations to the building and for equipment - under the revised estimates we notice the ridiculous sum of \$3,000 shown. We would like the hon. Minister to tell us what is an accurate figure, and we hope the amount voted this year will be used for the improvement of the hospital and the equipment, in the interest of the patients from that area.

Dealing with, subhead 8, Environmental Sanitation Programme, I should like to ask whether the hon. Minister is satisfied that all persons who need and request these new type pit latrines, which were provided by this programme on the Essequibo Coast, are satisfied. We

understand that this programme is being moved to Demerara when it is known that there are many persons in Essequibo who still need these pit latrines, which, are sold to them at the subsidized price of \$5 per unit. It is my opinion that the programme is not completed in Essequibo. It is most needed, particularly in the Islands any on the Coast where the sanitary facilities are most primitive. This we would like to find out, whether the programme for building these units will continue to be operated in the Essequibo area.

Subhead 14, Surveys and Investigations. The legend states, "To provide for investigation into the causes of diseases etc." I have no doubt this money is for a very good cause, because research into the causes of disease is absolutely necessary and would help the programme of the Ministry, but I should like to know specifically what diseases are being investigated.

Turning to subhead 16, Equipment - General, we see it is for the purchase of miscellaneous equipment - United Kingdom Government Loan. I wonder, sir, if this equipment for which money is being voted this year, includes any revotes for the bed lift at the Georgetown Hospital, or whether this comes under some other vote. In other words, what I am trying to get at, for at least two years, the bed lift for the Georgetown-Hospital was one of the things to be provided but it still could not get installed. It is like a recurring decimal. I understand it is now being constructed. I should like to know whether this money has been shown elsewhere or whether it is included in this subhead on this page.

At the same time, we would like to know what equipment really is intended. I do not mean the Minister should have a long list, but the main equipment, so that we can gauge or judge whether we are getting the sort of thing we require, and more specifically, whether this money would include equipment for the Analyst, or whether the Analyst's equipment is shown elsewhere. The Analyst Department needs more equipment if it is to do the added work. We would like to know whether it includes equipment for the Psychiatrist attached to the Georgetown Hospital. It is my opinion one of the Psychiatrists has left the country because the Ministry did not provide the equipment necessary for his work and so he left in frustration.

Whether this is so or not, I would like the Minister to say whether this subhead includes money for the Psychiatrist's equipment.

Dr. Ramsahoye: On subhead 6, Geriatric Unit, we must all be aware that the aged live in a blurred border between hope and despair and their hope depends on what the rest of society would do for them. I would presume that it was with this in mind, that there was provided in the Development Programme some \$ 1/2 million to establish a geriatric unit, which was intended to deal with the problems of the aged, not only problems of illness but with their psychological and other problems which are strictly derived from their age.

It would appear that four years of the programme have gone but no steps have been taken towards the establishment of this unit. It is not necessary to have something of a Cadillac type. What is necessary is something which would be sufficient for the purpose, not necessarily extravagant, but something which would enable the doctors and nurses to work and which would provide all who live in the unit with some sort of comfort. There is also need for medical personnel to be specially trained in this field.

2.55 p.m.

Gerontology has reached a far stage in Europe and it should be easy for this Government to have at least one medical man trained and to have nurses trained because this is also a specialised field of nursing. With so many years gone, I should like to know whether the Government will not make attempts to establish these things. The "Palms" could never be a geriatric clinic. That is the place to which old people are permitted but, in large measure, they are treated as what we would call residents; they are part of the forgotten number of persons whom we sometimes think of and whom politicians go around hunting them down for votes at election time and to whom certain do-gooders carry Christmas gifts on Christmas Day.

But we need a Geriatric Unit equipped satisfactorily, with a trained medical man at the head and a few nurses specially trained in that field. The Unit could be situated in Georgetown or in New Amsterdam and so I do not think that there would be much difficulty in getting about the establishment of a Unit if the Government really wants one.

Nutritional Survey

The next thing I wish to refer to is this item, Nutritional Survey. I was shocked yesterday beyond belief when the hon. Minister (Dr. Talbot) read out to this House the figures for tablets issued by the hospital in the treatment of diabetes and glaucoma. It is obvious that these diseases are a scourge in this country and when we think of the causes, we wonder if any amount of satisfactory work is done in this Survey. One of the major causes of diabetes is excessive carbohydrates in the diet and it is clear to me that what we need is some study of diabetes and of diets. It may be, too, that glaucoma, a disease of the eye, causing loss of the eyes, has something to do with the bad diet and we need research. Excessive carbohydrates definitely cause disease in the body. It is said by the medical men that there is a form of diabetes that is temporary. It comes and goes. I do not know that this is medically confirmed. It bears a lot of examination in this country. People are eating the wrong food, eating what they like but which is nutritiously very valueless. I am not a medical man myself and I do not know that we are doing any medical research in this country but there is need for establishing the connection between a diet and certain of these diseases scourging this population.

I have been made to understand that, in some cases, diabetes is hereditary passing down from one member of the family to those who follow but I would like to know whether nutrition is being done and whether, in particular, the Ministry has found cases of protein deficiency in this country and what diseases are caused by them. I know that in Africa, protein ... is very very ... on account of deficiency and I would like to know if any work is done in this field. I cannot be dogmatic but something is wrong with Guyana which provides such awful statistics in relation to diabetes and glaucoma.

The Chairman:The hon. Member Mrs. DaSilva.

New Hospital, Georgetown

Mrs. DaSilva: Mr. Chairman, speaking under subhead 3, I wish to make no apology for once again bringing up Radio Bingo. It is extremely important. The hon. Minister may get tired of hearing about it but we have to keep on plugging away at it in the hope of getting an answer. We want to know what are the gross receipts for this Bingo over the last period - the end of last year - to know what is happening to the money which is supposed to go towards the Georgetown Hospital. We are reliably informed that all is not well and it needs being thoroughly investigated. We want to know what the position is and how much is received and how much is paid out. It should not be difficult to get the answer. It may be embarrassing, but not difficult to reply to.

Geriatric Unit

On subhead 6, Geriatric Unit, I wish to support all that the hon. Member Dr. Ramsahoye had to say about the care of the aged members of the community, but I would like to go further. \$250,000 is allocated for the Geriatric Unit. I would like the hon. Minister to tell us what progress is made and to suggest that it be carried to the hospitals in the rural areas. A Unit, no matter how small, should be set up in New Amsterdam, in Suddie, in Bartica, specially for the care of the aged, so that these people, when they get old, do not have to come to Georgetown far from those who can care for them and can visit them. They need this more because of their inability to get around. We do not want this geriatric unit just for Georgetown but spread it around the country, just among the big communities to begin with so that special care could be given to the old people. In that way something would be done for our country.

Rural Hospitals, Health Centres, Dispensary

Mr. Wilson: Mr. Chairman, with regard to Rural Hospitals, I would like to point attention to the Leonora Hospital which, when the hon. Minister received a delegation from West Demerara she was told, is now too small for the great demands made on it. The population has been growing rapidly and there is still only one doctor. I do not think that the nursing staff is adequate. I think that Government should carry out necessary survey and consider increasing the staff and, perhaps, the conditions with regard to the Leonora Hospital. The hon. Minister was told that the people had to leave Leonora and go to Parika as they could not wait. There was a bottle neck at the hospital. We would like to know whether the hon. Minister is carrying out the necessary development to cater for the increased demand on that hospital.

3.05 p.m.

As regards Health Centres, since 1964 during the disturbances, the Windsor Forest Health Centre was closed.

The Chairman: I think the hon. Minister has already dealt with that and she gave the assurance that the matter is being looked into.

Mr. Wilson: I wish to deal now with Dispensers. I refer particularly to Canals Polder, 1 and 2. There is a Dispenser at the No. 2 Canal and the same Dispenser has to serve the No. 1 Canal. Those of us who know the geography of these two Canals will realize that it is easier to travel from Canal No. 1 to Georgetown.

Subhead 8, Environmental Sanitation. If there is any area in the country which needs environmental sanitation today it is the squatting areas on the East Coast. As I said some time before that perhaps the Government feels that most of these people are not supporters of the PNC, so it does not care if these people get diseases and die. I am saying in their interest that it is right that the necessary attention be given to these people so as to prevent diseases spreading from one person to another.

Dr. Talbot: Mr. Chairman, the question was asked: How much money was spent under subhead 1? Actually the figure is \$38,329.07. I should like to say that we have been able to improve several of the rural hospitals, Skeldon and Port Mourant especially. I should like to add an explanation, to this because very often we look at figures hoping to derive some support for argument and this could be used in any way one wishes. But in terms of improvements to all the medical facilities I, personally, have been very encouraged by the active spirit of self-help that has taken hold in many of the institutions among the staff and also in the communities. In a sense we have been able to effect many improvement, though small, in some of the facilities by mere self-help. The amount of money spent from the vote, therefore, does not adequately affect the amount of work.

In connection with the comment on Leonora, I would agree. In fact, because of the demand of our population for sophisticated medical care and because of the lack of fore-sight of the government which built these cottage Hospitals and Health Centres they are now proving to be inadequate. When they were built, they were no attempt to assess the needs of the population ten and twenty years in advance. The hon. Members have complained that people in the medical service are not doing their job, but when we look at the great number of people have been served at the hospital and health centres we realize that a very useful service is being given.

I have promised at every meeting of delegates from these areas, as the hon. Member Mr. Wilson has said with regard to Leonora, that our plans are not so much to expand every facility, to add rooms, but to attempt to provide other subsidiary facilities so that people will be served in their communities and will not have to travel long distances.

As a matter of fact, a suggestion came from the delegation that the hon. Minister Mr. Wilson headed, that instead of adding to the facilities at Leonora we might do very well if we were to improve facilities at Vergenoegen. This is under review. I take it that it was a serious and helpful suggestion and we are now considering the suggestion. I also discussed with the delegation the problems of Canals Polder 1 and 2. We do have a dispenser in the area. I do

appreciate the difficulty that the residents have in moving from one area to seek emergency help in some instance. I am looking into the situation. As I understand, what is needed is another person to be assigned to the other Canal. Therefore, these comments, Mr. Chairman, are not new. We are again at the insistence of the opposition discussing problems which are receiving our active consideration.

In connection with the question about the Suddie Hospital, as hon. Members know, the \$30,000 allocated was for a specific purpose, that is, for the addition of a maternity wing and for the building of the Parika Health Centre. We have done both and the total sum of \$30,000 has been used.

At the New Amsterdam Hospital many improvements have been effected indeed and the sum spent - I think that there has been an error here - should be \$33,000 instead of \$3,000. It is probably a typographical error.

With reference to the question dealing with environmental sanitation, I would agree that in the Essequibo area perhaps all the households which really wanted to have latrines did not receive them.

3.15 p.m.

Perhaps there are new houses now being built where a latrine could be used. However, the Environmental Sanitation Programme started in 1962, I believe, and it was active in the Essequibo region until it was removed in 1969. There seems to have been ample opportunity for householders to either receive the latrine or to be helped technically in the building of such latrines. As I explained very carefully, the position is that the officers of the programme will now focus their attention in the Demerara area.

I was asked to say what surveys and investigations will be done. I would like to mention that we are in fact attempting to identify those diseases which are a special problem to this country. As the hon. Member Dr. Ramsahoye mentioned, it is striking that glaucoma and diabetes are prevalent in this country. We are doing something about this. I may say that it is not true to say, as the hon. Member said, that because a person eats a lot of starch he will get diabetes. There are two types of diabetes and I presume the hon. Member was talking about the type which is prevalent here, that is, the mellitus type, which is caused by a malfunctioning of the pancreas and not merely by over-eating starch.

We have, however, a Nutritional Survey in progress. As a matter of fact, I stated in replying to a question yesterday that the hon. Member Mr. Chandisingh must have had a direct line to the Ministry because he used figures that we had derived in a survey.

However, this survey did show, as he correctly pointed out, that a Nutritional Survey had revealed that there was protein deficiency among our children.

I am very glad that this was brought up because I failed to answer a question which was asked under the vote for the Government Analyst. That question referred to the use of the sum of \$1,000. Actually this money is for a Research Fund which the Government has just set up to carry out what is considered very urgent research in the development of a high protein vegetable mixture from native foods. This is urgent because we feel that if we are able to develop this high protein vegetable food, which can be manufactured by using indigenous foods, this will, in some respect, assist in improving the now large problem of malnutrition and especially protein deficiency. The Ministry is also collaborating with the Caribbean Food and Nutritional Institute in a food consumption project. This is in reply to the question which had to do with the Nutritional Survey

With reference to glaucoma, there was a survey made during May. The Department of Ophthalmology and the Lions Club did a glaucoma screening project. The response from the

public was tremendous we were able to identify many latent cases. The activities I have mentioned are now underway. These are not merely plans. These activities are actually being conducted. I do not know whether the hon. Members have not been reading the Press and listening to the radio, but there has been much publicity about these health activities.

In connection with the various questions and comments raised about Radio Bingo, improvements at the Georgetown Hospital, and the need for a new hospital and so forth, I really do not know how much to repeat myself, but I can remember on various occasions saying that Cabinet had allocated \$500,000 of the Radio Bingo Fund to the rebuilding of the Casualty and Out-Patients Department. This has been published. However, I do not know whether it is the understanding of the hon. Members that the day after this \$500,000 had been allocated the building will have automatically gone up. We have to review the situation on rebuilding because any new unit in the Georgetown Hospital must meld with the whole programme of rebuilding of the hospital.

As a matter of fact, this anxiety to produce tangible evidence of facilities has caused us a great deal of trouble at this time because what we are experiencing here is a result of the very haphazard planning that was done 10, 15, 20 years ago. We have a Georgetown Hospital that was built without a plan. Every time a need became apparent a building was put. We do not intend to repeat this unwise procedure.

We have made the necessary contacts and I believe that within a reasonable amount of time work will begin at the site. I do not know how much more assurance is needed. The decision was publicized to phase the rebuilding of the Georgetown Hospital and this means precisely what it says. There will be a rebuilding of the Georgetown Hospital.

It was implied that the sum of \$150,000 may be used in building the Georgetown Hospital, but that is not the intention. The intention is to use this money for minor works and repairs. Last year much of this was done. For example the laundry was renovated, the Medical

Record Unit was established, the kitchen was improved, a section was added to the medical library. All of this has already been done.

There was also some comment about a Geriatric Unit. I did tell the honourable House last night that the Ministries of Labour and Health are collaborating in improving medical care. A Geriatric Unit is not an institution. A Geriatric Unit is a section of a medical institution and what we are proposing is that each of the major hospitals will have a unit where chronic geriatric cases could be treated medically. That is different from the kind of custodial care that one needs to have when one is really aged, but not necessarily ill. It is true that in England gerontology is in an advanced stage, but England has many more older people than Guyana and with them it is a very real and pressing problem.

3.25 p.m.

Therefore, I should just like to say, for the information of those who would like to have the information that we are actively involve improving the medical care of older people. The Department of Physiotherapy and the Department Surgery are now training nurses at the Palms and are working out a suitable programme for geriatric care in hospitals.

