

**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**

16th Sitting

2 p.m.

Thursday, 20th March, 1969

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Speaker

Cde. R.B. Gajraj, C.B.E., J.P.

Members of the Government – People's National Congress (35)

Prime Minister (1)

Cde. L.F.S Burnham, Q.C.,
Prime Minister

Ministers (14)

Cde. P.A. Reid,
Minister of Finance

Cde. R.J. Jordan,
Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources

Cde. M. Kasim
Minister of Communications

Cde. H.D. Hoyte
Minister of Home Affairs

Cde. N. J. Bissember,
Minister of Trade and Parliamentary Affairs

Cde. C.M.L. John,
Minister of Local Government

Cde. W.G. Carrington,
Minister of Labour and Social Security

Cde. S.M. Patterson,
Minister of Education

Cde. B. Ramsaroop,
Minister of Housing and Reconstruction

Cde. S.S. Ramphal, C.M.G., Q.C.,
Attorney General and Minister of State

Cde. M.W. Carter,
Minister of Information

Cde. H. Green,
Minister of Works and Hydraulics

Cde. H.O Jack,
Minister without Portfolio

(Absent)

Cde. S.E. Talbot,
Minister of Health

Parliamentary Secretaries (5)

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

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

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

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

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

Other Members (15)

Cde. J.N. Aaron
Cde. M.M. Ackman
Cde. K. Bancroft
Cde. J. Budhoo, J.P.
Cde. L.I. Chan-A-Sue
Cde. O.E. Clarke, Deputy Speaker
Cde. E.F. Correia
Cde. M. Corrica
Cde. E.H.A. Fowler
Cde. P.A. Limerick
Cde. S.M. Saffee
Cde. D.A. Singh
Cde. R.C. Van Sluytman
Cde. C.E. Wrights
Cde. M. Zaheeruddeen, J.P.

Members of the Opposition (23)

Leader of the Opposition (1)

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

Other Members(22)

Cde. Ram Karran
Cde. R. Chandisingh
Cde. F.H.W. Ramsahoye
Cde. D.C. Jagan
Cde. E. M.G. Wilson
Cde. A.M. Hamid, J.P.
Cde. G.H. Lall
Cde. M.Y. Ally
Cde. R.D. Persaud, J.P.
Cde. E.M. Stoby
Cde. R. Ally
Cde. E.L. Ambrose
Cde. L.M. Branco
Cde. Balchand Persaud
Cde. Bholia Persaud

(Absent)

Cde. I. Remington, J.P.
Cde. R.P. Sahoye
Cde. V. Teekah
Cde. R.E. Cheeks
Cde. E. DaSilva
Cde. M.F. Singh
Cde. J.A. Sutton

(Absent)

OFFICERS

Clerk of the National Assembly – F.A. Narain

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

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have received a letter from the Chairman of the Demerara Companies Holdings Limited and I shall read it. It is dated today and addressed to me at Parliament Chamber.

“20th March, 1969.

Dear Mr. Speaker,

When Mr. Edward Halliday's portrait of the Prime Minister was presented to Parliament on the occasion of Guyana's Independence in 1966, it was intended that a small gold plaque should be fixed within the lower frame but this was never done.

As Demerara Company Holdings Limited has now been taken over by Jessel Securities Limited and Mr. D.A.C.W. Parker, formerly Chairman of the Holdings Company, who presented the portrait, has since died, it seems more appropriate than ever that some 'legend' should be attached to the portrait frame.

I am writing to request Your Honour to approve the enclosed plaque and to give permission for it to be attached to the portrait. In the event of this being granted would you let me know through one of your staff whether you would like us to have it fixed or whether this can be done by one of the maintenance force in the Public Buildings.

Yours very truly,

sgd. John Hailwood.
(J.A.F. Hailwood)
CHAIRMAN.”

It is a lovely plaque and I think we ought to have it fixed ourselves. I shall arrange with the Minister of Works and Hydraulics to have it affixed to the frame.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following Paper was laid:

Loan Agreement between Guyana, Guyana Rice Development Company Limited, and the United States of America for a Rice Modernization Project – Dated: March 11, 1966 – A.I.D. Loan Number 504-L-008. [**The Minister of Finance**]

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

The Prime Minister(Mr. Burnham): The Government of Guyana has taken a consistent stand on the question of Anguilla ever since the illegal overthrow of constitutional government in March 1967.

In July of that year an intensive effort was made by the Commonwealth Caribbean Governments in consultation with the Governments of St.Kitts-Nevis-Anguilla and the United Kingdom to secure a return to constitutional authority and resolve outstanding problems. During those discussions two factors became clear.

The first was that the secessionist movement had developed out of the inability of an oligarchic class to come to terms with the new political realities of associated status, and more particularly with Mr. Bradshaw's predominantly African Government in St. Kitts. Indeed, even as statehood day was being celebrated in February 1967 and prior thereto this group was threatening violence and a breakaway from the new State now that local self-government was passing from British to West Indian hands.

The second factor, confirmed by the political leadership itself, was that external forces had all but seized the control of the protest movement and of the island itself maintaining the hostility to the central Government as a front for their dubious operations. These discussions in which Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago took part, were conducted with Mr.

Peter Adams, the elected representative of the people of Anguilla and a Member of the Legislature of the State.

So far as Commonwealth Caribbean Governments were concerned it was an important part of the proposals that emerged from these discussions that there should be an immediate granting of local autonomy in Anguilla and a crash programme of development with the urgent injection of economic aid. West Indian Governments would play their part in all ways open to them and Guyana itself agreed to provide help in the form of an Administrator and by contributing to a Caribbean peace-keeping force.

All this was acceptable to the Anguillan representatives who confirmed that the proposals were “in the interest of the people of Anguilla and will be welcomed by a large majority of them.” They went on to warn, however, that they felt sure “that a handful of self-seeking individuals, encouraged, promoted and assisted in tangible ways by people or organisations from overseas, will resist the implementation of these recommendations and, in particular, will seek to prevent a return to constitutional government and assume outright control of the island.”

It was not long before their fears were seen to be fully justified. On his return to Anguilla Adams was forced to resign, by the extremist minority group, as a Member of the State Legislature and Ronald Webster was installed as the President of a so-called Anguilla Council.

From there on the situation deteriorated steadily with efforts being made at the United Nations to clothe the outlaw group with respectability in the form of an appeal to the concept of self-determination. Eventually, in tri-partite discussions between the Governments of the State, the Government of the United Kingdom and Webster, a British Administrative officer was installed on the island on an interim basis for one year.

We hoped then that this would mark the return to constitutional government in the island; but when the period was up Webster’s intransigence prevented even a resumption of this

20.3.69

National Assembly

2.15 – 2.25 p.m.

arrangement. Shortly after that, in January 1969, Webster took the final step in declaring Anguilla to be an independent State.

2.25 p.m.

Guyana, along with other Commonwealth Caribbean Governments, viewed these developments with concern and anxiety for they represented a violation of the territorial integrity of the State of St. Kitts/Nevis/Anguilla and placed in jeopardy throughout the area the principle of constitutionality.

At the last Commonwealth Caribbean Heads of Government Conference all delegates agreed unanimously to record this concern in the final communiqué and in expressly calling on the British Government “to take all necessary steps, in collaboration with the Government “to take all necessary steps, in collaboration with the Government of St. Kitts/Nevis/Anguilla, to confirm the territorial integrity of the State.”

The action that has now been taken by the British Government with the full prior concurrence of the Government in St. Kitts achieves the first objective of a return to constitutional Government in the State. We are, of course, gratified that the operations that have now been carried out have not involved any loss of life, and now that law and order in the Island has been restored we expect the swift withdrawal of British military personnel.

So far as the civil administration of the Island is concerned we understand that the Order in Council that was made on Tuesday specifically acknowledges the concurrence of the Government of the State of St. Kitts/Nevis/Anguilla in the interim arrangements. Moreover, I have Mr. Bradshaw’s personal assurance, as well as the text of a statement issued today by his Cabinet, that the entire action has the full approval of his Government. This fact is with us of paramount importance and for us transcends any temptation of carping criticism.