I believe that I have answered all of the questions raised. [Mr. Chandisingh: "What about hospital beds?"] I think that I have answered all the questions raised.

Division XX, Ministry of Health - \$1,010,000, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: We come now to page 124, Ministry of Housing and Reconstruction. Now let us try and be specific in our questions and deal with them as promptly as we can.

HEAD 56 - MINISTRY OF HOUSING AND RECONSTRUCTION

Question propose that this Head stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chandisingh: I should like to speak on subhead 1, items 1, 14,20 and subheads 10 and 15 on page 125.

Mr. Sutton: I should like to speak on subheads 9 to 15 inclusive.

The Chairman: You will take them together

Mr. Wilson: I wish to speak on item 22 of subhead 1

The Chairman: Well then we may start with the hon. Member Mr. Chandisingh.

Permanent Secretary

Mr. Chandisingh: Speaking on item 1, I should like to say that we have come to a very interesting ministry, most interesting indeed. I observe that we have a new Minister and I should like to take the opportunity of wishing him success and lots of luck in his new endeavours. I have a feeling though, that he will need an awful lot of luck since this is a very tricky ministry to it in I am a bit surprised, however, that the Government did not see it fit to take the advice I gave last year and that was to merge this ministry with another one. Nevertheless, I think that the Government should realize by now that the time for experimenting has long come to an end.

I should like specifically to ask whether, in view of the fact that the Rent Control Act has been passed, the ministry has been able to have under control all the procedures and formulas to make the Act effective. What I have in mind is that while we have the Act and we were given in broad outline the schedule, the factors which would be taken into account in assessing rents

under the Act, I wonder whether these formulas have been worked out to the extent where they can now be applied by the Magistrates who are supposed to carry out these assessments. If so, would it be possible for the hon. Minister to make available to the public, or at least to Members of this House, the standards by which rents will be assessed, in other words, the variations, the different yardsticks and the so on, so that the people generally, at least those who *are* interested enough, who would want to work out a formula would be in a position to do so? I think this would be most helpful.

Housing Administrator

Turning my attention to item 14, Housing Administrator, I have attached several questions to this item. Recently, houses have been advertised for hire purchase in the Georgetown area - I think it is called "Roxanne Burnham Gardens" and I should like to know what were the bases on which need and ability to pay were worked out. I saw an advertisement in the Press inviting persons to apply for these houses and we were told that there were two-bedroom, three-bedroom and four-bedroom houses at different prices, different down payments and installments. It was stated that these houses would be allocated on the bases of need and ability to pay. I should like the Minister to say precisely what does this mean, what sort of income qualification would apply to these houses. In other words, is there an upper and a lower income qualification or barrier? I should like to know this because it would indicate to some extent whether or not these houses are really intended for persons in the lower income brackets.

Will the Minister also specifically state the yardstick used in determining need? Is it on the basis of some vague principles determined by the Housing Administrator, or by the Minister, or

3.35 p.m.

are there certain standards such as size of family, existing accommodation, etc.? *[Interruption]*
The Minister asked whether I am trying to answer the question, but sometimes we do get replies

which are not specific and so, out of an abundance of caution, I am putting the points to the Minister so he may give his reply.

I should also like to ask whether the ministry has given thought to the question of slum clearance in Georgetown and New Amsterdam. I referred to this during the Budget debate but, since the hon. Minister did not take the opportunity to reply on that occasion, I am just reminding him that this is one of the questions that we would like answered in the affirmative. We would like to know specifically if there are any plans worked out for tackling this big problem of slum clearance.

Connected with this, of course, is the building of houses for rental. I notice under the capital Estimates that no money is being spent by the Government on houses for rental and it would seem to me that many people who live in the slum areas both in Georgetown and New Amsterdam would be unable to afford to pay the large down payments and the large monthly installments which are now required for the type of houses which are being sponsored by this Government. In other words, for people who are really in the low income group.

Thirdly, I should like to find out what plans the Government has and how soon it intends to take steps to control the prices of building land. This has been a point we have made on more than one occasion, to tell us specifically what is being done on this score. The problem is that land prices have skyrocketed from \$1,000 to \$10,000 or more and similar rises for lower-priced land and this has become a problem for people who would wish to build their own houses. The price of land should not be a hindrance to persons

The Chairman: The question of the price of land would come more properly under Division XXI. If the hon. Member persists in dealing with this question now, when we come to the Capital Expenditure, will he want to speak on this again?

Mr. Chandisingh: I will not speak again. I do not know if anyone else may.

The Chairman: All right. Continue if you will not speak again.

Mr. Chandisingh: As I was saying, it is a pity of course, that we are still in the bonds of capitalism where the price of land is such a big item in house building. In genuine socialist countries where the land is nationalized, when people have the opportunity of putting up their own homes at very cheap cost, they do not have to, pay anything for the land. Anyone can have a plot of land once the need is there. I do not expect that this Government will find it possible to move in that direction but at least for a start one would expect that a Government that classes itself as subscribing to the philosophy of co-operative socialism would want to put a limit on the price of building land.

I have observed in the past and wish to observe again that most of the sponsored and approved building projects are beyond the means of the lower income people and I should like to ask specifically whether the Government has any long-term plans to house the ill-housed in our country. We have seen on several occasions the Minister concerned getting up and reciting how many houses have been built by private persons, how many plots of land has been sold, etc. This is not what we are talking about. This is the normal thing which was happening during our time and the figures quoted from the Government's Economic survey of Guyana show that this Government has not been doing any better, so to speak, so I would use the opportunity now to ask, what, if any, are the long-term, plans for rehousing our people who are living in bad conditions? We cannot leave these things to chance. I hope that the hon. Minister concerned has been thinking of this problem of how the Government is going to move ahead in time, the next five years, or the next ten years, to be able to really make a dent into our grave housing problem. These are some general questions which I thought I would ask on that subhead.

Subhead 10, Materials for Maintenance of Government Housing Estates. I recall that on the last occasion, I mentioned that there was political discrimination in the repairing of houses of persons who were not of the political persuasion of the Government. This was denied by the Minister understandably, but I should like to inform him once again, that there are such cases

that have come to my attention in which persona have made requests for repairing their houses, windows perhaps, for over a year now and up to now they cannot get the houses repaired, whereas, for other houses nearby, the tenants of these houses find they are getting through quite readily. I think I will also speak to the Minister outside about the particular case which has come to my attention. It is a very glaring case and I am sure the Minister will understand that there must be something cooking. Maybe he is not getting the Information.

Incidentally, I forgot to say that I just want to make a point on subhead 9, Wages, Government Housing Estates. It is my opinion that the garbage disposal system is not up to scratch in the Government Housing Estates, and there seems to be no adequate garbage removal system since residents are being advised to burn their rubbish. While this may apply to certain rural districts where there is no disposal system, in Georgetown that should not really be the situation. Government is spending a lot of money and I think the residents in the area deserve efficient garbage removal.

Subhead 15, Transport and Mortgages, It is just a simple question. Very few transports had to be passed since we note that the amount of money being voted is very small compared with previous years. It may be that the work has dwindled to that extent.

Mr. Sutton: Mr. Chairman, when one looks at page 125, for the moment excluding subhead 12 with which I will deal separately, one finds subhead 9, Wages, Government Housing Estates, \$500,000, subhead 10, Materials for Maintenance of Government Housing Estates, \$178,000, subhead 11, Water Supply, Government Housing Estates, \$119,000, subhead 13, Lighting, Government Housing Estates, \$100,000, subhead 14, Miscellaneous Expenses, Government Housing Estates, \$4,000, and subhead 15, Transports and Mortgages, which I would presume, also relate to Government Housing Estates, \$5,000.

Mr. Chairman, when we add up the expenses, the amount of money allocated for use on Government Estates under these heads alone is \$797,000. One wonders what is the system, what method the Government has in dealing with these Government Estates? Is it clear and straightforward or real estate propositions? Is it a subsidised exercise and, in the words of the hon. Member Mr. Chandisingh, what is the yardstick used when allocating houses in these housing estates? Does it bear any relation to the earning power of the persons concerned? In other words, we would like to know what earning bracket, what level of income is primarily helped or intended to be helped by these Government estates?

When taken into conjunction with what will be said under another Head, we will see that we can certainly get no picture at all as to what the Government is really doing as far as housing is concerned. We should like to get some idea of the objectivity of what is being done. We see \$797,000 being put forward for housing estates expenses but when we turn to page 183 - Appendix M - the revenue we find a total sum of \$552,700 and, because I can only interpret what I read in the absence of a more detailed analysis of the situation, I find that under housing, Government expects a revenue of \$460,000 for Government Housing Estate. Is any attempt made when these are established - lights are put in, electricity is installed - the cost of the electricity, is it related to the charges for electricity - because at a glance this whole operation is subsidised and we feel that if the Government goes into the subsidising of houses in any sector of the country, it should clearly be stated. It already appears that unless low-cost houses are subsidised, people earning between \$4 and \$5 a day will find it impossible to get any help from Government as far as getting a house is concerned.

Will the hon. Minister be good enough to tell us what levels of income - what yardstick is used income-wise - is used for people to qualify for houses in the Government Housing Estates? Is there any barrier? Are people above a certain income not expected to take these houses? Those questions we would like answered. Would the hon. Minister tell us what system or what method is used to ensure that where people are being sold houses that the money

expended is recovered and, if not, how it is hoped to recover it. That is as far as the housing in the Housing Estates is concerned.

Water Purification Plant, Wismar

Subhead 12. We notice that in 1967 the actual expenditure was \$23,901; in 1968 it was \$42,100; in the Revised Estimates for 1969 it was \$59,400. Now, with this Water Purification Plant, the question jumps to one's mind what system is used. In the case of Georgetown, New Amsterdam and other areas where purified water is supplied, there is a system. Has the Government any system by which to get revenue to replace that spent? In the meantime the ... for the Water Purification Plant at Wismar, how is the money being recovered from the people making use of it, bearing in mind the water system in other places is paid for by the people who use it.

Community Organisers

Mr. Wilson; Mr. Chairman, I seek to speak on this item only to draw attention to the people in displaced areas because, as I go, I wish to ask the hon. Minister Are there any community organisers for housing the displaced persons; are there estates in squatting areas? What does the hon. Minister contemplate?

The Chairman: The hon. Minister of Trade is deputising for the hon. Minister of Housing and Reconstruction.

The Minister of Trade (Mr. Ramsaroop): It may be appreciated that the Minister of Housing and Reconstruction (Mr. Singh) in the brevity of time he has had to look into matters in his portfolio will not look at these matters as effectively as if he were there longer.

The hon. Member Mr. Ranji Chandisingh, for whom I have the greatest respect and whose contribution will always be substantial, has raised a few questions. I had occasion to chide him

when he made his remarks. He did not appreciate the that was put forward then and I regret that I have to repeat my stricture. The Schedule of that Act sets out the criteria to which regard could be had by the Magistrate. That is a technical matter. He, apparently, is under the misapprehension, the notion, that this is a matter for the Ministry of Labour - a highly technical matter - and I may remind him that the magistrate can consult a Valuation Officer in keeping with the provisions of either the Amendment or the principal Ordinance. The formula is clearly worked out and the ... are worked out.

3.55 p.m.

Regarding the Roxanne Burnham Gardens, the hon. Member- wanted to know whether there are fixed criteria or principles to which members of the Selection Committee must address their minds. The answer to this is, Yes. At the inception of this Department, we have always paid tribute to certain principles that guide the selection of applications for these houses and the two most important, are (i) need of the applicant and, (ii) ability to pay. These might appear to be small matters but in the context of the committee of members, looking at applications they assume a great proportion, the need being the need of the applicant with reference to the physical convenience to which an applicant is subjected or the physical standard of living. Ability to pay encompasses several matters.

I think it will be meet and right for me to ask the hon. Member to look at the Housing Ordinance of the laws of Guyana, Chapter 182 in which he will see the categories of persons which are statutorily catered for. The Central Housing and Planning Authority is the statutory authority in this country charged with the responsibility to supervise housing development. That Authority fixes the income levels of persons for whom Government can provide houses. The level fixed in the Ordinance is \$15 a week; that would be the minimum wages of the applicant. That has since been altered by the Authority cover the same rate at \$120 to \$180. In this context, I may refer to the question asked by the hon. Member Mr. Sutton who wanted to know what income level must guide consideration for rental unit. Normally, Government asked persons to

contribute one-fifth of the income of the breadwinner of the house. This is a rather hard and fast rule for some time. With respect to my previous reference to income levels, and wage levels, I think that that is now a subject of revision and the Central Housing and Planning Authority will make a statement on this in a short while.

My friend the hon. Member Mr. Chandisingh has asked us about the question of clearance of slums. On this score, may I remark that although there is no specific slum clearance machinery in operation in this country, the very act of providing housing has accelerated the volume and momentum of housing construction in this country. This is by itself, one method that some clearance is effected.

He also wanted to know about the terms of Roxanne Burnham Gardens which was advertised recently. The terms of such sale of houses are extremely concessionary and each applicant would have thirty years to pay off for the house. He or she needs a deposit of only 10 per cent of the price of the house as initial, deposit and the balance on interest rate which is to be surcharged thereto. One would appreciate from reference to these terms, that the circumstances have been made very easy for each applicant to avail himself or herself of a house.

There has been some reference on this question of trying to put an end to land speculation. I feel that that is a very worthwhile contribution and I think during the debate on the Rent Control Bill, I said something on this. The hon. Member Dr. Ramsahoye made some reference to this. I may remark that Government is looking very seriously and carefully into this question of land in this country. On the platform of our land programme the hon. Member should know that Cumberland is an area now being developed for the use by the Ministry either as the basis of self-help programme or for these lands to be sold as lots to people in the Pearl Housing Scheme.

The basic planning area is being developed and. I think the construction of house is will now commence. Reliance on the Essequibo has been the scene of two self-help projects, one of which has been recently completed. With regard to the land acquisition and development programme, I wish to remind hon. Members that this Government recently acquired 160,000 acres of land at Ruimveldt and very soon will commence developmental work with a view to housing construction and for sale.

The hon. Member asked what programme the Government has in mind with respect to long range housing development in this country. I want to inform this House and the nation that it was only last year, and this was after the assumption of power of the Government to which my hon. Friend had belonged, that any serious thinking was done with respect to formulating a really dynamic housing programme in this country. That programme is still in a state of flux. I may remind him that housing has been set up which shows to a great extent Government's earnestness in providing housing for the people of this country.

All the proceeds of sale from hire-purchase houses and self-help houses will be channelled into a specific statutory fund which sums will be designed to be used primarily for housing construction in this country. I may also observe that a census has been recently launched by the Statistical Bureau of the Ministry of Economic Development, with a view to computing and assessing the statistical needs, particularly in the field of housing, of the people of this country. Coupled with this information which will be made public shortly and the fact that the statutory fund has been established, one can see from these two factors that a serious attempt is now being made with a view to formulating a long-term housing programme to house the unhousted and ill-housed people of this country.

The Chairman: May I put the question?

Mr. Ramsaroop: There is one question on the transport of mortgages.

20.1.70

National Assembly

3.55 - 4.05 p.m.

The Chairman; Can we not use that when we are dealing with another Head? Let us close this off.

Head 56, Ministry of Housing and Reconstruction \$1,318,047, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Assembly resumed

Suspended accordingly at 4.05 p.m

4.35 p.m.

On resumption –

Assembly in Committee of Supply

**HEAD 57 - MINISTRY OF HOUSING AND RECONSTRUCTION
TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING**

The Chairman: We now move on to Head 57.

Question proposed that this Head stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Hamid: I would like to speak on sub-head 1, items (1), (2) and (15). They are interrelated to some extent. I will be as brief as possible.

The Chairman: As the hon. Member has just returned from his holiday let us hope that he has learned to be brief.

Mr. R.D. Persaud: Sub-head 5

Mr. Wilson: Sub-head 5.

Mr. Ram Karran: Sub-head 5.

The Chairman: The hon. Member Mr. Hamid.

Mr. Hamid: I notice here that the sum of \$9,600 is earmarked for the Town and Country Planning Officer, but my information is that this officer, a very important officer in the Housing and Planning Department, resigned some time last year and the position was not filled. With regard to the Deputy Town and Country Planning Officer, during last year I spoke about the vacancy that existed and I asked why this position could not be filled by someone who was acting. At a later stage this was done.

I would like to know what the Minister intends to do with regard to allowing someone an opportunity to serve fully as Town and Country Planning Officer.

Item (15), Town and Country Planning Trainees. I notice that several persons have been sent abroad during the year to train as Town and Country Planning Officers. Some time recently someone who had an opportunity of being trained and becoming qualified through a Government scholarship returned to Guyana. It was around the time that the Prime Minister was making his call for all qualified Guyanese to return home so that existing vacancies could be filled. This officer came around the time that the Town and Country Planning Officer resigned and this person acted many times in this capacity. He is a very experienced officer, but it seems that the conditions offered to him by Government were not good enough and the officer immediately resigned.

I think this is a great injustice to the country, in the sense that scholarships are offered to trainees and after returning they do not fully serve the Government in relation to their contract, so to speak. I do not know what contract was offered, but I think the time has come when Government should make it its duty to see that more officers, especially in this field, are trained. The sum of \$8,800, which is earmarked, is quite inadequate, I think. I was wondering what the Minister had in mind and what can be done to raise this amount in order to train many more in a shorter time.

Mr. R.D. Persaud: Some time ago plans were submitted by the Demerara Company suggesting that on the eastern side of the East Bank Public Road, starting from Providence Pasture right down to Diamond, the canefields should be abolished and that area should be developed for housing. This was four years ago and, instead of these areas being developed and the canefields abolished; I discovered that there is an increase in the planting of canes in these areas.

Some time ago, permission was given for an experiment at Diamond on the western side. This was about three or four years ago. I discovered that while this is an experiment, cane is being planted there regularly and reaped for the making of sugar. This is not an experiment. There is an acute housing shortage and there is a demand by people for land to build houses. These areas can house a large number of people.

In addition to this, the eastern and western sides of the road, particularly at Little Diamond, are desolate because of the canefields. People coming from the cinema at Diamond to Little Diamond find it extremely difficult to pass this area because of their fear of "choke and rob". A few nights ago there was an attempt on a Judge in Georgetown. I think that the Government should move into this question immediately and the hon. Minister should tell us whether Government has any policy, so far as planning is concerned, for the East Bank area, from Providence to Diamond on the western side and at Little Diamond.

In addition, I want to point out to the Minister that at Leonora Park, where houses should be built, the estate is now planting cane, I know as a fact that it was the intention of the Housing and Planning Authority to convert these areas into housing areas. Will the Minister tell us the position now.

Mr. Wilson: Mr. Chairman, I seek to speak on this matter and to ask a question on sub-head 5, Planning Surveys, with the specific object of finding out whether these surveys include surveys with respect to squatting areas. I have to ask this question until I get an answer because I have seen that the Government is using various devices to side-track this matter of giving the necessary attention to displaced persons. It had promised to give this attention in the Sir Stanley Gomes Report, that is, the Report of the National Rehabilitation Committee.

Sub-head 12, Relief and Rehabilitation.

In previous years, relief and rehabilitation of displaced persons was placed under the Ministry of Housing and Reconstruction. Now I see it is transferred to the Ministry of Labour and Social Security under Division XXII, yet, under that Division, the legend states "Related to the work of the National Aid Board". The National Aid Board deals solely with temporary relief, that is, to give two bits of bread in cases of hardship. It does not deal with the other question of Housing Development Trusts.

For the Minister's benefit, in case he has not had an opportunity to read this Report as he has recently taken over his portfolio, I would like to read what Sir Stanley Gomes recommended at paragraph 23. I quote:

"The object and responsibility of the Trust will be to implement residential development schemes for *bona fide* displaced persons throughout the country wherever the need can be shown to exist. Government-owned lands in areas suitable for such schemes should be made available to the Trust."

Paragraph 25 states:

"The functions of the Trust will be:-

- (a) to negotiate for and to purchase land considered necessary for residential development schemes;
- (b) to carry out the development of lands made available as aforesaid and purchased for residential development schemes in keeping with plans approved by the Central Housing and Planning Authority;
- (c) to sell lots in development schemes to displaced persons, as hereinafter defined, who may wish to purchase, be they those already occupying the land, or others who, with the approval of the Trust, may wish to go into the area; "

4.45 p.m.

What do we find? The Government has simply abandoned these people and left them to the mercy of Bookers and other landlords. Bookers is not selling directly to the people. Many of the displaced persons cannot really meet the terms and conditions. They have to put down 10 per cent and pay the balance at the time of passing of transport and I can tell the Minister that there is going to be a crisis in this matter. These people will eventually lose all their lands because they will borrow money from money-lenders and, ultimately, they will lose all. Therefore, this Government has betrayed these people and I should like to know whether the Government has reneged on the promises it had made to the people.

The Chairman: The hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran.

Mr. Ram Karran: I wish to raise more or less the same questions raised by my colleagues. I should like to refer to the fact that many green parks which were in Georgetown, years ago have been abandoned and houses are built on them. I wish to know whether the Government is thinking in the direction of creating development for parks in not only

Georgetown but in Greater Georgetown. You will recall that at the corner of Third and Oronoque Streets there was a very nice park where children went and played. It is now occupied by the Convent of Good Shepherd. At the head of Church Street there was a playground which is now occupied by Dr. Fulton and other people. They have built up that area. More recently, some places are being occupied with Government buildings.

Only the other day I had to make reference to the Georgetown Prison. I was wondering whether the Government was thinking of removing that eyesore. My friend the Minister of Information (Mr. Carter) used to say that this is a city with a prison for a heart. Remove that eyesore and make a playground for the children in South Georgetown. These are not original suggestions but suggestions which have been made time and time again. In this republic year one would think that the Government would make a break with the past - the past colonial period and the semi-colonial period - and make a breakthrough so that many children, particularly in South Georgetown, could find some accommodation to play. One sees housing schemes going up - some have recently gone up - without any proper accommodation for children to play and for old people particularly to sit by themselves and commune, if necessary, with the birds.

We call this city the Garden City, but are we prepared to go beyond that and provide new facilities and new amenities for future generations? For instance, in Greater Georgetown, that piece of land coming back from Cummings Lodge to Sophia is being sold by the authorities to anyone who will buy, without regard to ingress and egress and, if houses are going to be built, it is going to be very difficult to provide accommodation for playing fields, parks and greens in this area, much less that section which is supposed to be the Green Belt.

Now that we have changed Ministers in this particular ministry, I should like to find out from the present Minister if he has any views on the Costello's plan for the Green Belt and whether he is under pressure - as I know the Government is under pressure - to allow three-storeyed buildings to be set up in that area thereby stifling the people in Greater Georgetown by blocking off the cool Atlantic breeze. When the hon. Member Mr. Bissember was Minister of

Housing and Reconstruction he had indicated to this House that the Green Belt will be maintained regardless of the pressure put upon the Government by Bookers. I should like to know whether the Government is going to stick to that decision or whether it is going to succumb to pressure and allow houses of a very high density to be constructed in that area. It is true that that area is near to the Atlantic, it is very breezy, very nice, and a lot of big shots from the city are moving there.

As I indicated to this House some time ago - and many people, who are knowledgeable in these matters, including the late Town and Country Planning Officer, feel the same way - there will be no objection to the building of houses as long as they conform to the standard low house so that the area will really be what was originally recommended, the lung of the city.

Mr. Ramsaroop: In reply to the hon. Member who has just spoken I should like to say, first of all, that his statements on the Green Belt are not what I would call authoritative statements. I do not have the time to go into what really is the Green Belt and what are the concepts and motivations that guided Town Planners with respect to - - - schemes that are called Green Belt area. Suffice it to say that, in case there is a change of use for that area, which is now an area earmarked primarily and fundamentally for agricultural purposes, Government would address its mind to maintaining, if not upgrading, some of the principles that are normally looked at when one uses for another purpose an area that was intended for a specific purpose.

The hon. Member's remarks that Georgetown is overcrowded and that certain areas which have been earmarked for public recreational use are now swallowed by the consuming demand for houses are well taken and I am sure the Ministry of Housing and Reconstruction will be looking more carefully into this and will make alternative areas available for public recreation.

With respect to this hardy perennial which has been before the House for many years, this vexed question of the appointment of the Town and Country Planning Officer, I am happy to say

that it has now been resolved. An offer has been made to the acting Deputy Town and Country Planning Officer and I am informed that that offer will be accepted.

My hon. Friend Mr. Hamid made reference to another officer whose name he has not disclosed. Since I am not following in the tradition of Houdini or Mandrake the Magician, I am not psychic —

Mr. Hamid: On a point of order. It is always a point raised by the Chair that we should not call officers' names and I am keeping with the principle of this House.

4.55 p.m.

Mr. Ramsaroop: In keeping with the principle of the House, I would not know. Had his hint been meaningful, I would have been able to reply. But I am certain that the substantive Minister (Mr. D. Singh) would look into this matter very carefully to see into any anomalies that might arise in the public administration.

The reference to more money being ploughed into the expenditure for trainees is answered in this way. Trainees are perforce raw greenhorns who come into the Planning Division, to be trained as draftsmen. The number of trainees always varies. It is very difficult at this stage to have a fixed sum for trainees because year after year you may have the numbers being changed so for this reason only that particular sum has been earmarked for training.

The hon. Member, Mr. R.D. Persaud, has asked a few questions about the East Bank. I want to state in this House that there is no plan on the records for the Little Diamond area but the Government survey controls the use of the lands in that area. His point about the area being hazardous from the point of view of security is well taken and in future planning, cognisance will be given to it. I may remark that there have been some developments in the East Bank area. Last year, the Ministry of Housing and Reconstruction was able to acquire a substantial portion

of the backlands of Agricola Village, so that today, the villagers can see expansion of their village and this is a signal and substantial contribution to the expansion of houses peripheral to the Central Georgetown area, which is overcrowded.

I may remind the hon. Member of a statement made here by Mr. Oliver Jessel, who holds a controlling interest in Jessel Securities, Ltd., which has taken over the Demerara Company Ltd. The statement made by Mr. Jessel last year was to the effect that the company would be going into low-income and middle-income housing this year as a part of their investment portfolio. We hope during this year that something is done to honour this promise and Government will be very vigilant in this regard.

The Commonwealth Development Corporation, parent company of the Guyana Mortgage Finance Company and the Guyana Development Company, has also done work in the East Bank area. There is a new development there which is called, New Providence, which is one of the developments but more particularly in the field of low cost housing. Substantially acreages of land have been developed at Peter's Hall on the East Bank, which acreages of land will accommodate low and middle-income houses.

Lastly, although it is not within the portfolio and responsibility of the Ministry of Housing and Reconstruction to make reference to the work of the National Aid Board, since this comes within the portfolio and responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, I may remind, the hon. Member, Mr. Wilson, that the Ministry of Housing and Reconstruction has prepared an extended layout for areas that are not occupied by squatters, to wit, East and West Lusignan, Logwood and Haslington.

The Chairman: May I put the Question?

Head 57 Ministry of Housing and Reconstruction- Town and Country Planning- \$184,258 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

**DIVISION XXI - MINISTRY OF HOUSING AND
RECONSTRUCTION**

Question proposed that this Division stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Hamid: I wish to speak on subheads 2 and 9.

Dr. Ramsahoye: I wish to speak on subheads 2 and 5.

Mr. Chandisingh: I wish to speak on subheads 11, 13, and 14.

Mr. Sutton: I would like to speak on subheads 4 and 5.

Mr. Hamid: Mr. Chairman, under subhead 2, I note that it is intended to provide for the purchase and development of land in various areas, but I do not see anything earmarked for Kitty railway lands. I wish the Minister to answer. Ever since the Kitty Railway lands were handed over to Government, it was decided by the Government that the lands should be properly drained, roads should be properly constructed, and buildings redesigned, and other things, and that all expenses incurred should be passed down to those who may be in a position to purchase. The quantity surveyor had gone into the matter and worked out the cost per square foot, but subsequently, the lands were sold before all these things were done.

It is an old idea that before lands are sold they must be properly drained and irrigated but this was not so in the case of Prashad Nagar, where the resident are making a lot of noise in that area.

We find even Government Ministers and high Government officers are complaining that this individual who sold those lands should at least have put in proper roads and a proper drainage and irrigation system before the lands were sold.

In Kitty, we find the lands were actually sold on long term agreements or leases and although the price by the quantity surveyor was already fixed, we find that permanent roads that should have been laid and metalled by the Town and Country Planning Authority are still not there. We have to use the old roads put down by the local authority. This is something which I believe the Minister should look into. It is a new Minister and it may be a very difficult thing for him to do, but I would ask him to take cognisance of the position and to understand what the residents in the area have to endure.

Regarding the La Penitence area, I see \$30,000 has been earmarked. Sometime last year, the then Minister (Mr. Ramsaroop) and I, together with the staffs of the Town and Country Planning Authority and the Housing Division, made a very extensive trip into that area because residents were complaining of there-allocation and use of certain plots and the redesigning of internal and central drains, as well as the re-location of existing frontage which was a difficult thing for them to carry out. The hon. Member will recall that when those people went there to live, such plans had not been laid and they were not happy because they felt whatever plans Government had, were not told to them, but the Government had called in surveyors who were trying to do a lot of things, shift concrete structures two feet from where they were, and it was found in the new arrangement, that drains fell in the centre of buildings.

I think the hon. Member will agree with me that our tour in the area was one of great benefit to those people and he will also congratulate the representatives of the people in this particular area. I hope that now he is not in office he will find time to discuss these questions and the very important points that we raised, and that something will be done to help those residents

The Chairman: The hon. and learned Member Dr. Ramsahoye.