Let it be clear, however, that our understanding of the position and, indeed, of the statement made by the British Foreign Secretary in the House of Commons yesterday is that the concurrence of the Government of St. Kitts/Nevis/Anguilla must be an essential feature of any permanent settlement of the constitutional problems.

On a more general note, we have been deeply disturbed by the inadequacies of Associated Status relationship which recent events in St. Kitts/Nevis/Anguilla have revealed. These arrangements had been worked out between the Governments of the Leeward and Windward Islands and the Government of the United Kingdom. They were novel in many respects and frankly experimental in most. We believe that in their unfolding a variety of problems not originally envisaged have been thrown up.

Let us now as a region in the light of this experience come together with our colleagues of the Associated States and with them work out some more satisfactory basis for a sound and stable constitutional future – a future which is secure against those forces of fission and fragmentation which can destroy the stability of the entire region and render ineffectual our joint efforts to provide a better life for all our peoples. Above all, let us secure the end of an extra regional overlordship – however described – in the Caribbean.

In these efforts the Governments of the Independent Commonwealth countries of the region have both a role and a responsibility. We in Guyana stand ready to play our part and to take an initiative.

The action taken has inevitably raised the question of Britain's position on Rhodesia. Our own position has been consistently clear and unequivocal. Force remains the only means of restoring constitutional Government in Rhodesia and bringing to an end the domination of the majority African community by Ian Smith's white minority oligarchy. The British Government's refusal to use force in Rhodesia is totally indefensible and we renew our demands in the name of justice that they discharge in Rhodesia the responsibility they have now discharged in Anguilla.

PUBLIC BUSINESS**MOTION****APPROVAL OF ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE 1969****BUDGET DEBATE**

Assembly resumed debate on the Motion moved by the Minister of Finance on 28th February, 1969, for the approval of estimates of expenditure for the financial year 1969, totalling \$146,698,155 (excluding \$20,567,751 which is chargeable by law.)

Assembly in Committee of Supply.

The Chairman: Hon. Members we are in Committee of Supply. When we commenced our duties on Monday last to examine Head by Head the Estimates of Expenditure for 1969, the Committee agreed with the Resolution of the Business Sub Committee for the allocation of time to be devoted to each head or Division. Further, hon. Members also agreed not to proceed later than 6.30 on Monday. This loss of two hours already was drawn to your attention last evening. I pointed out that more time was being spent on some heads than was allocated.

It has now been calculated that unless a reduction of 20 per cent of the time allocated for the Estimates of the 54 Heads be agreed to, hon. Members will find themselves without the opportunity of comment on several important Heads on the last day allotted. After consultation with the hon. Leader of the House and the hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran of the Opposition, I wish to announce:

- (a) that the time allocated be reduced by 20 per cent;
- (b) that the Chairman shall allow hon. Members two-thirds of the time, on every Head or Division leaving approximately one-third of the allocation of time for the hon. Minister to reply after which the question shall be put without further discussion; and

- (c) if time is saved, the Chairman may on the request of Members reserve the same for use on the remaining Heads.

Head 28 – Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources

Question proposed that this Head stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: As before, if hon. Members would let me know how they wish to speak we shall fix a time when we shall stop.

Head 28 – Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources - \$329,457 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

2.35 p.m.

HEAD 29 – MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES GEOLOGICAL SURVEYS AND MINES

Question proposed that this Head stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. R.D. Persaud: Subhead 1 (1).

Mr. Ram Karran: I have a small point on item (8), subhead 1.

Mr. Wilson: I should like to make a general comment on this Head.

The Chairman: Do it as quickly as possible.

Mr. Wilson: With reference to the nomenclature used for the posts listed under items (1), (2), (3) and (9), Commissioner, Director, Deputy Director and Commissioner, I think the time has come when terms should be used in keeping with our present position of Independence. Formerly we used to speak of a “Director of Health” and a “Director of Education,” but for a long time now we have changed these terms and I think the Government should proceed in this direction.

Mr. R.D. Persaud: Year after year this particular item (1) has been appearing on the Estimates with a total provision of \$1 each year. In the Report on Geological Surveys for 1965 it was regrettable that no steps were taken to create a Department of Geology.

I think the idea behind this provision is to have one officer in charge of both Departments and he would be designated Commissioner of Geological Surveys and Mines. This would be similar to the Ministry of Works and Hydraulics where there is one officer in charge and a chief officer for roads and one for drainage.

Can the hon. Minister tell us why it is that proper provision is not made for payment of the officer who will hold this and why it is that someone is not yet appointed as Commissioner of Geological Surveys and Mines? Does the Government think that we do not have any qualified persons in this country to occupy this position? My information is that there are people in this country who can occupy this position and so integrate the two Departments and thus provide better administration in this important sector which deals with minerals and so on.

Mr. Ram Karran: I refer to the Annual Report of this Department which showed that there were seven vacancies in this Department. I should like to enquire of the hon. Minister whether these posts have been filled and if not what efforts has the Government made toward the filling of these technical posts. The hon. Minister read out to us the names of 53 people whom the Government had sent for training. While this Department has been almost fully Guianised

there are still some expatriate officers there. Will the hon. Minister indicate to us what has been done with a view to filling these vacancies and having the Department fully staffed?

The Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources (Mr. Jordan): Regarding the post of Commissioner of Geological Surveys and Mines, this should be read along with the post of Commissioner of Lands and Mines which is a post that carries certain statutory duties. The Commissioner of Geological Surveys and Mines is already performing some of the functions. He is now known as Director of Geological Surveys and Mines because the two Departments have long ago been integrated, but a certain amount of legal work is involved as the Commissioner of Lands and Mines has certain statutory duties to perform. This, I am advised, is in process and as soon as it is completed this will take place. But already the Director of Geological Surveys is also in charge of the Mines Department, the two Departments having been integrated.

On the question of the shortages of geologists, we still are using contract officers. We have five Guyanese abroad. One is due back this year and four others are due next year. They will be able to fill the vacant posts. It is admitted that the bulk of the posts are filled by expatriates at the moment because Guyanese have not hitherto been sent for training.

Mr. Persaud *rose* --

The Chairman: I said that after the Minister had replied there would be no discussion.

Mr. Persaud: I --

The Chairman: Later on we may be able to make up time with other questions which may, perhaps, be more important.

Head 29, Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Geological Surveys and Mines - \$462,603, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

**HEAD 30 – MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES -
LANDS**

Question proposed that this Head stand part of the Estimates.

Dr. Ramsahoye: Subhead 13.

Mr. Wilson: Subheads 3, 6 and 14.

Mr. Lall: Subhead 6.

The Chairman: Mr. Wilson is speaking on subhead 6. I said yesterday that I will not allow two members of the same party to speak on the same subhead.

Mr. Wilson: Page 77.

The Chairman: We have not reached that page yet.

Mr. Lall: Page 76, subhead 6. I notice under this subhead an amount of \$260,000 allocated for Labour and Rations for Labour. I should like the Minister to give us some explanation as to how this money is to be expended.

Dr. Ramsahoye: Mr. Chairman, I rise because I wonder what the necessity is for this sum of \$18,000.

This department and this Ministry have a system of allocating lands to people on the basis of patronage and favour. This Minister, in the month of January, informed the farmers of the little Kabawer Land Co-operative Society that he was not going to take away their lands which they had occupied under permission. While the hon. Minister was saying that to the farmers he had, in fact, set in train, on the advice of the Chief Officer for Co-operative Development, a procedure to terminate permission for 2,000 acres of land and to award the land to twelve men, including Mr. George Bowman, at 166 acres each. The land has since been taken away and 200 families belonging to the Kabawer Land Co-operative Society have been left without land to cultivate.

Of the twelve men, there is a man whose name is Bobb. This is a person who does not exist. Only the hon. Minister could tell us who Mr. Bobb is. One of the other men is a trespasser who went on the land last year and against whom the Society had proceedings pending in Court at the time when its license was terminated. If this is the way the hon. Minister is going to give away lands to twelve men who are in a position, who have lands already, what is the need to spend \$18,000 on Investigation of Applications for Lands?