Dr. Ramsahoye: Your Honour, under these two subheads, I wish to raise a question of the inadequacies of drainage on the housing- estates. In some of the new housing estates in Greater Georgetown, when the rain falls the lots are flooded very easily because of the incapacity of the Cummings Canal to take off the water during heavy rain. I wish to know whether the hon. Minister will spend some of this money to see that the conditions are ameliorated in those areas. There is also a great difficulty and hardship caused because the roads are not properly maintained in the Government housing areas. Workmen are sometimes there but not much is done.

With respect to new housing schemes, a matter of very serious concern has been brought to my notice in relation with the T.U.C. Ville Scheme. This has been under bad weather for sometime and the most grievous thing about it is that a sum of about \$20,000 is now owed in the form of wages to people working on that scheme. The authorities say that they are going to pay but the money has been owing since about May last year and something should be done by the hon. Minister to ensure that payment is made. I agree that it is also a matter for the Ministry of Labour but it is also a matter for the Ministry of Housing because that Ministry should be aware that these houses are constructed on the blood of the workers who are not even getting remuneration for their work. The matter is of such great concern and consequence that I would have thought that between the two hon. Ministers, there would have been a move to form a public enquiry committee as to the fraud of the workers in this matter. It is tragic that workers who are poor have to wait so long in order to get remuneration which is owed to them and which they need.

The Chairman: The hon. Member Mr. Sutton.

Construction of Houses for Rental**Housing Estates - Miscellaneous Works**

Mr. Sutton: We note there is no allocation for construction of houses for rental. It is difficult to understand how the people cannot understand houses for sale - how are they expected to live bearing in mind that there are increases for the whole population. We would, all remember that the hon. Minister, in replying to the statement of one of my hon. Friends - I think it was Dr. Ramsahoye - mentioned that people, to pay for houses, have to pay ten percent down and they have thirty years to cover the balance for the houses. I speak subject to correction but I think that the interest figure is six per cent. Is it not? [At this stage the hon. Minister indicated agreement]

In view of the fact that these houses cost approximately \$7,500 to \$8,500, if we were to go through an exercise, it means that the average amount of down-payment is \$800 and when subtracted from the capital \$7,200 is left to be paid in 30 years at six percent interest. Now that calls for a commencing payment of \$56 a month. As the interest is paid it will be reduced - there are the first three years before any significant reduction is made. We have to bear in mind the yardstick used for these payments is approximately one-eighth of the person's salary or income which means that if a person pays \$56 a month - let us put it in round figures and call it \$50 - and that is one-eighth of his income, in other words the qualification to acquire one of these houses would be that a person's income must be in the vicinity of \$400 a month.

Now, I am going by the figures supplied by the hon. Minister. They are not my figures. If those figures are right, we are being told that these housing schemes are to help the comparatively low-income group. We know that the majority earn between \$4 and \$6 a day. For easy calculation you multiply this by 30 - although there are not 30 working days in a month - and the answer is about \$200 a month. These figures, as planned in the Estimates, make no provision for the low-income bracket, the people who need help so badly. In addition to this we

see no allocation for houses for rental. Could the hon. Minister say what plans have been made in order to meet people who cannot pay more than \$30 a month for houses based on the fact that they cannot expect people to provide more than one-eighth of their income for rental?

I will again attempt to get the hon. Minister to answer my question asked on the previous Head which he completely ignored on the expenses of Government housing estates. What system is used for the recovery of the money expended on water, lighting and other services because under Appendix M the amount to be recovered is less than half the amount expended. If it is expected that this sum will not be recovered, are these housing estates consciously and purposely subsidised for the people who are buying them?

Mr.Chandisingh:Subhead 11 deals with staff development matters. I note that this sum of \$40,000 has been increased over last year. Also, the sum under subhead 13, purchase of equipment has been more than doubled from roughly \$60,000 to \$142,000. My query is whether all this expenditure is really worth it. The legend states:

"To provide for additional staff to implement the Ministry's development works."

Then we have a large sum of \$142,000 to provide for the purchase of miscellaneous equipment. If we add these two amounts it will mean that the sum of \$182,000 will be spent and it is almost as much, if not more than, what is actually being spent on housing. I wonder whether we are over-capitalising on our equipment in relation to the actual work which is being carried out on housing.

Passing quickly to subhead 14, I have several questions on this. I do not think it has been clearly explained by the hon. Minister. We note that the sum of \$240,000 is shown under the 1969 revised estimates. I cannot really remember when this was brought to this House as supplementary or what, but somehow or the other we find this sum listed on the revised estimates for last year. Does it mean that this sum was put into the Fund last year and that the

sum still remains in the Fund? Where can we find the amount from year to year being put in the housing fund? Is it shown anywhere else? Can we find out how much was spent? Was this money which was put into the Fund actually used during last year? Is it going to accumulate over a period before being utilised? These are just some of the questions.

The hon. Minister should explain to us exactly how this Fund is going to operate. I should like to know how much is being put into this Fund this year. I must presume that since no money is being voted for self-help housing or construction of houses for rental - as a matter of fact, no money is being voted at all in the present estimates for any housing construction - the Housing Fund will be the source of some sort of Government housing. If this is correct, may I ask the hon. Minister to state how many houses are contemplated to be built by aided- self-help for 1970 and the areas. How many houses are contemplated to be built for hire-purchase? How many houses are expected to be built by Government for rental?

I must confess that since this information is no longer given under the housing estimates we have to probe and make these queries in order to get information in judging and assessing Government's housing programme. I wish to remind the hon. Minister that for the last five years only approximately four hundred and fifty houses have been built and these are the ones that one may regard as low income houses. All the others are above low income houses. I do not want to repeat what the hon. Member Mr. Sutton has said but I agree fully with him that at least all the housing being undertaken by the Government now is above the means of those who have the-greatest need for Government help.

The hon. Minister has made big and bold promises. He has told us that the Government is undertaking a programme for house building in terms which lead us to believe that very are many houses are going up and very soon we will see what is taking place. I sincerely hope that the former Minister is not putting his successor in difficulties by having to honour these promises. For the past few years we have been hearing these claims but I would say that out of a mountain of promises we have a molehill of achievement.

My final comment on this capital side is that, on the whole, the sums being voted by the Government for housing are small in relation to all the undertaking it has given. Criticisms were given in the past and the Government has undertaken to do much better and we have seen in fact, that they are not putting in any real effort. One can observe that the total amount of money that goes into Government entertainment expenses, if added up for all the Ministries, would amount to a much greater sum than is actually spent in building houses for the needy people of this country.

I look forward to the hon. Minister answering these questions that have been asked.

Mr. Ramsaroop: Mr. Chairman, we are tempted to have a lot of half vague statements in this House.

The hon. Member, I recall, wanted to know what this Government intends to do with respect to aided-self-help housing. It is intended that fifty-six houses will be built at Ruimveldt Gardens which houses have already started.

5.25 p.m.

At Ruimveldt Gardens the building of houses has already started. Fifty houses will be built in the New Amsterdam area, town savannah and Cumberland. Twenty-six houses are in course of construction at Reliance, Essequibo. The Ministry also intends to complete 50 hire-purchase houses at Ruimveldt on land which will soon be developed. This is in the field of public sector housing.

In the private sector, we have such schemes as the Civil Service Association scheme, better known as the Lamaha Gardens scheme, now working vigorously. We have the C.D.C. which is in housing in two respects and if one would take the trouble to go to Ruimveldt

Gardens, one would see the work being done there by the Guyana Housing Development Company.

In addition to that, I referred to the plans for the East Bank, which will soon be put in train. Legislation was enacted last year to assist in promoting the construction of houses. The Government, very early this year, will promulgate legislation to bring into being the 90 per cent guaranteed system.

May I make a remark here on the Housing Fund, because it does seem there is some confusion on this point. The Fund is expected to bring in this year the sum of half a million dollars. I have already alluded to the sources that will be channelling this Fund, that is, the proceeds of sale from land the Government may sell. The instalments now accruing to the Government from self-help houses will go under hire purchase.

The Housing Programme is an expanding programme. It means that every year as there are increases in the number of houses in the country there will be *pro rata* increases in the Housing Fund of the country. So every year there is likely to be an accretion in housing development by the public sector.

I think the hon. Members ought to look at it in this respect. It is not a field of diminishing returns. It is a field of expanding gains and every year momentum and volume come into being. This Programme has to be seen in its correct perspective - not only the houses built by Government, but the houses built by the private sector. The houses will be built, as the result of the legislation, concessions and enactments by this Government.

Mr. Sutton apparently is confounded by the figures used. I wish to clarify the point that on an expert's calculation by my Permanent Secretary the amount for hire purchase ... to \$38 a month. I do not know whether he had regard to the principle of diminishing factor when calculating interest on that sum in order to arrive at his final figure.

The Housing Estates have been subsidized over the years. One cannot hope, in all fairness and earnestness to people who want houses, to give them houses and not to subsidize those houses.

My hon. and learned Friend Dr. Ramsahoye wants to know whether anything has been done, or will be done, to effect an improvement in, or amelioration of, sanitary conditions in housing estates. The answer is, Yes. Over the last five years we have had a vigorous and dynamic programme of drains construction at Ruimveldt and at the La Penitence area and in fact, at this very moment, several concrete drains are being constructed and erected in order to improve the estates' sanitation.

The question of the lengthening and broadening of the Cummings Canal has engaged the attention of this Government. I understand that a very expert and very informed Committee was set up recently, headed by the Chief Hydraulics Officer of the Ministry of Works, Hydraulics and Supply and the report on the dredging of the Cummings Canal will soon be submitted to Government for consideration.

Another point that I wish to make is probably a parting shot because I will not have an opportunity to speak on housing for some time. It is that this problem that we now face of having a dearth and inadequacy of machinery and equipment in the Ministry of Housing is directly attributable to the negligence, incompetence and ineptitude of my friends when they were in the administration of the country.

The records show that in 1956 the Government of that day thought that it was not necessary to have a Housing Department and a certain gentleman was assigned to carry out the specific task of observing the obsequies and the demolition of that department. *[Interruption]* It is precisely because of that that we have to earmark a substantial sum to provide machinery and equipment in order to improve the facilities and implement some of the services of the Ministry. The sum that is earmarked for the Ministry for expenditure is very small and I hope to have

much more equipment this year so problems as garbage collection and disposal can be looked at more effectively.

Division XXI, Ministry of Housing and Reconstruction -\$882,000, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

HEAD 58 - MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL SECURITY

Question proposed that this Head stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Lall: Sub-head 1, items (3), (9), (11), (12), (13), (14), (15), Onpage 129 I would like to speak on sub-heads 7, 8 and 10.

The Chairman: May I remind the hon. Member that the time factor will be against him unless he deals directly with the questions and does not skirt around them.

Dr. Ramsahoye: Sub-head 1, items (13), (14), (15), (16), sub-head 2.

The Chairman: May I say that the hon. Member Mr. Harry Lall will be speaking on items (13), (14) and (15). In case he has the same points, do not repeat them.

Dr. Ramsahoye: Also sub-heads 6, 9 and 12.

Mr. Jagan: I would like to comment on the National Insurance Scheme very briefly. I do not know what particular sub-head I can do it under, but perhaps it can be done under sub-head 16. It will be a general comment, having regard to —

The Chairman: I am afraid I cannot permit a Second Reading debate speech. It has got to deal directly with a question because we are dealing now with details of expenditure proposed.

We cannot have a regular speech on it. Time is against us. I do not think the hon. Member was here when at the commencement of the sitting, I pointed out that we are almost four hours behind already.

Mr. Wilson: Sub-heads 7, 10 and 12, if it is still necessary after my colleagues have spoken.

Mrs. Da Silva: Sub-head 1, items (12), (14) and (15), sub-heads 7 and 14 on page 129.

5.35 p.m.

The Chairman: Well then may we commence please? I think we had better start with the hon. Member Mr. Lall.

Chief Labour Officer

Deputy Chief Labour Officer

Assistant Chief Labour Officer

Mr. Lall: I should like to speak on items 9, 10 and 11 at the same time. Last year I advocated an increase in salaries for officers employed in the Labour Department. I mentioned that there was a heavy brain drain in that Department. Men were sent for training on Industrial Relations courses and when they came back they went to search for jobs with more lucrative salaries. Many efficient officers have left the department and I feel that as time goes on and as the cost of living goes up more officers will leave the department.

I am therefore advocating that the Government should give some thought to increasing the salaries of these officers because if you remember - I do not think you were the Speaker then

The Chairman: Do not stretch your memory too far.

Mr. Lall: I should like to refer to a statement made at an I.L.O. Convention and what was recommended. It is stated-

The Chairman - Hon. Member, may I intervene at this point? Please sit down while I am speaking. The hon. Member seems to be making a point for the revision of salaries. It is not a question that we can deal with at this time. Now whether or not the salaries are adequate, you may just make a statement if you feel like doing so, but I cannot permit a discussion which is aimed at revision. That is a matter entirely for the Government and the association concerned.

Now we are asked here to pass the amounts provided under this Head of the Estimates and we must find other grounds for discussing it rather than what the hon. Member is doing. I do not think I can allow this quotation from the I.L.O. or any such thing on the particular point that the hon. Member is speaking. Let us try and save time because, I can tell you this, at 6.15 p.m. I will put the question for this Head and if the hon. Member Mr. Lall takes up all the time, then his colleagues would get no time to speak.

Mr. Lall: I can appreciate your objection.

The Chairman: I am just guiding you,

Mr. Lall: I should like to say what qualities these men should possess to acquire such jobs and so they must be suitably recompensed.

The Chairman: A statement like that is permissible, but that is all you need do now. Now move on to another point.

Mr. Lall: I shall continue.

Senior Labour Officers

I notice that 9 Senior Labour Officers are provided under item 12. I should like the hon. Minister to tell us whether any of these officers are acting as Factory Inspector because, at the present time, there is a great need for Factory Inspectors. I understand that there is only one Factor Inspector operating in the department and there are factories in the Berbice area, the Demerara area, the upper Demerara area, in Bartica and Essequibo. I am saying that there should be at least six Factory Inspectors who should be highly trained because we saw what happened a few days ago at Canje, Rose Hall, where wives lost the loving arms of their husbands and children lost the loving care of their fathers. We do not want this to recur.

Right here in Georgetown a businessman by the name of Edward B. Beharry is operating a business and a young lady –

The Chairman: The hon. Member is breaching the functions of the House by calling names.

Mr. Lall: If there were sufficient Factory Inspectors that young lady would not have lost her hand. I should like to proceed.

The Chairman: Go right ahead.

Labour Research Officer

Mr. Lall: Item 13: May I ask the Minister what would be the function of the Labour Research Officer? The note states:

"Anticipated filling of vacancy."

When will this vacancy be filled?

Vocational Guidance Officer

Item 14, Vocational Guidance Officer: I should like the hon. Minister to give us some information with respect to the functions of this officer.

Labour Officers

On item 15 I should like to ask the hon. Minister what is the criterion used in selecting Labour Officers.

5.45 p.m.

Again, I want to point out when men are appointed as Labour Officers, they ought to possess a certain quality, honesty of purpose to serve humanity, and I should like the Minister to answer. What yardstick is used in selecting Labour Officers?

If you will permit me to turn over to the next page, subhead 7, Factory Ordinance Expenses, I should like to bring to the attention of the Minister that I have visited many factories and I have seen where protective measures are not carried out. I have received many complaints from workers in places that are operating as factories that they are not paid time and a half for overtime work, and for Sunday they are not paid double time.

Subhead 8, Public Utility Undertaking and Public Health Services Arbitration Ordinance, Expenses.

This subhead deals with arbitration. I should like to ask the hon. Minister of Labour if he could say what time the Ramsaroop Watchmen's Committee Report will be released. When this Report was submitted to the Labour Department in 1968 –

The Chairman: Was this Committee dealing with arbitration? I have no knowledge as to the Committee referred to. This deals with arbitration expenses. If the hon. Member wishes to deal with arbitration expenses, O.K. I think the hon. Member is choosing the wrong item to speak on.

Mr. Lall: Money provided for the Committee is taken from the arbitration fund. Where is provision for the Committee? Let the Minister show it.

The Chairman: Next item.

Mr. Lall: Subhead 10, Contribution to the International Labour Organisation. Sir, I want you to bear with me. Labour is important. Labour is responsible for the economy of the country, I am asking you to bear with me.

The Chairman: I am trying to keep you in line. I do not want to have you derailed.

Mr. Lall: According to the I.L.O. Convention, No. 66, it was stated that every individual is entitled to security of employment. I have with me the Annual Report of the Labour Department for 1968 and with your permission, sir, I will quote from page 15.

The Chairman: The hon. Member must understand there must be a difference between the general debate on the Motion and the examination of the Heads of the Estimates. All those things should have been dealt with when we were dealing with the Motion proper.

Mr. Lall: I said that it was stated in the I.L.O. Convention that there must be security of employment for every individual. What have we found here? I want to develop my point from this Report because it is stated that from 1956 to 1965, nearly 14,000 people were thrown out of the sugar industry. What we find here is that 350 workers were thrown out by the Demerara Company Limited.

At Leonora and Cornelia Ida, there were 94 workers, 25 were from the weeding gang, 6 cane cutters, 6 shovel men, 5 were from the field workshop maintenance, 13 from the Garage, 10 were factory firemen, 11 factory carpenters, 6 weeders, 4 general office clerks, 2 from Personnel, 2 from the mechanical tillage, 1 from the Laboratory, 1 from the engineering office, 2 from the general stores, and God knows how many more.

These are from Leonora only. In the East Bank area from Ruimveldt to Craig, hundreds of workers were thrown out. I should like to discontinue from this point and raise another point.

The Chairman: I shall give the hon. Member until 6 O'clock and after that I shall ask the hon. Member, Mrs. Sahoye, to speak.

Mr. Lall: I want to draw your attention, that it was also mentioned in the convention that every worker in employment is supposed to be protected to the maximum. What have we found?

5.55 p.m.

At Enmore and L.B.I., workers were employed in spraying toxicchemicals. On one occasion a man's whole head of hair fell off because of the chemicals. On the next occasion the liquid soaked through the man's pants and went to his testicle; that man's testicle was swollen to a size, the skin was peeled off. Still there is no protection – no protective measures –for these workers in the area. A man was killed by drinking poisonous water. May I ask the hon. Minister what provision is made to protect these workers?

... was destroyed. I telephoned the Deputy Prime Minister and he took up the matter immediately. No compensation was given. Calves were killed, donkeys were killed, and children were affected. The Government set up a commission which they called the Chabrol Commission. This was two years ago. I heard that the Commission had submitted their report to the Government but up to now the report is not made public.

Who could tell if by spraying the canes with this toxic chemical and the liquor from the canes went into the clarifier and when those six men went into it to clean it, they were killed by this toxic chemical? Who could tell? I am therefore asking the hon. Minister to answer these questions, to answer why the Chabrol Commission's report is not out and when it will be out.

The Chairman: The hon. Member Mrs. Sahoye

Labour Research Officer

Mrs. Sahoye: Mr. Chairman, on item 13 we see "anticipated filling of vacancy." I would like to ask the hon. Minister of Labour how soon will this vacancy be filled because it is very important and vital in Guyana today. The Ministry must be fully equipped to cope with personnel officers to work in private firms and industries. If the Ministry of Labour is not so equipped to have officers to do expansive research then the Ministry of Labour will not be able to mediate disputes in Guyana. We had a lot last year.

Vocational Guidance Officer

The amount of \$5,136 was voted but only \$2,996 was spent in the Revised Estimates. I would like to ask the hon. Minister if this post was not filled since the beginning of the year but only during the year or if the post is still unfilled.

Labour Officers

For the last three years, we have seen that there are only 15 Labour Officers and we are of the view that the Ministry of Labour needs more Labour Officers. This is because of the amount of complaints that these officers have to review. I would say that there are many Labour Officers who are taxed. If the Ministry is to cope with responsibility of doing justice to the employees of this country, it is important that they increase the Labour Officers because I feel that the Ministry needs efficient and capable officers. The Ministry is confronted with the problem of many disunites and wages, in price work, therefore the Ministry should cater for pricing officers. It should also cater for officers to go around the shops, gasolene stations, timber grants, sawmills and quarries to check on wages paid at these pay offices. I know that the hon. Minister is aware of many of these things which are happening in this country to employees because we saw on Friday, October 10th, 1969, --[Interruption] I think that the hon. Minister is fully aware of this problem in the Ministry and I would like to ask him what is being done in the Ministry, if they intend to increase the amount of Labour Officers and if he does not see the need of having pricing officers to check on the books to see about wages.

Statistical Officer

I would like to ask the hon. Minister what are the functions of this officer because it is dependent on statistics of the Ministry and I would feel that one Statistical Officer is not enough. A Statistical Officer checking, if he is to check, on wages, for instance, one officer cannot do this. We know for a fact that there are many employees in this country who have to sign for more wages than they receive. I do not think that the hon. Minister has the power to check on books of small employers and small industries. The hon. Minister does not have this power and I would like to ask him if he does not recognise the need at this time to have industrial peace; if he does not see the need for officers to check the books. There is another question under Statistical Officer of which I ask if the hon. Minister thinks that one is sufficient. There is a problem in this country - only proved a few months ago - where factories send down sugar to the terminal but

there is no one other than the Sugar Producers' Association who knows the amount of sugar made to each factory.

6.05 p.m.

I should like to know whether the, hon. Minister also considers that there should be an officer to check the tonnage of sugar made by each factory - not the gross amount of sugar throughout the country, but the tonnage of each factory.

Page 129, subhead2, Transport and Travelling. I notice that there has been an increase from 1968. I think that this is an excessive amount and there is no increase in the complement of labour officers. I should like to ask the hon. Minister why there has been an increase in this amount.

Subhead 6, Library and publication. The Ministry of Labour and Social Security is not equipped with a proper library and therefore, publications to employees or employers are inadequate. Under this Head, I feel that there is need for a labour library and consequently, a librarian.

On subhead 9, Relief messengers, I should like the hon. Minister to say why such a great amount has been voted for relief messenger s.

On subhead 12, Expenses, Manpower Research, I should like to know whether the Ministry of Labour is still conducting a manpower research. The expenses so far is \$4,000 and I think this amount can be used otherwise. There are so many other things to be done in the Ministry of Labour and this money can be utilised in other fields that I have mentioned.

The Chairman: The hon. Member Mrs. DaSilva.

Mrs. DaSilva: Under subhead 1, I wish to put items 12 and 15 together, Senior Labour Officers, and Labour Officers. I note that there are nine Senior Labour Officers, one Labour Research Officer, one Vocational Guidance Officer and fifteen Labour Officers, making a total of twenty-four. We would like to know what is being done to increase the force of Labour Officers in view of the important part they have to play in the working of our country. We have many troubles; we are plagued with wildcat strikes, and so much depends on our Labour Officers. How is it possible for twenty-four men to get around all this, I cannot understand. Employers are entering wrong amounts paid as wages in the registers and things like that. How on earth can these twenty-four gentlemen get around to look into all these things. We need more Labour Officers to inspect factories to see that equipment is in order; and maybe, if we had more Officers available, we would not have had that tragic accident at Rose Hall.

Item 14, Vocational Guidance Officer. There is one such Officer who I presume is stationed in Georgetown. We keep thinking that everything begins and ends in Georgetown; but surely the people in the other counties, Berbice and Essequibo, have need for vocational guidance. How can one man get around, or is it that everyone comes to Town? The work of a Vocational Officer is very important and one man is inadequate.

Subhead 14, Contribution to the International Centre for advanced technical and vocational training. We are asked to vote the sum of \$5,000 for this. Could the hon. Minister be kind enough to tell us where this Centre is, and what benefits we derive by making a contribution to it?

Dr. Ramsahoye: I wish to ask the hon. Minister whether the Chief Labour Officer knows that the workers at the Tucville Project have not been paid since June last year, and whether any investigations will be made into payment of the sum of \$20,000 owing.

Mr. Wilson: Mr. Chairman, with regard to subhead 7, Factory Ordinance expenses, I should like to ask the hon. Minister whether in view of the recent tragedy at Rose Hall, it is not

proposed to institute a more systematic examination of factories in order to ensure that safety measures are properly attended.

The second question on that same subhead is that proper inspections should be made to see that the Factory Ordinances are properly carried out .

With regards to overtime paid, can the hon. Minister say whether it is a fact that the Transport and Harbour Department installation are exempt from the Factory Ordinances and whether he considers that they are included in the Factory Ordinances.

6.15 p.m.

Sub-head 10, Contribution to the International Labour Organisation. I would just like to inquire from the Minister whether he is aware that the owners of Rangoon Settlement have recently given perfunctory orders to terminate an agreement with respect to the occupation of 456 acres of land by certain co-operative societies, because the people of Rangoon Settlement refused to remove from the settlement.

The Chairman: That is not a question.

Mr. Wilson: Sub-head 12, Expenses, Manpower Research. Will the Minister say what extent of the labour force is unemployed.

Mr. Jagan: I think the question I want to raise might be more conveniently raised, under capital expenditure.

The Minister of Labour and Social Security (Mr. Carrington): Mr. Chairman although the hon. Member Mr. Harry Lall was the first speaker I would rather give heed to the ladies first and answer the hon. Member Mrs. Da Silva's question.

One of the questions she inquired about is whether or not I consider the staff of the Ministry of Labour inadequate. She says the number has remained the same for many years. From this question it seems that many of the hon. Members are not in touch with the Ministry of Labour. It is clear that they have not been listening to the many releases and discussions taking place. It is a fact that the Ministry intends to reorganize. In the reorganizing programme, there will be more Labour Officers, in the sense of the word, but we have in mind not to have Labour Officers but Labour Inspectors.

Now, the hon. Members would agree that the reorganizing of any Ministry depends to a great extent on the Public Service Ministry and the finances available to carry out such reorganizing. At the present moment I have put up, through my advisers, plans to reorganize and to have more Labour Inspectors or Labour Officers. But what she wants to know is whether they can do the work. Surprisingly, the Ministry of Labour, with the same amount of officers that it has had over the years –

Mrs. Da Silva: I rise to a point of order. I was not questioning the ability of the Labour Officers, but the number.

Mr. Carrington: With the same amount of officers - and I am sure the hon. Member will agree with this - the Ministry has done more work in 1969 than in many years in the past. We have sent more officers to estates and to factories. We have been able to reduce the number of strikes by 50 per cent. We have been able to reduce the number of man hours lost by 50 per cent.

Hon. Members who are engaged with unions will know the reasons for this. This was set out in a Press Release I issued some time ago. The reduction in the number of strikes, the type of industrial relations we had in 1969, was mainly because of the work done by the Labour Officers in the Ministry of Labour.

We posted an extra Labour Officer to New Amsterdam to assist in the work in that area. We have issued notices to all of the estates informing them of the more regular visits to the estates by Labour Officers. This was never done before. A notice is posted up on the various notice boards informing the workers and the unions when officers will be visiting the estates.

Because of this procedure we have been able to settle many grievances at a low level. The hon. Member Mr. Harry Lall is a trade unionist. He knows this is a fact. So we have been doing a better job; we have been doing more work with the same amount of officers. At the same time, I agree that there will be an increase in staff if the matter is considered by the Public Service Ministry and the Ministry of Finance.

On the question asked by the hon. Member concerning the Contribution to the International Centre for Advanced Technical and Vocational Training, I would like to give in detail what we have been able to achieve by paying this amount to the Turin Centre. The Turin Centre is in Italy where we send Guyanese for technical training. More or less, the persons sent will return to Guyana and train others. We have been able to send a number of officers from various Ministries and from private concerns.

From 1967 we have sent 9 such persons to Turin for training. They have come from CAGI, that is, the Consultative Association of Guyanese Industry, from the Guyana Rice Corporation, from the Co-operative Department, from the Co-operative Unions, from the Government Technical Institute and from the management of the Telecommunications Corporation. They all went to Turin for training. We are satisfied in the Ministry of Labour that the amount of money spent in this respect is well spent. We have seen the results because when these individuals return they are able to assist Guyana in technical work and in development as a whole.

On the question of factories. As you will realize this question was asked by many of the speakers, so I would like to embody in this statement my replies to the questions regarding the factory inspectors and safety. We realize that in this particular area there is need for improvement. Guyana is becoming more industrialized and as we become more industrialized

we will have to have more factory inspectors. You will agree that many of the institutions, department and ministries in Guyana inherited a sort of colonial system and certain procedures in doing things. We will have to examine this, re-examine it from time to time, and set about organizing Ministries and department to suit the needs of Guyana.

At the present time we really do not have factory inspectors. What we have are Labour Officers. Any Labour Officer can be called upon to inspect a factory. We have one or two officers who are specifically trained in inspection of factories, but we realize there is need for more training in this area and, as a matter of fact, we agree there should be the establishment of a separate section for the inspection of factories. At the same time, no one can deny that with the limited resources in the Ministry of Labour we are doing our best. We are, in fact, inspecting factories and we go, from time to time, to make these inspections.

One of the hon. Members referred to the question of the accident at Rose Hall and not only to the question of the accident. The Ministry of Labour has been very active and prompt in dealing with most matters. On any report from a trade union, worker or individual, we act. On the report of this accident at Rose Hall I sent an officer there to make immediate inspection and to take samples of the liquid from the tank. Within days, as I announced this morning, a commission will be appointed to investigate the matter.

This closes my reply to the hon. members.

I have the highest regard for the hon. Member Mr. Lall. I was hoping that he would have asked me questions that would have given me the opportunity to give account of my stewardship in the Ministry of Labour. The hon. Member knows what we have been doing in the past months. He has been close to the ministry and is constantly consulting with the

ministry on many matters. I am surprised that he deviated from the Estimates and raised a number of questions, arguments and discussions not related to the Estimates.

The hon. Member referred to the question of the officers and their salaries. I agree that in 1968 we had some problems because officers were dissatisfied. This happen in any concern. These officers are members of a trade union, they are members of the C.S.A. and, as how. Members are aware, the Public Service Ministry has to deal with the question of salaries and wages. I think hon. Members know too that the Collins Commission examined the entire public service structure. These officers gave evidence before that Commission and put their position before the Commission. This will be considered in due time.