Most of the men who have been given 2,000 acres at Kabawer are people who have been well provided for – Rasheed, Naipaul, George Bowman, and some of them are absentee tenants. They will not be there to cultivate any lands; they will have other people cultivating the lands for them, and 200 families who have been developing those lands from the time they were wild savannahs, have been put out. This is the serious thing about it. These people whose leases have been terminated were given the license during the regime of the P.P.P. in 1964, had done work of development, and this Government has taken away those lands and given them to twelve men without any compensation to these 200 families who have been thrown on the road.

I should like to know if it is not true that when I sent those men to the Minister, the Minister did not say to the Kabawer Land Co-operative Society people that he was not taking

away their lands. He said that to them. I wish him to deny it, because while he was talking to them, the papers were actually being prepared to terminate the permission.

Mr. Jordan: The lease was terminated because for three years these people had the lands and did nothing with them. [**Dr. Ramsahoye:** “That is not true.”] No lease has been given to any party. A number of people have had an annual permission issued to them and the fictitious character that the hon. Member Dr. Ramsahoye refers to is Mr. Wendell Bobb who is resident in Berbice. [**Mr. Lall:** “Yes, he is the Personnel Manager at Reynolds.”] He exists; the hon. Member Dr. Ramsahoye said he does not exist.

To go a step further, we spent a lot of time investigating people who applied for lands because there are persons who, by changing their name or using a different name, find themselves in possession of two and three pieces of land. That is why we have to send officers out into the districts and depend on the various reports received, so as to ensure that no one person gets more than plots of land.

Head 30, Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources – Lands - \$736,425, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

DIVISION XIII – MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Question proposed that this Division stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. R.D. Persaud: I should like to speak on subheads 1, 15, 22.

Mr. Lall: Subhead 19, sir.

Mr. Ram Karran: Subhead 7, sir.

Mr. Sutton: Subhead 14, sir.

Mr. Wilson: I should like to speak on subheads 3, 14, 20, 23, 26, 34.

The Chairman: Let us proceed.

Mr. Yacoob Ally: Subhead 29, sir.

Mr. R.D. Persaud: Subhead 1, Rice Development - \$30,000: The development of the rice industry involves many things and, in considering the development of the rice industry, the Minister of Agriculture, out of necessity, has to give consideration to the industry as it is operating at present and as it has operated in the past.

A former Chairman of the Rice Marketing Board did say that the R.M.B. and the R.P.A. are inseparable organizations. He likened the R.M.B. and the R.P.A. to an orange and he said that if you cut an orange in two you would be in a difficult position to decide if there is any difference between the two halves. That gentleman, a former Chairman of the Rice Marketing Board, is one Mr. R.B. Gajraj, and I thought it was fitting to quote him. I want to say that I agree implicitly with what he said during his term of office as Chairman of the R.M.B. Therefore, if the rice industry is to develop and be given a fair chance in this country, it is necessary for the Minister and the Government to give due consideration to the R.P.A., the important institution of the rice farmers.

During this debate, the hon. Minister did say that the membership of, or subscription to, the R.P.A. is 25 cents per year. This shows that the Minister is unaware of the true position of the R.P.A. and I want to suggest very strongly that he examines the position of the R.P.A. I want to remind him that, in 1966, the R.P.A. Ordinance was amended and the subscription was increased to \$1.00 per year.

What is important is that the law as it stands in the country makes it obligatory for rice farmers to sell their rice to the R.M.B. If the Minister does not want to be vindictive against the R.P.A., which, so far as the development of the rice industry is concerned, is inseparable from the R.M.B., he should amend the law and allow the rice farmers to sell their rice to anybody. As the law stands, the rice farmers are compelled to sell their rice to the R.M.B., unlike the farmers who are producing provisions and so on. They have an option; they can sell to the Guyana Marketing Corporation or privately. This is a very important point for the Minister to consider when he is taking actions that are inimical to the interest of the rice industry of this country.

As I said, I do not want to speak for long. I want to remind the hon. Minister of the reference I made. If he would check in the records of the R.M.B., he would find the reference I made with respect to a former Chairman of the R.B.M.

Secondly, I want to ask the hon. Minister why is it that since November 1968 the Rice Assessment Committee has not been reappointed. I raise this matter now because when it was being raised under another Head you did suggest that it should be raised under Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources. Since November 1968 this appointment has not been made. Can the Minister tell us when this Board will be reappointed? I understand that consideration is being given to an amendment of the Rice Farmers (Security of Tenure) Ordinance.

2.55 p.m.

Can the hon. Minister tell us which organization is being consulted on behalf of the farmers in the matter of the Amendment of the Rice Farmers (Security of Tenure) Ordinance? As far as I am aware, the Rice Producers' Association has not been consulted. Is it that the Government has consulted the landlords as the proper forum, or the Rice Assessment Committee? As I have already said, this Committee has not been appointed since 1968.

With respect to subhead 15, people have been complaining about cattle stealing. As a result of complaints made to the Government, I understand that the Minister invited the people concerned for a meeting to discuss how this cattle stealing could be prevented and when the delegation went there, instead of discussing the grievances of the people concerned, the Minister wanted to discuss with them an Ordinance whereby provision would be made for the central marketing of beef. Can the Minister enlighten us as to what steps are being taken in this connection? Is it true that the Ministry of Agriculture has already prepared draft legislation in which provision is made for central marketing of beef? Is this so or not? And what steps is the Government taking to prevent cattle stealing which is so prevalent at the moment?

Mr. Sutton: In the light of the statement in reply to my question on what substantial arrangements were being made for Amerindians in respect of agriculture, I have a recollection that the Minister said that it would be surprising that the Government does not know how many Amerindians are being accommodated and trained in the Guyana School of Agriculture. In these circumstances may I ask the Minister to let us know how many Amerindians are at the Guyana School of Agriculture, what the conditions are under which they are trained, and whether any special arrangements were made to accommodate Amerindians during training at this school or elsewhere?

Mr. Wilson: Eradication of Acoushi Ants – there is no provision for that. The last expenditure on this subhead was in 1966, \$6,500. The total amount provided under the 1966 – 1972 Development Programme is \$10,000, which means that just about \$3,000 is left. Is the Minister aware of the ravages being done by the acoushi ants in the remote areas? I know about Bonasika, and those people are suffering very badly.

If this Government wants to project the idea of raising the standard of this school, then early steps should be taken to incorporate the Guyana School of Agriculture as a faculty of the University of Guyana, so as to elevate it. This matter concerns the Minister of Education also

and it is time that the University of Guyana should move forward in that direction, not only in science but also in specific fields, such as agriculture, geology and the like.

Development of Arakaka/Kaituma – a few days ago, the Minister very gleefully showed me a copy of the *Evening Post* where it was reported that people were going back to Matthew's Ridge. I do not know if this subhead deals with that but I want to urge that it is time Government ceases putting in the schemes, only their supporters. There is the complaint that unless you pass through Congress Place, you cannot go into those schemes.

Assistance to Miners – what is the kind of assistance given to miners and what is the criterion used for giving miners whatever assistance is given?

Mr. Lall: Machinery and equipment, \$837,000 – we would like to know where this will be used. We would like to know also if the machinery provided for land clearing at Black Bush is still available and in working condition. We would like to know if the machinery provided at Mara Land Settlement is still in working order.

Mr. Y. Ally: Subhead 39, Central Timber Manufacturing Plant. There is an amount, \$199,000, but when one looks at the legend, one finds it is to provide for repairs to the wharf. Over and over again I have been advising the Minister concerned that Government should do something to replace old machinery but he always says the Government wants to expand the timber industry, whilst there is a lot of dilapidated machinery at the Central Timber Manufacturing Plant. If there is a genuine desire to expand the industry, there must be a genuine desire to expand the industry, there must be a genuine effort to purchase new machinery. Every year the amount voted omits new machinery and if this plant deteriorates, this country cannot take advantage of even the benefits offered by Carifta. The Minister should look into this and every aspect of improvement for advantage in the timber trade should be gone into very keenly. I would urge that we think seriously. All we see is a provision to repair the wharf. There is nothing for the improvement of machinery, nothing for the manufacture of timber.

Mr. Ram Karran: I wish to point out that this Government, rather than thinking of the real development of this country, continues to serve as puppets of the North American philosophy. We all know of the tons of material wasted in schemes that can be developed and exported, adding to the country's wealth. Aside from other by-products, offals and other parts of the animals can be used. My information is that the philosopher, the economic adviser to the Government, who has gone to the United States of America, has told this Government that it must not involve itself in the by-products at the Lethem plant.

3.05 p.m.

They must leave that to private industry. For generations now we have been standing by and waiting for private concerns to develop the waste and the by-products from Lethem; the Government continues in its puppetry. During this year, hon. Members on this side of the House will be very glad to vote with the Government for supplementary assistance to go ahead with such a project. It is useless for them to spend all the money on roads, which are important, but this is more important to the Amerindians and those being sent to the Rupununi and to Lethem to properly utilise this wilful waste. It is useless, too, for the Government to talk of development and yet allow thousands and millions to go by waste.

The Chairman: The hon. Member Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud on subhead 22.

Mr. R.D. Persaud: I would just like to ask the hon. Minister, under subhead 1, what will be done for rice. What type of development will go on at Mackenzie?

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Persaud queried the sum of \$30,000 being spent, under subhead 1, for Rice Development. I would like to say that the rice programme, which was started by the United Nations, has to continue until we are ready to begin the bigger programme and the sum of \$30,000 is what is known as counterpart funds to meet costs until the overall programme takes over.

On the question of rice assessment Committees, Mr. Persaud should pay some attention to the Official Gazette which shows that the Committees have been set up and members appointed.

On the question of security of tenure we have had discussions with proprietors and farmers and are looking into this and, very shortly, this matter will come before the House.

On the question of the Development of Beef, Cattle and other livestock the hon. Member spoke of a central market. It is not true and it is disappointing to find that, after we took the trouble to invite cattle dealers in, he could so misunderstand or misconstrue what was said at the meeting that we should hear this coming from him; at that meeting we actually sought to take these people into our confidence. There is no plan to centralise markets. What is planned is a scheme to register all animals – I suspect that these gentlemen, who cry so much about cattle stealing, when we get down to hard facts, will want to run away from it. We shall make sure that cattle are only sold at central markets and people will have to be registered buyers or sellers. I believe that some of these hon. Members do not want that type of legislation.

In reply to the hon. Member Mr. Sutton who spoke on the Guyana School of Agriculture, I would say that we have four Amerindians at the Guyana School of Agriculture and we have two Amerindians at Tuskegee Institute doing cattle ranching. We had taken care of them long before he thought of them.

On the subject of Eradication of Acoushi Ants posed by the hon. Member Mr. Wilson as to why no provision has been made for this subhead, we regard this as a serious menace in this country and we believe that we can only arrive at a solution to the problem if we involve communities as a whole. We have already started with communities in the Berbice River. We have taken the money out of agriculture and put it in under community development and so we have \$50,000 for the eradication of acoushi ants, using Mirex, a new compound.

As far as the Guyana School of Agriculture is concerned with higher training, this would no doubt be of interest to my colleagues the Minister of Education (Mrs. Patterson), I can tell the hon. Member Mr. Wilson that two lads graduated from the Guyana School of Agriculture and are at Louisiana State College where they were admitted on scholarships and will complete their degree courses shortly.

As far as the persons at Arakaka and Kaituma are concerned, this project was primarily conceived to preserve employment for the 554 persons at the Manganese Mines, and, since this project has been in operation together with the fact that Amerindians are now in the area, the population has gone up considerably instead of decreasing as was expected.

In the matter of assistance to miners, the problem we discovered was that, due to the fact that with the coming of the aeroplane the miners, known among us as pork-knockers, found it difficult to get into the interior, so gold-bearing areas were neglected. The assistance has been in the line of provision to Siparuni and Puruni Rivers and the Merume and Paruima Rivers where the pork-knockers can get to and carry out their prospecting and, finally, mining. I am happy to say that, as a result of this, our gold production has increased substantially.

As far as the Central Timber Manufacturing Plant is concerned, the hon. Member (Mr. Yacoob Ally) should know how to read his Estimates. If he looked under the F.I.D.S. programme he would see that we have over \$1,000,000 and out of that additional equipment will come whilst under the recurrent estimates the subsidy which was given to the Central Timber Manufacturing Plant is reduced. I hope that he will learn how to read his Estimates because, although we would forgive the new Members, we cannot forgive one here for four years.

The question which the hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran rose on the waste at Lethem. A much larger scheme is involved than just the using of a small bit of waste. We all know that, for something to be economic, it has to be of a certain size; we have turned our attention to this in

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3.05 – 3.15 p.m.

order to bring it up to the kind of size that will make it a viable economic project. We hope to use the waste at Lethem, offal as it is known to us. The meat, after the killing at Lethem, is flown out but it might not be so practicable to bring out offal and waste at high cost in the light of economic considerations.

As far as the land clearing equipment is concerned, the hon. Member Mr. Harry Lall asked about the amount of equipment at hand. We have a lot of equipment already and now have the big problem which is, as I hope all hon. Members know the clearing of lands. We have proposed, in several areas, to clear large tracts of land and it must be quite evident to all of us that in these times we could hardly send many men to clear trees with axes and cutlasses. We have to provide equipment.

Division XIII – Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources - \$6,711,400 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

3.15 p.m.

Head 31 – Ministry of Trade

Question proposed that this Head stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Jagan: Mr. Chairman, could the hon. Minister tell us what is the attitude of the Government in respect of trading with socialist countries? Some time ago, I understood that the Government's attitude was that it will not trade with a country that does not in turn buy from Guyana; and as a result there has been a quota restriction with respect to trading with some of these socialist countries. A large amount of goods were imported at a very cheap price compared with similar goods from western sources. In view of the Government's policy of importing goods from sources which will purchase from Guyana, I wonder if the Government will not consider the question of trading with socialist countries whereby one country would purchase

from Guyana, and Guyana will import from another socialist country without the actual spending of money between these two countries and the other country. For instance, if Guyana sells rice to Cuba she in turn can sell her sugar to Russia from whom we could import goods to the value of the rice sold to Cuba.

I wonder if the Government would consider this aspect of trading whereby the country of itself would be able to benefit and sell the products at a higher price and at the same time would be able to buy at a cheaper price compared with other sources. I should like hon. Minister to tell us what the Government's attitude is in this respect.

Secondly, as regards item 4: Economists, I notice that two new posts have been created. In view of the fact that only one will be under this Ministry, I wonder what the necessity is for the creation of two new posts since the department will do less work than formerly.

Subhead 14: Expenses, National Specifications Board. Could the Minister tell us whether the National Specifications Board will be a single body as a bureau of specifications to deal with the goods that are to be produced in this country, and to see that the goods produced here are of a certain standard? If this is so, I hope that the Government will appoint people who are qualified, not particularly party members; because the goods to be produced will be used by the Guyanese people and therefore the question of party members should not play any major role.

Mr. M.Y. Ally: Subhead 9: Licensing Division Salaries. I notice that a Price Control Inspector will be earning \$1,404 per annum. This works out to \$117 per month. This is corruption as regards salary. I feel that the holder of this post is underpaid. If one is underpaid the duties he is supposed to perform will not be effective as it should be. I wonder if this is a typographical error. Could the hon. Minister tell us? I see no note in the legend.

Mr. Sutton: I note from this Head that the sum of \$45,000 is put aside for expenses for the National Specifications Board which is a post of recent innovation. I am sure that all

Members of this House, and quite a few people in the country, would welcome the establishment of such a Board. It is because of the absence of a Specification Board that a great degree of wastage is taking place in the country. This country is one of the few lumber producing countries which could be a great lumber producing country but it has no set standards whereby manufacturers could be able to produce at high standards. A manufacturer has to attain a high standard of production before he could get export licences, and as a result, with the exception of one or two big firms, it has become almost impossible for the smaller producer of lumber to get into the export trade. It is not that there is no room for him but because he is allowed to cut any standard, he finds it far more convenient to cut unsuitable specifications.