The hon. Member repeated some of the questions that he asked last year but he does not know that the salaries of all of the officers that he referred to are now increased. These officers are satisfied and, with the type of

The hon. Member Mr. Wilson referred to the question of vocational guidance. As I said before, there is need for reorganizing and this comes under the Employment Exchange where there is need for guidance in employment. We were just toying with thematter. What we need to do now is to put it on a better basis and we have invited an expert from the U.S.A. by the name of Kennedy who has put up plans for vocational guidance and testing at the Ministry of Labour. These are the things that are taking place that the hon. Members opposite know nothing about. In the past persons went to the Ministry of Labour and the Employment Exchange and said that they were carpenters, or plumbers, mechanics, and that was put down, but when they turned up at the persons who requested them to work they knew very little about the job and this is where, from time, the members of the public who requested such persons lost confidence in the Employment Exchange. We intend to put it on a better basis by way of testing the individual with respect to his competence.

To explain further the stream of developments in the Ministry of Labour, we have the Guyana Industrial Training Centre where we train people and test them, so we feed the Employment Exchange with people who know the job. All of this is taking place so the Vocational Guidance Officer will be fully established and more persons would be there to assist him when the Employment Exchange is fully reorganized.

I should like to reply on the question of research raised by the hon. Member Mrs. Sahoye. We do have a research officer but the person who is carrying out these duties is designated Senior Labour Officer. We are not satisfied that with the assistance that is given this individual he can do the job that is required in Guyana. Here again we need to reorganize for we would like to be in a position to know the unemployment situation exactly, not every year or every month, but if possible every day. We speak of our resources but we would like to be in a position to know our manpower resources, where they are and to what extent and how best we can utilize them. All of this requires reorganizing so I am putting these points here. I am admitting the fact because when we come for supplementary expenditure to carry out these reorganizing programmes hon. Members will agree with it. We do have a research officer but his work, with the assistance that is given, is limited.

On the question of a library, here again Members are not visiting the ministry. Since I became Minister of Labour one of the first things that I did was to have established at the Ministry of Labour one of the best equipped libraries on industrial relation matters in Guyana today. [Mrs. Sahoye; "This is not so.] I am inviting the hon. Member, not next week but tomorrow, to come and see the best library on industrial relation matters in Guyana today. We do have a library.

Finally, the hon. Member Mr. Wilson raised a question with respect to our relations with the I.L.O. The I.L.O. is not an organization that is interested in the Government only, the I.L.O. as an institution is mainly interested in the workers. A lot of the material and literature that the hon. Member Mr. Lall refers to

comes from the I.L.O. and for this reason he is informed about what is necessary and best for workers. As I said before, this Government adheres to and believes in principles and policies of the I.L.O., but our relationship with the I.L.O. goes further. We do get technical assistance. For instance, with the assistance of many experts from the I.L.O., we have now put into effect the National Insurance Scheme from which thousands of workers will benefit and with which previous Governments have toyed for many years. Up to now we have Mr. Matthews who is still assisting us in this scheme. We have had Mr. Max Swerdlow who assisted the T.U.C. in the development of the Critchlow Labour College. We have had Mr. O'Connor who is putting up a report for the establishment of a productivity centre.

Outside of this, the I.L.O. is prepared to assist in our Employment Exchange and vocational training and handicraft, so you can see the need for the continued relations with the I.L.O. and the money that we are spending there.

Finally, on the question asked by the hon. Member. Dr. Ramsahoye, on Tucville, it is the policy of the Ministry not to interfere with employer-employee relations unless either the worker or the employer makes a request. We believe in voluntary collective bargaining in relations between the two parties. During all the months of difficulties at Tucville, we did not interfere.

Today I received a letter from a representative of the union concerning wages and the conditions at Tucville, and I told him that I will investigate the matter, but, sir, you will see the name, Tucville, the T.U.C., the workers' organization, and it should be the first to find out. Instead of this trade union going to the T.U.C., which is a sort of parent of this housing co-operative, it comes to the Ministry of Labour and I will tell you why, and the hon. Members will agree with me, the Ministry of Labour during 1969 has been proven to be a friend of the workers. Thank you.

The Chairman: Hon. Members, I shall put the Question.

20.1.70

National Assembly

6.25 – 6.35 p.m.

Head 58, Ministry of Labour and Social Security - \$575,590, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Speaker: Now we shall suspend the sitting for one and a half hours.

Sitting Suspended at 6.36 p.m.

8.05 p.m.

On resumption –

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

Assembly in Committee of supply

The Chairman: When we suspended, we had completed consideration of Head 58 and we begin with Head 59 on page 130.

HEAD 59 – MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL SECURITY

EMPLOYMENT EXCHANGE SERVICE

Question proposed that this Head stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Lall: I should like to speak on subhead 1, items (1) and (2).

Mrs. DaSilva: I should like to make a short general comment on the Head.

Mrs. Sahoye: Subhead 1, items (6) and (7).

The Chairman: The hon. Member, Mr. Lall.

Mr. Lall: I should like to state that the policy of the Employment Exchange should be fairer. People who are seeking employment must be given employment without favour, fear or partiality. It is not my desire to attack any officer but I should like to attack the policy, the method by which people are employed through the Employment Exchange. I was told by several workers that when visiting the Employment Exchange in Georgetown and New Amsterdam, they are asked to present party cards. [Mr. Hoyte "An old record. That was on the hit parade a long time."] Whether this is true or not, I was told so. What I am saying is that the Government is the Government of the people of Guyana. It is not a Government of one party. The Government represents a party in the Government.

Mr. Joaquin: To a point of order. Will you please tell me on What item the Member is speaking?

Dr. Ramsahoye: On a point of order. The hon. Member cannot usurp the functions of the Speaker.

The Chairman: Hon. Member, proceed.

Mr. La11: When a party is in the Government, it has to govern for the whole nation.
Mr. Lall continued

8.10 p.m.

When there are elections, persons have their election differences but, as soon as a party is elected to Government, that party is the Government of the whole country. I am asking the hon.

Minister to desist or ask his officers to desist from this sort of practice. We have to take into consideration that thousands of children are leaving school. They are seeking employment. If they observe that the children of one section, one party, are getting jobs and they are left out then we will not have a peaceful country; the students are going to rebel. Therefore, the policy should be one that will satisfy everybody in the community. Once again, I should like the Government governed for the whole nation. Once again, I will ask the Government officers at the Employment Exchange to recruit without favour or partiality.

The Chairman: The hon. Member Mrs. DaSilva

Mrs. DaSilva: Sir, I have just a few questions to ask the hon. Minister. First of all, I am greatly indebted to him for telling us earlier this evening of plans afoot for grading workers so that if someone comes along and says that he is a carpenter, one can know exactly how good he is and how well he can perform his duties. This is a necessary step to be taken. I have had some experience in labour where some people say they can do certain things; it is not fair on persons who draw the same wages when the week is finished. I hope that it will be implemented soon.

I wonder if it is possible to tell us at this stage how many people the Employment Exchange found employment for last year. How many men, women and juveniles? Can the hon. Minister say whether there was an improvement in 1969 over 1968? Could the hon. Minister say whether the report of the Committee that met quite a long time ago - the Campbell Report - what has happened to it? Nothing is heard!

There was an enquiry to go into the problem of domestic servants. Could the hon. Minister give us any information?

Juvenile Employment Officer

Assistant Juvenile Employment Officer (Female)

Mrs. Sahoye: Items 6 and 7. In Guyana today, more and more children are leaving school and seeking employment. The mal-administration of this department of the Ministry of Labour, therefore, arouses a great amount of doubt because an Employment Exchange is indeed vital in a developing country like Guyana but since there is such a great amount of malpractice one wonders why this should be the attitude of this department. We should have more Juvenile Officers, male and female, not only to find employment for juveniles but also to be checking on these juveniles to ascertain the wages received by them and also to see that their conditions of employment are proper. Finding employment for juveniles should not be the only criteria. I think there should be some criteria for finding employment because people do not only want to be employed; they want security of employment and conditions of work. This is far from being the policy in this department and I call on the hon. Minister of Labour to let us know what are the duties of these two officers in this department and if he could give us more data pertaining to their functions; how far they could go and if he does not see it fit to streamline this department whereby we could have it so efficient that it will meet the needs of all the people in Guyana and not only one section of the people in Guyana.

Mr. Carrington: Mr. Chairman, on this question of the Employment Exchange, I would like to say that the hon. Member Mr. Harry Lall made reference to unfair employment practices and filling of vacancies and the presentation of a party card; I wish to say that this is not so. This hon. House, and most Guyanese, know that this Government is not concerned with party, race, colour or creed. We are here to serve all Guyanese. One sees how speedily this Ministry acted on the question of the retrenchment of the 350 workers when brought up by the Opposition, we did not waste time. We are not concerned if they had party cards or not. Immediately the Ministry instructed the officers to carry out an investigation and since then we have had a number of meetings – one with the employers, a few with the M.P.C.A., N.A.A.C.I. and with the S.P.A. and we have had an undertaking that they will inform the Ministry if there is any retrenchment to take place and they are prepared to re-examine the whole matter of these retrenched workers. No-one had to present a party card. The same policy extends from the Ministry of Labour to the Employment Exchange.

In this country we talk about party and race; this is the first thing one hears. Go and see who is the Manager of the Employment Exchange. [Interruption] I should like to dispel this idea of having a party card before one can get employment, from the minds of hon. Members. If they find that they are getting any trouble with respect to employment, they are always welcome to make their complaints at the Ministry of Labour.

On this question of employment of juveniles, I wish to say that I have the highest regard for the female. It is said that this is a woman's world and I have always sought to take the advice of the two female members of the Opposition, Mrs. Sahoye and Mrs. DaSilva who have been putting forward suggestions with respect to youths. The fact is that we have been doing a great deal for juveniles. In Georgetown, for the year 1969, 606 juveniles were employed; in its environs, 261; in East Demerara, 302 males and 82 females; Berbice, 261 males and 90 females; West Demerara, 147 males and 44 females; Essequibo 91 males and 15 females; which makes a total of 1,457 employed.

We would like to do more for juveniles but as hon. Members know the Government's overall policy now is to have them enter multi-lateral schools so as to equip them to take their places in the industrial world. Apart from this, the Ministry of Labour, through the Guyana Industrial Training Centre, has sponsored a number of training courses in hotel and restaurant servicing. As a result of this, we have been able to fit a number of young people for employment at the Pegasus Hotel. To date, 151 students have been trained and have graduated from this Centre; and most of them have found employment.

We would have to prepare them, and the burden rests only on the Government, the private sector will have to do its part. We have the technical Institute which is a training ground for these young people. But there will become a time when we will be able to do more extensive training. As regards the duties of the Juvenile Employment Officer, it is more than just sitting there and finding jobs for young people. This Officer, on many occasions, has advised young people as to what employment is best for them depending on their aptitude. Most of the young

people want to be employed in the City; they do not want to do agriculture and other things. These Officers are intended to advise young people and give them guidance in respect of employment. As a matter of fact, in the near future, we may have to increase the number of persons in this particular section of the Ministry of Labour.

With regard to Domestics, I wish to state that the Report of the Committee is with the Law Officers and is being carefully examined. This report is far-reaching and there should be a thorough examination of it. I want to assure the hon. Member Mrs. DaSilva that we are at the same time looking into the interest of domestics. As I said, we would have to equip them first of all. As soon as the Report is returned from the Law Officers, we will see how much can be implemented.

Head 59- Ministry of Labour and Social Security Employment Exchange, \$70,373, agreed to and stands part of the Estimate.

The Chairman: We turn now to pages 131 and 132.

HEAD 60 - MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL SECURITY

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Question proposed that this Head stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Jagan: I should like to speak on subhead 25.

Mr. Wilson: I wish to speak on Subhead 2, item 1; subheads 16 and 17.

Mrs. Sahoye rose --

Mr. Harry Lall: I should like to speak on subhead 1, items, 6, 18 and 23; subheads, 7, 16 and 17.

Mrs. Sahoye: Subhead 1, items 5, 6 and 7; subhead 7

The Chairman: I hope you note that both the hon. Member Mr. Harry Lall and the hon. Member Mrs. Sahoye will be speaking on the same subhead and item. I hope that whichever of you speaks first will have regards for what is said by the other.

Mrs. Sahoye: I will do items 5 and 6.

Mr. R.D. Persaud: I wish to speak on subhead 1, item 1, 2, 4 and 6: and on the other page sub head 16 and 17.

Mrs. DaSilva: on page 131, I wish to speak on subheads 8 and 12. I should like to make a general statement on page 132, subheads 15, 16, 17, and 25.

8.30 p.m.

The Chairman: The hon. Member Mr. Jagan wanted to speak on sub-head 25.

Mr. Jagan: Sub-head 25, National Insurance. During the Second Reading of the Budget Speech I referred very briefly to part of the benefits that workers were entitled to claim under the National Insurance Scheme and was very happy to hear my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of Home Affairs - it was done when he was speaking for the Minister of Labour and Social Security - when he said that the Government's intention was that workers should not derive less benefit under the National Insurance Scheme than they had derived under the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance.

Since then, I have had an opportunity to look at some of these benefits more closely and I hope that the Minister will ask his advisers to look into this matter more carefully, having regard to the Government's intention, and that something will be done to have the regulations amended or annulled within the period of 40 days as required by the Act.

The regulations dealing with death benefits to dependants under the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance set out dependants who are entitled to benefit, for instance, widow, children, step-children, grandfather, grandmother and all other persons who are wholly or mainly dependent on the earnings of the deceased. All these persons were entitled to share in the compensation if they were dependent on the deceased's earnings at the time of his death.

But strangely, under the death benefits set out now, one sees, if a person dies, in what circumstances his dependants would be entitled to death benefits. First of all, the widow would only be entitled to death benefit when she reaches the age of 55 years. If she is below 55 years, she must be permanently incapable of working, otherwise she would not be entitled to claim any benefit; secondly, she must be pregnant at the time of the death, or must have the maintenance of a child of the deceased or of the children of the marriage. Then, to make it worse, although there are all these restrictions, she must be receiving the sum of \$5 per week at the time of the death of the person.

It means, therefore, that first of all before a widow would be entitled to claim she must reach the age of 55 years or, if she is younger, she must be permanently incapable of work, or pregnant at the time of the death of the worker, or she must have the maintenance of a child of the deceased or of the children of the marriage. With the condition of \$5 a week, it means that if the worker has a casual type of employment and receives just below \$5, such a person's widow or dependant would be totally debarred from claiming any benefit under this new scheme.

Under the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance, as I said, all dependants claimed at the same time, but under the scheme, if the widow is entitled to claim, if she passes those rigid tests

set out in the scheme, then she alone would be entitled to claim compensation and not the children or any other dependants.