3.25 p.m.

I welcome the arrival of this National Specifications Board. I hope it will make it possible for the lumber trade, in particular, to be looked into because thousands upon thousands more board feet of lumber can be exported from this country. There are several examples of people who have brought orders for thousands of feet of lumber and, when they have tried to get them, the sawmills have said that they have thousands of feet which can be had, but when these are examined one cannot get thousands of feet of export quality.

When the specifications of lumber for export are put on a proper basis it will be found that we will be able to sell every single foot of lumber we produce, both hard wood and soft wood, and this will put us in a position to buy building material more suited to the tropic while we can export our lumber to places which want it. We will not be forced to build, in many cases, with what is sub-standard lumber.

The Minister of Trade (Mr. Bissember): If I may deal with the last question first, I think I am right in saying that when lumber is exported the Forest Department deals with that aspect of it and a certificate is usually issued before the lumber is exported. The National Specifications Board, as I am aware, will only be concerned with manufactured items and goods.

Having regard to the question asked by Mr. Derek Jagan I should like to explain what will be the functions of this Board which Government intends to set up some time this year. This, if I may say so, is just a forerunner to the Bureau of Standards that the Government has in mind. The actual functions will be these:

Defining standards and specifications for locally produced goods and for such imports as may be deemed necessary –

With your permission, sir, I am reading from the notes I have prepared:

Arranging for testing of products and processes in order to develop information required for the preparation of standards, specifications and test methods.

Assembling data on international, regional and national specifications and standards so as to guide local interests – and this is very important for us – particularly in export marketing and imports.

Issuing certificates of raw material content of goods in CARIFTA trade and of such other goods as may be required by Government and by industry.

Because of the setting up of Carifta certain certificates have to be issued as to the basic material content in manufactured goods and the Ministry of Trade will be in a position, through the National Specifications Board, to have these certificates issued.

As I said, we hope this Specifications Board will be established this year and that it will be properly staffed. It is hoped that as time goes by and funds are made available we may have a Bureau of Standards of which we hear so much in other parts of the world. I am told that Trinidad and Barbados are now thinking of a Specifications Board.

Mr. Yacoob Ally asked about the person who is Price Control Inspector. If I may explain, this Price Control Inspector is a kind of liaison officer between the Ministry of Trade and the Price Control Squad of the Guyana Police Force. It is not that he really goes and chases after people who are black marketing. He does not have to check in shops to see whether articles are being sold above the controlled prices. The Price Control Squad has over 350 policemen who are authorized to check on shops and I may say that they are very active at this very moment. Their duty is to get information from the officers in the License Division. They now inspect shops and business places to see whether items are being sold over the controlled price.

This, I think, is important to all hon. Members because right now Government is very concerned about certain merchants who have stocks of flour at present and are refusing to sell. 350 policemen are now on active duty trying to see whether they can get information so that the Police might prosecute these merchants if evidence is available.

The hon. Member Mrs. Da Silva drew to my attention the fact that she went to several places and no flour was on sale. With your permission, sir, I should like to mention this: This morning a baker came to me and said he went to Mr. X who asked \$22 and \$18.50 for a 100-lb. bag of flour. May I repeat that the controlled price of flour remains the same and it is illegal for any merchant to sell flour beyond the controlled price? Perhaps later on Government will consider taking stern measures to see that black marketing comes to an end.

Mr. Derek Jagan asked about the post of economists. I am glad he asked that question because from my information the Guyana Marketing Corporation never had the services of an economist as such but had their own technicians who advised them on various measures. Since we became independent in 1966 we have had several organisations to deal with, for example, UNCTAD and now CARIFTA, and we have found it necessary to have these two economists who will be actively engaged in advising the Ministry and Government in certain trends, international and inter-Caribbean. These two additional economists will assist the senior economist, who is already in the establishment, in the preparation of certain data to be studied by

the Permanent Secretary, officials and myself. One of these economists will be concerned solely with external trade and the other will be concerned solely with domestic trade.

We in the Government view this matter of trade of very great importance, especially having regard to the inauguration of CARIFTA and we are trying to get all manufacturers to see that they can produce goods competitively. We talk about import substitution. The National Specifications Board will be established to see that goods which will be produced locally and put on the market for local consumption measure up to certain standards.

I thought that the hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran would have asked me something about trade with socialist countries because I think he has a great interest in a certain big industrial concern in this country. I believe he is thinking most of expanding business with socialist countries. I repeat: The moment he wishes to expand this trade, if he applies to the Competent Authority, the Competent Authority will look into his application and will see that his requests are met.

We of the Government have considered this and our policy is one of trading with any country, be that country in the Eastern bloc or in the Western bloc, but we say the trade must be bilateral and we must get cash for the things they buy from us, not cement or maybe cigars, or guns and rockets. What we want is money for the articles we export.

At the moment the Ministry of trade is reviewing the licensing policy to see whether certain quota restrictions can be changed so that certain persons who wish to import from certain Eastern bloc countries may be able to get Government to approve and issue the license so long as those countries are willing to buy from us and are willing to pay cash for the things we sell them.

As I said in 1961, on one occasion in this House, we will trade with the devil as long as the terms are favourable and are in the overall interest of the Guyanese people. I think I have dealt with all the questions asked.

Head 31, Ministry of Trade - \$167,813, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: We will now turn to page 79, Division XIV, Ministry of Trade.

DIVISION XIV – MINISTRY OF TRADE

Question proposed that this Division stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Does any hon. Member wish to speak? There is only one item here.

Mr. Ambrose: I should like to speak in general, not on the particular item.

The Chairman: You can only speak once.

Mr. Balchand Persaud: I should like to speak on subhead 1, Tourism.

The Chairman: Please proceed.

Mr. Balchand Persaud: To my mind, the paltry sum of \$25,000 which is being sought by the Ministry of Trade to promote tourism in our country is very inadequate. Since this country achieved Independence, we have been hearing a lot of talk from this Government about how it intends to promote tourism and how it wants the whole world to see Guyana.

According to the Development Programme 1966 – 1972, the Government is supposed to spend \$1,394,000. This means that, on an average, the Government is expected to spend nearly \$200,000 per year. So far, the Government spent \$75,000 in 1966; \$10,000 in 1967; and \$25,000 in 1968. This means that, over the past three years, the Government spent \$110,000 to

promote tourism in our country, whereas, it was expected by the citizens of our country that the Government would have spent at least \$600,000.

This year the Government intends to spend \$25,000. This amount is very inadequate. If we want to raise money by developing tourism in our country, the Government must make definite plans and have certain programmes to ensure that proper persons are trained to assist the Ministry of Trade to promote tourism.

There are lovely places on the Corentyne, for instance, the Nos. 63 and 64 Beaches. There is a lovely beach on the East Coast, Demerara, in the Cove and John area. We have lovely waterfalls, notably our Kaieteur Falls, and various places in our country that the Government can seriously try to develop. The Government should ensure that there are certain facilities available so that we can embrace more foreigners in our country.

This paltry sum of \$25,000 clearly indicates that the Government is afraid to allow foreigners to come into our country. The members of the Government do not want foreigners to see how unpopular they are. They are really deceiving the world when they say that Guyana welcomes tourists. It seems to me that the Government has something to hide. I want to ask the Minister of Trade to explain why this amount is so small and what plans the Government has to promote tourism in our country.

Dr. Jagan: I just want to ask a few questions. From 1966 to 1968 the sum of \$90,000 was spent. Could the Minister tell us where these development sites are for tourist attraction? How many tourists visited these sites during the last three years? I should also like to know whether money was spent on these sites and how much was spent by tourists at these sites.

Mr. Bissember: We did some work at Dakara Creek, the first phase, and I will invite hon. Members to pay a visit there. Some work was done at Manari. I must emphasize that this small amount is to do just the basic things in promoting tourism since the Government believes

that private enterprise, the hotel people, can do quite a lot to encourage tourism. I think the B.O.A.C. hotel which is going up will be completed by September and more tourists will be attracted. The Tower Hotel and the Woodbine Hotel have been expanded and there will be more rooms there.

We feel that people from all foreign countries – the Eastern bloc and the Western bloc – should come and see for themselves what we are doing in Guyana, whether or not this country is really progressing. I hope that in the near future we will get more money for tourism so that we could do more, but it is our view that private industry has been doing something and we hope that it will continue in the same way.

Division XIV, Ministry of Trade - \$25,000, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: We will now turn to Head 36, Ministry of Works and Hydraulics, page 87.

HEAD 36 – MINISTRY OF WORKS AND HYDRAULICS ESTABLISHMENT

Question proposed that this Head stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Balchand Persaud: I wish to make a few general comments and then I will deal with the items as they come along.

The Chairman: Remember, of course, that at a certain time I will have to call "Time," so one hon. Member must not take up all the time.

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3.35 – 3.45 p.m.

Mr. Ram Karran: May I observe that this Head is going to be handled almost exclusively by the hon. Member Mr. Balchand Persaud with some assistance from the hon. Member Mr. Hamid?

Mr. Balchand Persaud: I wish to speak on subhead 1, items 31, 43, 56, 58, 64, 67, 74, 94, 98, 104, 107, 108, 118, 121, 126, 143, 148, subheads 7, 8, 10, 13, 18, 20, 21.

Mr. Hamid: I wish to speak on subheads 5, 8, 13.

The Chairman: You cannot speak on subhead 8 because two members of the same party cannot speak on the same subhead. Subhead 13 is also listed for the hon. Member Mr. Balchand Persaud.

Mr. Balchand Persaud: I will give way to the hon. Member Mr. Hamid whenever he wants to speak.

Mr. Hamid: Subheads 8, 13, 24 –

The Chairman: That is not a subhead; we do not have a subhead 24.

3.45 p.m.

The Chairman: Were you thinking of items?

Mr. Hamid: Subhead 1, items (5), (8), (13), (24), and (93).

Mr. R.D. Persaud: I want to speak on Pure Water Supply, on page 89, under the general head.

The Chairman: I was just told by the hon. Member, Mr. Ram Karran, that it would be handled by two Members.

Mr. Hamid: Item (5). Assistant Secretaries. At present there is a senior surveyor acting in this post and I was wondering whether the Minister is in a position to say whether this officer is to be confirmed in this post.

Under item (8), there is a vacancy for another officer because the officer who is acting will be transferred to the Public Service Training Centre. I wonder if arrangements will be made now for that post to be filled.

Item (13) – the person who is acting as storekeeper, from my observation, is not qualified to serve in that capacity. It is normal that a person serving as storekeeper should be a Member of the Institute of Supply and Purchases and this capacity that person is not qualified. I hope that the Minister will look into this in order to ensure that in the appointment, through the Public Service Commission, an officer who is qualified to fill this post will be selected.

Under item (24) I should like to know what criteria would be used as the basis for promotion. Many clerks in the Service have from ten to twenty years' service and there it is they very seldom have a chance of being promoted. The salary structure of clerks in the Department is the one shown in item (24). I hope the Minister will look into it and see that clerks, who have been in the Department for a long time, are given some sort of promotion.

The Chairman: The hon. Member, Mr. R.D. Persaud wishes to speak on Pure Water Supply.

Mr. R.D. Persaud: Salem, Essequibo. The people dug the place by self-help and only about 19 feet of pipe was left to be connected in order that the people could get water. Some expert was taken to the area after the work was completed. He advised the people to dig the

place again and reconnect the pipes. Why the expert had to completely go over the work and so delay the supply of water to people between Salem and Blake nobody knows?

Secondly, at Vergenoegen, Essexquibo, the pipes have been connected and all that is left is for the Vergenoegen Local Authority to give permission for connection to be made but for several months they have been waiting. I wonder if the hon. Minister would say what the position is.

Mr. Balchand Persaud: The Ministry of Works and Hydraulics for the past four years has been guilty of many malpractices. First of all, in this particular Department, there has been blatant discrimination in employment, the giving of jobs to Guyanese people, and also in the award of tenders for contractor works. These things are done on the basis of discrimination by this Ministry. We have seen where many persons, who were once cane cutters on the sugar estates, were encouraged by the Ministry to leave their jobs and go and seek employment with the Ministry.

One can say never in the history of the industry have the sugar producers - in the past five or six years – put an advertisement in the newspaper for cane cutters. It is not that Bookers is expanding cane farming but it is because of the fact that many persons who are strong P.N.C. sympathizers are asked to come out and work at the Ministry of Works and Hydraulics and many persons who have had their names for many years registered at the Labour Exchange are today denied jobs by the Ministry. This Ministry seeks the largest vote in the total budget and this Ministry seems to be the Ministry which will give employment to the people because the Government's programme is based on infrastructure, therefore one would expect a fair deal where jobs are concerned. This Ministry is guilty of discrimination.

The second point, this Ministry practises favouritism. We have seen in certain projects there are more foremen and checkers than workers. There are cases on the East Coast, on the

road building programme, where the Government is doing construction work, where about seven persons working in a particular gang; there exist two foremen, two checkers and three workers.

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This is where persons are being promoted, not on the basis of service or qualification, but on the basis of favouritism; as long as they are loyal supporters to the P.N.C. they are given the job. There is also blatant waste of public funds. Some time ago, I made the observation that public funds were being wasted and were not being used properly.

For instance, I was told by a certain reliable source that, for the East Coast road programme, the Government acquired a loan and, because of the fact that the Government felt that if they do not finish the project in a certain time they would not be in a position to receive the loan, they embarked on a “penny-wise pound-foolish” programme; a proper foundation is not being laid and only top-surfacing is being done. It will look smooth for a short time but, if the foundation is not done properly, it will crumble. This is the “penny-wise pound-foolish policy of this Government.

The last observation I wish to make is that the Ministry of Works and Hydraulics shows up the colonial mentality of the Government. Many Guyanese engineers have been by-passed and foreigners have been brought to do the construction. No Guyanese engineer is given the opportunity to use his skill and understanding, his experience, to develop this country.

Foreigners have been taking away large sums of money from this country and Guyanese are not given a chance to participate. There are a series of consultants; this is not a practice which members of a Government, who claim that they have the welfare of Guyanese at heart, should encourage. I think that the Minister of Works and Hydraulics (Mr. Green) should look seriously into this matter and ensure that justice is done in Guyana.

Specialist Engineers

I wish to speak on subhead 1, item 31. I notice that there is a post called Specialist Engineer. There has been an increase of \$10,000 from last year's Estimates. I would like to know from where these Specialist Engineers will come? Will they be Guyanese or foreigners?

Specialist Engineers

Subhead 1, item 43 asks for another Specialist Engineer. The sum of \$8,400 will be spent here. What is he qualified in and what part will he play in the Building Division?

Resident Carpenters

Subhead 1, item 56. Here the sum of \$14,129 is being sought; and increase of \$1,922. Anticipating the filling of these vacancies, I would like the hon. Minister to tell us clearly what he means by this.

Specialist Engineer

Subhead 1, item 58. Here is another Specialist Engineer. It would appear that these vacancies are not filled. Where will we get this specialist and I would be grateful if the hon. Minister could say --

The Chairman: Could we stop and, on resumption, turn to page 89? Let us revert into Assembly.

Assembly resumed.

The Chairman: This sitting is suspended for half an hour.

Sitting suspended at 4.01 p.m.

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On resumption –

Assembly in Committee of Supply

The Chairman: At the suspension the hon. Member Mr. Balchand Persaud was speaking.

Supervisors, Rebuild Workshop

Mr. Balchand Persaud: Subhead 1, item 64. The Government is asking for \$14,292 for two new posts of Supervisors, Rebuild Workshop. Where is this workshop and who will they supervise?

Technical Assistants

I have seen, under subhead 65, that a new post is created. \$14,140 for two new posts; I would like an explanation.

The Chairman: From which page is the hon. Member reading?