I was surprised to see, from what appears in the newspapers in respect to the death of those people in Berbice, that even officers of the scheme gave wrong information. Evidently they themselves do not understand what the regulations mean. If the widow is entitled, no other dependant can claim and children can only claim, under the regulations, if they are orphans, that is, if the father and mother die. Only then would the children be considered for benefit and they would only receive benefit until the age of 16 years and not beyond. If, at the time of death, they are 16 years they would be paid until they are 18 years, and they would be paid in exclusion to other persons such as parents, or grandparents and so on.

If the person has a widow, then the widow claims exclusively. If there is no widow or widower then the orphan children would claim; if there are no orphans it goes to the parents. A parent would only be entitled if he or she is permanently incapable of self-support.

It means that if the person has a father who is 45 years of age, once he is capable of working - although he is not working or he cannot find employment and was being supported by the deceased - he would not be entitled to any benefit under the Scheme.

When one moves beyond the parents and the children, one finds that other dependants who were entitled under the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance would also not be entitled to claim any benefit unless they themselves are permanently incapable of self-support.

I am rather surprised that the advisers have not done anything to remedy this situation, having regard to the fact that the Government has stated openly, not only during this debate on the Budget, but even before when the National Insurance and Social Security Bill was being that debated, that its intention was that the workers should not receive less benefit under this scheme than under the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance

Further, in the case of death, under the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance there was a minimum payment of \$2,700 with a maximum of \$5,400. Once a person died, regardless of what his wages were, his dependants were entitled to a minimum of \$2,700. Under the new scheme the Director has a discretion to award up to a maximum of 100 weeks of relevant wage and the relevant wage starts from \$15 and goes up to \$55. So it means that, even if the Director decides to give the maximum allowance of 100 weeks, in some cases the dependants would receive \$1,500, in other cases \$2,500, as a maximum, which would be far less than the amount the persons would have been entitled to under the Workman's Compensation Ordinance, where the minimum was \$2,700.

I do not want to go into this in great detail. That is only in respect of the death benefit to show that unless the Minister can get his advisers to change these things immediately a lot of people will be affected.

There is just one other matter which was also referred to. Under the provisions of the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance, if a person is disabled he is paid compensation, but if his disability does not last for more than three days he is not paid any compensation. If, however, his disability continues for more than three days, then he is paid compensation from the date of the injury. Under this scheme it states that once a person has a disability he will not be paid for the first three days regardless of whether this disability continues beyond the three days or not.

Here, too, I think the advisers should follow the provision as in the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance. If they do not want to pay for the first three days, that is, supposing the disability lasts one or two days, it is right and good. If the person's disability continues beyond the three days, then he should be paid from the date of the accident, including the three days also.

During the Budget Debate I had referred to a few of the percentages that were given to workmen. I do not intend to refer to those again to waste the House's time but under the schedule to the regulations there are a whole set of injuries specified, ankylosis of spine, etc. For instance, it is set out here that a person with spinal injury will be paid 20 per cent for partial and 30 per cent for complete. The word "*ankylosis*" means abnormal immobility and consolidation of a joint. It means that a person could receive maybe 20 or 30 per cent for a number of injuries as set out in the schedule to the regulations made under the national Insurance and Social Security Act.

When one looks at the schedule to the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance, Chapter 111, it is stated there - and I will just read the relevant paragraph to show that the regulations made under the National Insurance and Social Security Act should be changed:

"The percentage of incapacity for ankylosis of any joint shall be reckoned as from 25 to 100 per cent., of the incapacity for loss of the use of that member, according to whether the joint is ankylosed in a favourable or unfavourable position."

Let us take the case of a shoulder joint under the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance. If a person loses his hand from the shoulder he would be paid 70 per cent. If the joint has become consolidated and he cannot move it properly he could be paid between 25 to 100 percent which is prescribed for the member, whereas, under the regulations made under the National Insurance and Social Security Act, for a similar injury to the shoulder he would be paid 30 per cent for partial and 40 per cent for complete.

When one looks through the regulations there are a number of injuries set out under ankylosis and, as set out in the schedule to the regulations made under The National Insurance and Social Security Act, the amount would be far less than what is stated in the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance. I have previously referred to the fact that where there is injury to

more than two members of the hand it could be aggregated and the medical practitioner could increase it rather than have it the way it is stated in these regulations.

I am very grateful to you to give me this opportunity to bring it to the attention of the Minister and I do not want to spend too much time on it because the Minister has indicated to me that the Government's intention is to see that the workers would not be at a disadvantage, having regard to the fact that workers are now contributing to this Scheme whereas previously they never contributed anything for benefits they received under the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance. I hope that advisers to the Minister would compare the regulations and the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance and that something would be done before the expiration of the forty days or else these regulations will come into effect at expiration of forty days.

The Chairman: The hon. Member Mr. Lall.

Social Assistance Officers

Mr. Lall: Item 6: I notice that many persons who apply for old age pension and social assistance have to wait for years before an officer visits them. Sometimes they re-apply and still no officer visits them. Many persons have made reports of this nature and, on several occasions, I drew them to the attention of the Minister. Why can't these officers hasten their investigations? People apply for social assistance or old age pension because they are in need. Some of these officers have reported to me that they are very dissatisfied because four years ago they were promised that their salaries would be regarded. Up to now nothing has been done and when I meet many of these officers and I question them they say, "We can only do as much as we can. Government has promised to regard our salaries and nothing has been done for so many years." I wonder if the Minister could inquire into this and regard these officers' salaries to encourage them to hasten their investigations.

Head Cook

Item 18: I visited the Palms and I was told by many of the inmates that the food they are getting is not fit for human consumption.

The Chairman: This item deals with Head Cooks You should raise that matter under subhead 4, Dietary.

Mr. Lall: I am saying that either the Head Cook is not getting the foodstuffs to prepare proper meals or something is wrong somewhere. Perhaps a dietician is needed and I am asking the Minister to appoint a dietician to the Palms and to check that all the foodstuffs purchased for the Palms are in good condition. Nothing spoilt should be sent to the Palms. I do not want to blame the cook but something is wrong somewhere. This is why I raised the question under this item.

The Chairman: See if you could go on to item 23 now.

Nurses and Servants

Mr. Lall: Item 23: I now want to turn my attention to nurses.

8.50 p.m.

Many of the nurses complain that they are doing dual duties at the Palms. They are looking after the sick and they are looking after elderly people. They indicated that they were promised by the Finance Minister in his last year's Budget that he would increase their salaries and the cost would be in the vicinity of \$6 to \$8 million. Up to now nothing has been done. I went there myself and saw the old people messing up the place, then these nurses had to take

care of them. Sir, I feel in the interest of justice, that these nurses should be treated better because they are doing dual duties.

Subhead 7, Uniforms for Nurses and Servants. I was told by these nurses that they are receiving two sets of uniforms. Your Honour, because of the type of work these nurses are doing, they have to wash their uniforms more often than the ordinary nurses, which means that their two uniforms cannot last as long as those of the ordinary nurses at the Georgetown Hospital. With regular washing, they cannot last the nurses at the Palms one year, therefore, I am asking, because of the nature of the job they are doing, because of the type of patients they have to care, that they be given additional uniforms.

The Chairman: We have to watch our time. You do not have to mate the points again.

Mr. Lall: Subhead 16, Old Age Pensions. On this subhead I want to appeal to the Government—

The Chairman: I thought you had incorporated this into your comment on Social Assistance.

Mr. Lall: When the late Mr. Critchlow thought Old Age Pension should be paid to people in this country, at that time, Your Honour, the cost of living was very low. Today, the cost of living has gone up almost by half and the means test of \$16 that was fixed during that period or after that period could not measure up with the cost of living today, therefore, Your Honour, I am appealing to the Government to either raise the amount of the means test because of the high cost of living to \$48, or abolish the means test. When the Government shall have done so, it will have made the poor man a real man.

Subhead 17, Public Assistance. I do not want to point my finger at any civil servant or any servant of the Government because as a labour leader, I do not like to see people sacked,

but complaint was made to me that people who are receiving social assistance, had their cards taken away, some for two months, some for three months, some for six months, and automatically, the cards were handed back to them. I should like an investigation to be made into this. I am not pointing to anybody but I am merely asking that an investigation should be made. Why is it automatically the card had to be withdrawn for six months and at the end of six months the person got a notice, "Come back, receive your social assistance again." People with five, six, seven children.

On one occasion I had to go and meet the officer in New Amsterdam and he told me that he was joking with the lady. Joking for three months.

The Chairman: You have made your point.

Mr. Lall: But I did not draw it to the attention of the Minister [**An hon. Member (Government):** "Why do you raise it here?"] - he might have lost his job. I am asking for a thorough examination to be made and this might correct things.

Mrs. DaSilva: Sir, I wish to start with the general comment I said I wanted to make on this Head. It is in connection with the Palms and I wish to quote from the Annual Report of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security for the year 1968.

9 p.m.

On page 52:

"The Palms' may be described as a Welfare Institution catering for the chronically ill and infirm, destitute and homeless individuals, being for the most part aged people who cannot support themselves in the community and are in need of geriatric care and attention primarily.

It is necessary that an atmosphere of homeliness be created and maintained for them and the objective of the Board of Poor Law Commissioners was to make appropriate recommendations to the Government to provide every amenity practicable for the comfort of those who must inevitably be committed to Institutional care."

In that year the "Palms" could cater for 520 people. Now we have a development programme in progress and I would like to know how, in view of the fact that the "Palms" is a place for the elderly, is it possible to have an atmosphere of homeliness in such an enormous building reminiscent of the colonial past, days like Dickens' work-house in Britain. We should create a homely atmosphere.

I wish to ask the hon. Minister to abolish the "Palms" and establish small homes not just one big place in Georgetown; these should be spread throughout the country because there are other people not only in Georgetown and they cannot all come and get into one building. Could the hon. Minister give this some consideration? Obviously this cannot be done all at once but bit by bit, little by little. After all we should aim high for the citizens of Guyana.

Furniture and Equipment

Now we come to subhead 8 - Furniture and Equipment - for which we are asked to vote \$5,000. I wonder if the hon. Minister can explain because, further on, under Details of Capital Expenditure there is allocation for \$4,000 for Purchase of Equipment, a total of \$9,000. What will it be spent on? Will it be for beds in this big bank of an institution?

Grant to Salvation Army for Social Work

On subhead 12 - Grant to Salvation Army for Social Work - I am not asking any question querying anything done for the Salvation Army. They are doing a fine bit of work and should be given an increase, but I use this as a mean to ask the hon. Minister what is the possibility of getting a grant for the Children's Dorcas Club. The report of the hon. Minister of Labour says that one -

The Chairman: I do not think you will be on correct by suggesting on this Head that grants should be given to the Dorcas Club. I believe that the club. I believe that the club already gets a grant under division of youth.

Mrs. DaSilva: I am not aware of this

The Chairman: I think they already do.

Mrs. DaSilva: I did not know this. Maybe the hon. Minister will be able to tell me where this is done.

Meals for Nurses

The amount asked for is \$18,000 for Meals for Nurses. We have been hearing many, many complaints of meals not only in the "Palms" but in all the Government institutions of Guyana. As everyone is aware, it is very difficult to cook in institutions. One cannot hope to cook for 100 people as one would for three or four persons. Very often the meals in institutions are badly cooked and not fit to be eaten. Or it could be that the stuff allocated to that institution disappears and the full quantity does not arrive; or it could be that the quality is not what it should be; a lot of meals are spoilt through bad preparation. The hon. Minister has been telling us about centers for training in various fields especially at the Carnegie; it is the correct thing to do as there is always something new to learn.

Old Age Pensions

Public Assistance

Subheads 16 and 17. I too wish to recommend the abolition of the pension of which is totally unrealistic in today's context of the high cost of living.

National Insurance

The last question is under subhead 25 - National Insurance. I wonder if the hon. Minister will be kind enough to tell the House how the Scheme is going since we have had no reports since it started? Can we have up-to-date information? Is he satisfied? Should more people be registered? Are people creating problems?

The Chairman: The hon. Member Mrs. Sahoye.

Supervisory Social Assistance Officers**Social Assistance officers**

Mrs. Sahoye: Mr. Chairman, in the explanatory notes for items 5 and 6, it is stated:

"Changes in holders of posts."

It is my belief that this department needs proper supervision. I wish to ask the hon. Minister what are the duties of the Supervisory Social Assistance Officers because there are so many complaints by people throughout this country pertaining to old age pension and social assistance. Visits of Social Assistance Officers - I am not saying all of them - are few and far apart especially in the remote areas of the country. Dates of payments of social assistance and old age pensions are far from acceptable. In the North West District, Berbice River, Pomeroon and Essequibo, residents who are in receipt of these pensions travel long distances only to find that the officer is not there. The residents of the North West, particularly, find it very difficult.

I could remember going to Mabaruma to obtain a social assistance form and there was no officer. I was told that there was a cupboard in which the District Commissioner usually kept the social assistance forms and old age pension forms, but it was kept lock.

I was told I cannot get any social assistance forms. This is the complaint of people in the North West District which is an area where people travel by boat for long distances. Therefore, I think the hon. Minister should investigate these matters. The Social Assistance Department should publish the date of visits; this could be done either by the radio or by the newspapers. In the areas where people do not have radios, I once told the hon. Minister that the Headmasters should be notified and it should be put on the blackboard where the children can write it on their slates. In such a way, the majority of people would be informed.

We have twenty-four Districts and I suppose a Social Assistance Officer is responsible for one District. In each of these Districts there is a Local Board of Guardians and a Social Assistance Officer is represented on this Board. There should be an allocation to each District. I should like the hon. Minister to tell us (a) the amount of money paid out per district, and (b) what check is made of each District with respect to social assistance and old age pension. I should also like to know who is responsible for checking each District? If there is checking being done, I should like to know if the checking is carried out quarterly, half yearly or annually.

I know as a fact that regular meetings of the Local Board of Guardians are not held. Many members are not fully apprised with what is going on in other Districts. Many residents who take an active part in the Board are not given copies of minutes of meetings.

Pertaining to subhead 1, item 7, Child Welfare Officer, I wish to point out that the majority of the recipients of social assistance are children. There are more children in receipt of social assistance than elderly people. It is my opinion that one Child Welfare Officer is insufficient. If we are to have a nation, if we are to progress in Guyana, then it is important and necessary that the fatherless and motherless be properly taken care of because they are the men and women of tomorrow. So it is necessary that there be a constant check to see not only that these children go to school but that their general welfare is properly taken care of. Therefore, I should like to suggest to the hon. Minister that there be more officers in this field.

Although subhead 7 has been adequately dealt with, I still wish to say that the uniforms given to nurses and servants at the Palms are indeed inadequate. When one sees a nurse from the Palms on the road one wonders where she is working. The majority of nurses at the Palms are women and therefore, I should like the hon. Minister to give consideration to increasing the number of uniforms for these women at the Palms.

The Chairman: The hon. Member Mr. Wilson.

Mr. Wilson: Mr. Chairman, the items and subheads to which I referred, I will deal with them all together. I want to say that I endorse what has been said by the hon. Member Mr. Harry Lall but I have one or two points to add.