Mr. Balchand Persaud: Page 89, sir.

Mr. Green: Please repeat that.

Mr. Balchand Persaud: Page 89, subhead 1, item 65. I see here a new head for \$4,140 for the creation of two new posts and I would like the hon. Minister to give an explanation.

The Chairman: You did not give notice for this item, but you may proceed.

Foreman Mechanics

Mr. Balchand Persaud: Subhead 67. Who is appointed and why is he needed; there are already eleven persons on the establishment? Could the hon. Minister give an explanation?

Specialist Engineers

Subhead 1, item 74. A large sum of \$48,400 is sought. I wish to ask the hon. Minister whether these specialists are all Guyanese and, if not, how many are Guyanese and how many are foreigners.

The Chairman: Will hon. Members turn to page 90?

Mr. Balchand Persaud: I asked for subhead 1, item 94, sir.

The Chairman: Item 94 – please proceed.

Drilling Superintendents

Mr. Balchand Persaud: The post of Drilling Superintendent is a new one. Will the hon. Minister say what are the qualifications of the drilling superintendents and why there is need for him?

Pure Water Supply

I would just like to mention a few points on this particular head. There has been a request from the residents of Big BiabuMahaica River since 1966 for the supply of pure water in that area. Since then residents from that area came to the then Minister of Works and Hydraulics (Mr. Kasim) with a delegation and they were promised that such a well would be dug but so far

nothing has been done. I wish to draw this to the attention of the Minister: during the dry season it is difficult to find water for the residents of that area especially school children who are handicapped when they do not have water.

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There is a well which is about three miles away, and it is very difficult for the school children to obtain water. This is a very urgent need of the residents of the Bog Biabu, Mahaica Creek. I should like the hon. Minister to look into the matter as early as possible. Could the Minister say whether the Government has any plans for the drilling of a well? The residents in the Mahaica River depend upon the creek water and in dry seasons it is very difficult to drink the water. The Government, I feel, should seriously think of putting a well in that area.

Page 90, subhead 1: Item 104 – Hydrological Superintendent. A new post has been created and an amount of \$8,160 is sought. I should like to ask the Minister who filled this post and what are his qualifications?

Items 107 and 108. The Minister is asking for one dollar to create new posts, I should like the Minister to tell us what these new posts will be.

Items 113: Meteorological technicians. New posts have been created involving the sum of \$5,265. I would like to know how many persons will enjoy this remuneration. [**An hon.Member** (Government): “Why don’t you read the Estimates properly?”]

The Chairman: If the hon. Member looks at the Establishment column, he will find a number of persons who will be involved in the exercise? It might save some time if he checks that. [*After a pause.*]

Mr. Balchand Persaud: Very well sir. Some of the other questions which I intended to ask will be covered by a general comment.

I wish to ask a question as regards Item 130 – a new post has been created. Could the Minister tell us whether this post is really necessary?

In general, I have seen that new posts have been created all along. While an explanation was given some time ago as regards the maintenance operation of vehicles I wish to state that there has been a lot of wastage in this particular Department and taxpayers' money go down the drain every day. Vehicles which can be repaired are left aside. Take for instance New Amsterdam and No 66 Village – there are a number of vehicles that could be repaired and no effort is made on the part of this Government to have these vehicles repaired. It seems to me that these vehicles are purchased from countries where it is difficult to obtain spare parts. As a result of this, the vehicles are left idle and the Nation is faced with additional expenses to buy new vehicles. In the New Amsterdam Compound, one can see vehicles lying idle for periods ranging from eight to six months. For the information of the House I can list the vehicles. There are four land rovers, three bull-dozers, two draglines and seven trucks. As a matter of fact money is voted to have vehicles repaired.

I feel that the amount of \$60,000 is inadequate to repair all these vehicles much less to maintain them. If this amount is not increased, we will always have to buy new vehicles. I trust that the hon. Minister will look into the matter urgently to see whether the \$60,000 will be adequate to repair all the vehicles in the Ministry.

Page 92, subhead: Expenses of Trainees, an amount of \$20,000 is being sought. I wish to ask the Ministry in which fields these persons are going to be trained. I notice also that under subhead 10: Maintenance and Operation of Data Processing Machine the sum of \$45,000 is being sought. If we look at the Estimates we will see that the sum of \$40,000 was spent to

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maintain and put these machines in operation. In 1968 the revised estimates show an amount of \$45,000.

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Now they are asking for the same amount. Is it that these machines were destroyed because of bad handling or is it because trained personnel are not handling these machines? Why is the Government seeking year after year large amounts of money to maintain machines that may be out-dated or machines that require so much in the way of repairs that the Government has to put a burden on taxpayers to carry out the repairs?

On subhead 13, Maintenance and Operation of Electrical Plants and Radio Equipment, \$100,300. We have seen that large sums of money have been sought since 1966 to repair and to maintain electrical plants and radio equipment. I would feel that this money is not properly spent because one of the basic reasons why electrical plants, and to some extent radio equipment, go bad is because of bad handling and lack of servicing.

The Government does not pay strict attention to the servicing of this equipment and that is the reason why this Government has to ask this House time and again for such large sums to maintain and operate this equipment.

Under subhead 14, Registers, Forms and Servicing Accounting Machines, the Government is seeking \$8,000. It is very unlikely that these machines can go bad so quickly and that the Government would need so much money to have them repaired. I think that if the Government is speaking of efficiency then it should be in a position to have proper instructors to ensure that persons who use these machines are in a position to use them properly.

Speaking on subhead 18, Contribution to Tropical Section Road Research Laboratory, U.K., subhead 20, Contribution to Meteorological Services and subhead 21, Contribution to

Institution of Tropical Meteorology, I should like to ask the Minister if he can tell us what purpose would such research serve, whether it will assist this particular Ministry and our country.

Mr. Hamid: Mr. Chairman, I had indicated item (57) on page 88.

The Chairman: I am sorry; I do not have it noted. Go right ahead.

Mr. Hamid: Under this particular subhead I should like to ask the Minister how long has the engineer who is now presently employed in this position been so employed and secondly, how is it that a senior mechanical superintendent was acting as an engineer for nearly seven months without the necessary qualifications?

This is very important point. The electrical engineering and electrical inspectorate office was once a separate item under the Ministry of Works and Hydraulics and a separate head was created for the inspection department. It is very difficult for one to assess what is really going on in the Electrical Inspection Office. It is not under Telecommunications where it used to be. It is very difficult to trace and I would be glad if the Minister could shed some light on this.

The Minister of Works and Hydraulics (Mr. Green): Mr. Chairman, questions raised by my hon. Friend Mr. Balchand Persaud follow a particular pattern. The question mainly revolves around the filling of vacancies.

We have heard it mentioned in this honourable House and we are aware of the difficulty every underdeveloped country has because of the brain drain. There is no point attempting at this stage to make explanations. There are a number of vacancies for senior engineers which are not filled and the Government is making every effort to fill them, but what is interesting is that there seems to be suggested in the question asked the argument that there ought not to be non-Guyanese employed. The policy of the Government and the Ministry is that where there is a Guyanese available he will be given first preference. This is the situation in the Ministry. There

were some specific points raised that show quite clearly that the hon. Members are not quite serious at this stage or that they have not done their homework.

The hon. Members Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud, for example, referred to pipes in Vergenoegen. This Ministry is not at the moment doing work in that area but I notice the hon. Member is not even present. For his information, I would say that I suspect that this may be worked carried out by the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund Committee and therefore there is no need for me to deal with the remarks made by that hon. Member.

On page 87, with respect to item (13) the hon. Member wanted to know whether the storekeeper, who at the moment is occupying the position, is indeed qualified. The answer is, yes. Here again the question of qualification and recruitment is a matter for the Public Service Commission and not for the Ministry of Works and Hydraulics. We ask for certain posts to be filled. The Public Service Commission, an independent body, lays down the standards and sends to us the particular officer. When I make that observation I am answering about 50 per cent of the questions asked by the hon. Member.