With regard to social assistance, the time taken to deal with applications is really too long in many cases. I have mentioned this only to build up a concrete case which came to my attention a few weeks ago so that the hon. Minister can see that I am not criticising for the sake of criticising. A woman from Vigilance whose husband committed suicide has seven not children who are all small but up to now her case has not been Investigated. I think that there is a procedure where the Local Board of Guardians along with the Chief Social Assistance

Officer gives emergency relief at some time and I am wondering why in this case those powers have not been evoked by the Officer. With regard to children, if a mother has two children under the age of 14 years, it is the practice that only six or sometimes five be given social assistance. But that is not all; I understand that the mother is the responsible one. Another point I wish to make is that the age set out for social assistance is far too low. Relief should be given to the child up to 16 or 18 years.

9.20 p.m.

Children are taken off the list at the age of 14 years. This is far too low. Children are not taken on the Creole dam now.

With regard to the old age pension, I wonder whether the hon. Minister does not think the time has come when the means test should be removed and the qualifying age be reduced from 65 to 60 years.

Mr. R.D. Persaud: I will be very brief.

The Chairman: You should be.

Mr. R.D. Persaud: Sub-head 1, item (l), Social Security Officer. Can the Minister say why this post is provided for in the Estimates and no sum is put down? The officer is no longer in the department. The person who was earmarked for this position is working with the National Insurance Scheme.

Secondly, with respect to all items I have mentioned that deal with salaries, I urged last year that there should be equal salaries for all social workers in Government departments. If I remember well the hon. Minister agreed with this proposal.

I pointed out on that occasion, that the Probation Officers were being paid higher salaries than Social Assistance Officers. Both departments are important, but Social Assistance Officers have a greater volume of work and their salaries at the moment are low. I am urging the Government to look into this matter as early as possible. I have been raising this question year after year. The Government should pay equal salaries to all social worker so I am told that some discussion is going on and the Government is inclined, at the moment, to increase the salaries of the Chief Social Assistance Officer and his Deputy, but there is no consideration for all Social Assistance Officers.

May I urge the Minister very sincerely that deep consideration be given to these officers. This matter has been pending for too long. Let him tell us positively tonight what is the decision.

I will not speak on sub-head 16, Old Age Pensions, but on sub-head 17, Public Assistance. I want to say there has been no increase in Public Assistance since the occasion when old age pensions were increased. Two years have passed and nothing has been done. I want to urge that \$6.50 for country areas and \$7.50 a month for Georgetown is too small, I think the hon. Minister should look into this question and immediately increase social assistance, both for Georgetown and for the rural areas, because there are many people who depend solely on social assistance and \$6.50 a month for a man or woman in the rural areas is too small. The same applies to the amount paid in Georgetown.

Mr. Carrington: In reply to the first speaker, the hon. and learned Member, Mr. Derek Jagan, who made reference to the National Insurance Scheme, hon. Members will realize that the question does not really fall under this Head.

It is always the policy of this Government and of the Ministry of Labour to listen to the views and advice, not only of Members of Parliament, but of members of the public. We have the greatest respect for the hon. Members knowledge of workmen's compensation. For this reason, when he raised the, question, while we were debating the Budget Speech, the Minister of Home Affairs indicated that it is the Governments intention to amend, if necessary, the Regulations. Since then I have communicated with the hon. Member Mr. Jagan and told him that we intend to show that it is Government's intention that workers should not be worse off in any way under the National Insurance Scheme.

We have compiled and examined the points raised by Mr. Jagan and we are ready now to have a meeting with him. I do not know if his party's colleagues are preventing him from attending such a meeting, because it has always been the attitude of the Opposition to prevent their colleagues from taking part in discussions. My Ministry has invited the hon. Member Mr. Harry Lall to serve on the Board of the National Insurance Scheme, so that he can give us his advice in the interest of workers, and they have decided that he should not serve.

I am just saying this as a clear indication that it is the policy of my Ministry at all times to take the advice of hon. Members and to invite the Opposition to discuss important matters.

On the question of outstanding social assistance, which was raised by the hon. Member Mr. Harry Lall, I want to say that there has been a marked improvement in this situation since the regime of the previous Government. During the life of the previous Government there were \$7,000 outstanding applications dating from 1961. This Government has been able to reduce it to a matter of 250. All of these things have to be examined. [Mr. Wilson: "You just disqualified them".] Whether they were disqualified or not, an examination was made. The previous Government did nothing. There were 7000 applications outstanding. These are the facts.

The hon. Member made reference to the question of regarding the salaries of Social Assistance Officers. I want to say that the hon. Members need not make representations here. These officers are members of the C.S.A. and the representatives of the C.S.A. came into my Ministry and we had discussions on the upgrading of these officers. The matter is now receiving the attention of the Public Service Ministry.

On the question of meals for nurses. We heard the hon. Member Mrs. Da Silva make reference to this. We have no quarrel. There is a quarrel elsewhere, not at Parliament. The nurses are satisfied with the meals, but the hon. Member seems to be mixing up Meals for Nurses with Dietary. I am going to try to separate them. I think she wanted to discuss the meals for the nurses and meals for inmates. There is improvement here. There is better control over the supply of foodstuff. We are training those persons who are cooking for both the inmates and the nurses, but I must admit that we have a problem here and I agree with the hon. Member that there is need to examine the stocks that we get.

I agree that there is a lot wrong, because there are times when meals may be short for the inmates; We would like to know where the foodstuff is going. I am making this statement because it is the intention of my Ministry to make sure that the inmates get their full quota of meals. Neither the employees nor members of the public must take away the foodstuff.

Therefore, when we decide at the Ministry of Labour to have control, to search the employees, and the unions start to howl, you will know that we are protecting the inmates. You may come in here and say that we have no right to set up better control. If we find somebody stealing the food and we dismiss that person, you are going to come in here and howl. We are going to have more control. I am indicating this because that when the employees are looking a bit bulky, we are going to search them, search their bags and if possible –

Mr. Wilson: ["You have to look at supplies too."] There will be improvement there too. It is the intention of the Ministry of Labour in consultation and co-ordination with the Ministry of Health to examine the whole question of supply of foodstuffs to both institutions.

9.30 p.m.

On the question of nurses, I think that some Members should pay a visit to the Palms and speak with, the nurses and the nurse aides. They would tell you that there is marked improvement there. We have mounted a training programme for nurse aides, because what was the position here? We found that in many cases, after many years of experience, the nurse aides were just as competent as the nurses themselves and, rather than recruit nurses from the Georgetown Hospital to work at the Palms where the type of work and attention is quite different, we decided to train the nurse aides at the Palms, give them a certificate and prepare them to become nurses. I opened that course and I saw that the nurses were happy about this new improvement. There is not much difference between the salary, a difference of \$18, but, surely, we want to make the nurses at the Palms happy and comfortable because we realize that they are doing a very important job taking care of the poor.

On the question of uniforms, it seems as if some Members have information but their information is not correct. The nurses get four sets of uniforms and they do not have to do the washing. The washing is done by the institution free of charge, so I do not see how it can be said

that the nurses at the Palms are ugly and shabby,, I am saying that we have to examine what the hon. Member said because I know that at times some employees go to work with untidy uniforms, but if you check at their homes their aunts and cousins are using the good ones These are the facts. We give them good uniforms and they are supposed to be clean because we wash them.

On the question of the payment of old age pension, I should like to say that I replied to this very question last year. We have increased it by \$2 over the years whereas the previous Governments did nothing, I think you would agree that we want to move away from this question of paternalism. I agree that we need to get rid of the Palms completely and perhaps allow voluntary organizations to assist in whatever way they can, but with the development of national insurance - I want to get this point over – the Palms will go because old people will then be receiving adequate pension to enable them to stay at home. Many persons at the Palms are not sick but they just cannot provide themselves with a living and their families cannot keep them in their homes.

On the question of public assistance, many people feel that public assistance is a must. You would have to examine the circumstances and this Government is not prepared to give public assistance as soon as a person scratches his head and says, "I want public assistance," Each case will have to be carefully examined and, depending upon the circumstances, public assistance could be granted and it could also be withdrawn at any time. I am saying that we did give public assistance in many emergencies and many Members know this. We are not here to share out to our friends and comrades as we like. We have to guard the taxpayers' money.

The hon. Member Mrs. DaSilva wanted to know whether we intend to purchase equipment. I agree that at some time the Palms would have to go and I should like to see it go as early as possible but, for the moment, the people are there, we have to take care of them, and the sum of \$4,000 is provided here to purchase furniture. We intend to do away with some of the

20.1.70

National Assembly

9.30 p.m. – 9.40 p.m.

old-fashioned beds and replace them with foam mattresses for the inmates. As I have said before, there is no complaint as regard's the meals.

As regards the Child Welfare Officer, the main function of the Child Welfare Officer is to assist in and advise on the rehabilitation of delinquents and also to assist the handicapped in whatever way he can. This officer is doing this job because there are many handicapped children and many delinquents. I agree with the hon. Member Mr. Sahoye that we need perhaps to increase the number in this particular field, but this depends upon the finances.

On the question of the age, I should like to inform the hon. Member that the age is 16 and not 14. It was 14 during the regime of the P.P.P.

An hon. Member made reference to the rates. For persons in Georgetown the amount is \$6.50 and \$10.00 in other areas. It is \$7.50 and \$12.00 in the country. The minimum amount is \$7.50 and the maximum \$12.00.

Apart from these answers, I should like hon. Members to know what is taking place because the hon. Member Mrs. DaSilva made reference to the 1968 report. Through the assistance of the Ministry of Health we now have two doctors. People are volunteering, they intend to work hard. They intend to visit the Palms four hours a day because we could not get any doctor to accept an appointment there.

9.40 p.m.

Through the Ministry of Health, we have assigned two nurses to assist in geriatric treatment. We are now starting a programme of rehabilitation because we do not put those people there and we are finished there, just letting them live there. This Government does not feel so, we feel they can be rehabilitated and made useful in the community. However, to show the attitude and the co-operation that this Government is receiving, today, there was a meeting of

public-spirited people in the community and we have just organized a "Friends of the Palms", and there are lots of people who will go in there from time to time to make these people much happier. There will be quite a change there in 1970.

Head 60, Ministry of Labour and Social Security, -Social Assistance - \$4,115,845, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

**DIVISION XXII - MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND
SOCIAL SECURITY**

Question proposed that this Division stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Wilson: Subhead 4.

Mr. Lall: Subhead 2.

Mrs. DaSilva: Subheads 1, 2, 3 and 4, in case my colleague does not make the point.

The Chairman: We will begin, with the hon. Member, Mrs. DaSilva.

Mrs. DaSilva: My general comment on subheads 1, 2, 3 and 4, is very short. Subhead 1, Purchase of Equipment, will the Minister kindly explain about the purchase of clothing and bedding for the Palms which appeared under the previous Head, What is the meaning of bedding Mattresses are one of the main items necessary for a place like the Palms, What other types of equipment will be purchased?

Subhead 2, Accelerated Training Programme, \$103,000, has been asked for while the legend says, "To provide for the training of unskilled workers." Will the Minister explain how an

Secondly, who comprises the National Aid Board? Thirdly, how much precisely - I do not imagine that the hon. Minister can give great detail but I would like to get as much detail as to how much - will be spent?

The Chairman: The hon. Minister may reply.

Mr. Carrington: Mr. Chairman, on the question by the hon. Member Mrs. DaSilva about Purchase of Equipment, I wish to say that this sum of \$4,000 is a very small amount to provide for the purchase of equipment for the "Palms" but I could not tell you in detail the equipment required until an examination is carried out. We are setting up a programme to improve equipment.

On the question of accelerated training programme, as I said earlier, people would like to make the employees at the "Palms" happy and we know that as long as they find it possible to improve their position, increase their skill and so earn more, they can make a further contribution. It is the view of this Ministry that if they find a porter capable of studying and reading they could establish a library there that could be used and he could study to be a nurse's aide or a wardmaid. If he is prepared to work, we are prepared to assist in this respect. This is the reason for this subhead.

On the question of National Insurance, I would like to satisfy hon. Members that we are doing our jobs and looking into everyone's interests. I am sure that everyone is satisfied that National Insurance is off to a good start. We have just paid our first industrial benefit to a worker. We are collecting forms and preparing for payments of other benefits. We are short of one member because of the refusal of the hon. Member Mr. Harry Lall to serve but the Board is set up and functioning. The National Aid Board is set up and we are examining the question of investment of payments and regulations and we have just sent off four officers to be trained in Europe, Malta, Geneva and in the United Kingdom. They have gone to get further training so that they can apply their knowledge to the Scheme. We are all satisfied that all is well.

On the question of rehabilitation raised by the hon. Member Mr. Wilson and the hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran, I wish to say that I do not deal with housing. The question of the Report of which mention is made, he made mention of it in 1969 and he will make mention of it again in 1971— [Mr. Wilson: "I want to know which Minister to ask."] You have to ask the hon. Minister of Housing and Reconstruction (Mr. D. Singh) about rehabilitation. The National Aid Board is doing the most it can to assist any person falling within this category. The Rational Aid Board comprises of Mrs. D. Bailey, M.B.E., Mrs. M. Rodrigues, M.B.E., Mrs. Chandra Singh, Mr. W.J. Rodrigues, F.R.I.C.S., Mr. R. Blair, Mr. J. A. Exeter, Rev. O.A. Lupe, J.P., Mr. S.S. Naraine, Mr. W.J. Matthews and Mr. M.H. Rahaman. The amount we have already spent is \$5,358 for various purposes of rehabilitation. \$100 went to repairing and renting houses, farming, training, hardships and stock-rearing. But the amounts vary from time to time.

I would just like to make reference to one set of applications for various amounts. We see here Mr. Alves - \$400 and so on; Mr. Rampaul, Mr. John DaSilva [Mr. Wilson: "Call the amounts."] — Mr. Jupiter, Mr. Randolph Kumar; I am giving you some of the names; Mr. UditNarain - \$250; Mr. Prashad - \$250; Mr. Singh - \$250. Would you like to examine this list? There were grants for many other purposes - purchase of food, clothing, school-books, household effects, erecting houses, farming, stock-rearing, etcetera. At any time any of the hon. Members who so wish can call out the Minister and get further information on granting of loans.

Division XXII, Ministry of Labour and Social Security - \$207,000, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Hon. Members, I want to draw your attention to the fact that tomorrow is the last day on which we will consider these Estimates in the Committee of Supply. We still have a number of Heads to cover. There are three Ministries left, the Ministry of Information, Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance. We have six hours tomorrow, and we want to conclude these three Ministries. I was wondering whether hon. Members would have any objection to dealing with the Ministry of Information tonight.

20.1.70

National Assembly

9.50 p.m. – 10 p.m.

Mr. Ram Karran: We have no objection but I do not see the need for it having regard to the fact that we can cover the ground tomorrow. Except for the Ministry of Education, none of the other Heads are very difficult.

Miss Field-Ridley: I think we should take the assurance of the hon. Member.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, "That this Assembly do adjourn to Wednesday, 21st January, 1970, at 2 p.m."

[Miss Field-Ridley]

Adjourned accordingly at 10 p.m.