The hon. Member Mr. Balchand Persaud in his opening remarks charged discrimination. Well, here again recruitment at the top level is done by the Public Service Commission. As I understand it from my officers, recruitment at the level of labour and subordinate staff is done through the agency of the Employment Exchange and that comes within the Ministry of Labour. I suggest that the hon. Member can raise the question when that Head is being discussed.

With respect to subhead 1 (43) there is a query with respect to specialist engineers. The qualifications are that the person must have five years' training at an approved institution and two years' specialist training in the particular field in which he is expected to operate. That, as I said, is a matter for the Public Service Commission and not for the Ministry of Works and Hydraulics but, for the information of my hon. Friend, I so volunteer.

There is a request for an explanation with respect to item 56, Resident Carpenters. It is a necessary to post Reside Carpenters at some institutions, departments and buildings, because of their size and the importance of maintaining some level of work done from day to day. We post Resident Carpenters at places like Guyana House, the Georgetown Hospital, the Palms, Public Buildings, and we recently sent in a Resident Carpenter into the Rupununi district.

I am a little worried that Members would come here to discuss the Ministry without, as I said earlier, doing their home-work. Item 64, Supervisors, Rebuild Workshop: Unless I heard incorrectly, one hon. Member asked where the Rebuild Workshop is. The Rebuild Workshop is situated in Ruimveldt obliquely oppositely the building housing Bank Breweries Ltd. That is the Rebuild Workshop of the Ministry of Works and Hydraulics where we do a large number of repairs to heavy equipment, where we have a superintendent, supervisors, and technical staff.

Item 67, Foreman Mechanics: An hon. Member asked why do we need an extra Foreman Mechanic. We are expanding in this Ministry, we are undertaking more work, and it is the pattern in these Estimates to increase the technical staff wherever we have been so advised, in an effort to move towards efficiency.

The hon. Member Mr. Persaud made a plea with respect to pure water supply at Biabu Creek, Mahaica. The Ministry is now going through a serious examination of the pure water supply needs in the entire territory. It indeed is a very serious situation and, as you must have heard through the media of the Press and radio, we are negotiating and we have identified certain priority areas. We will give very serious consideration to the Biabu Creek and make every effort, within our competence, with what personnel and equipment we have, to assist the residents of Big Biabu Creek in the Mahaica area.

Item 130, Superintendents: Here again the explanatory note is abundantly clear and it falls into the argument I advanced earlier.

The hon. Member Mr. Hamid expressed some concern with respect to the Electrical Inspector. Perhaps I can apologize; there ought to have been an item, but the electrical inspectorate begins at item 119 and ends at item 125. I trust that the hon. Member would be satisfied that this was an error with respect to printing and that there should have been the item Electrical Inspector.

My hon. Friend referred to the waste with respect to the use of vehicles and the fact that a number of vehicles belonging to the Ministry can be seen in various parts of the territory apparently not being repaired. This is true to some extent and, as I said earlier, the Parliamentary Secretary is responsible for this exercise to see that all vehicles owned by the Ministry are kept serviceable. We have recently established a Planning Unit in the Ministry which is headed by a senior officer and it is going through these matters in great detail. We hope, before the middle of this year, to come up with answers to solve these problems.

My hon. Friend asked for an explanation with respect to item 8, Expenses of Trainees. This sum is provided to pay for subsistence and other costs. This is really a programme which we started, and which will continue, for internal training, particularly with respect to categories like Mechanics, Pump Operators, and Store keepers. It is, in fact, complementary to the programme now in vogue and initiated by the Public Service Training Centre.

Subhead 10: Here again I would hope that Members, since they claim to have information, since they claim to have reliable sources of information, will know that Maintenance and Operation of Data Processing Machine is, in fact, hire charges. Throughout the world, these expensive and sophisticated types of machinery, like computers, etc., are never bought or are not sold by the manufacturers. Even in rather large complex corporations, where they have money at their disposal, the makers hire them and an annual rental is paid. This money is provided for these charges and this is a standard throughout the world.

Subhead 13, Maintenance and Operation of Electrical Plants & Radio Equipment: There is an increase on the revised estimates and it ought to be noted that we have quite some work to do with this vote at H.M.P.S. For example, we have additional plants. There is now one at the cottage hospital at Wakenaam and, in certain areas, we are now operating 24 hours where, previously, we were only responsible for an 8-hour and, in some cases, a 12-hour operation.

The hon. Member asked what benefits will be received from subheads 18, 19, 20 and 21. I hope that these proponents of acquiring advanced technical knowledge, those who quote so glibly from books, would recognize the importance of technical officers within the Ministry keeping themselves up to date with current events in the particular field.

5.10 p.m.

The contribution in one case is with respect to convention and in the other cases, in respect of literature and information and having dialogue with other international bodies that share similar interest.

The hon. Member, Mr. Hamid, asked about item (57), Chief Mechanical and Electrical Engineer. This is really Chief Mechanical Engineer and the term “Electrical” should be taken out. This obviously was an error.

The Chairman: We can correct it by taking out the word. It will read “Chief Mechanical Engineer.”

Mr. Green: I think I have replied to all the points made by hon. Members but I thought we would have had more questions in respect of such a large Ministry.

Head 36, Ministry of Works and Hydraulics, Establishment - \$3,254,998 – agreed to, and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: I should like to say, for the benefit of hon. Members, that I realized that was a large head and it led us to spend more time than was allotted because of the fact we saved time earlier. From now, we return the time allocated.

**HEAD 37 – MINISTRY OF WORKS AND HYDRAULICS
ANNUALLY RECURRENT**

Question proposed that this Head stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Hamid: Subheads 13, 15, 24, 26, 34 and later, on page 95, subhead 40.

Mr. Balchand Persaud: Subheads 1, 4, 6, 7, 11, 15, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 28, 29, 30, 32 and 35.

Speaking on subhead 1, Maintenance of Public Buildings, I see that the hon. Minister is asking for \$800,000. Let us take subheads 1, 4, 6 and 7. The usual pattern. Every single year the Government is paying to renovate buildings, to maintain furniture, to maintain compounds and for electric power. The fact is if the building is renovated in 1967 and a certain amount is spent on that building, how does it happen that that same amount of money is spent on that particular building the following year? In this House, very little money was spent. For instance, when last did the Government spend money to repair chairs for this honourable House?

The fact is every single year the Government is spending to maintain public buildings. Most of the public buildings that were maintained last year are in good condition. Why it is the Government has to spend so much money to maintain its buildings year after year? It is very difficult for one to understand why it is so. Why such a large increase? Why is the money not decreasing each year? I wish the Minister would give an explanation

Dealing with subhead 11, Interior Trails, \$80,000, an increase of \$20,000, I wish that the Minister would please tell us whether the Government has intentions of building new trails in the interior, taking into consideration its plans for interior development. Of course, normally, if a large amount of money is spent on one occasion to maintain a certain trail, then the following year there is less clearing to be done, and therefore, it may not be necessary for such additional expenditure. Can the Minister inform us whether the Government has new plans to build new trails?

Subhead 19, 20, 21 and 22, I wish to ask the Minister for an explanation for the amount of money asked.

Subhead 24, Maintenance of Pure Water Supply Systems, there is an additional point which I wish to make. I have made the point concerning Big Biaboo where the hon. Minister promised a pure water supply.

There is another case of the No. 1 Road, Corentyne, to No. 19, where pure water facilities are lacking and I wonder whether the Minister can seriously consider doing anything for these areas. At Bohemia Village there is no portable water for the centre. There is a school at No. 19 Village and also a station which are not in a position to have water throughout the day. Sometimes they do get water but generally, throughout the day, it is difficult for them to have water. I wish to ask the Minister to look into the matter because it is a very urgent one.

The question of Black Bush Polder – when the scheme was established, shallow wells were dug and today most of the wells are silted and it is always a difficult problem to get pure water supply.

On many occasions one has to drink water from the canal where the water, once it had settled, still had silt remaining at the bottom. The people have to use a type of ‘pebble’ of which I know nothing much; the water settles and even then is not fit for consumption. It is very difficult for them to have pure water supplies and I hope that the hon. Minister will do his best to see if wells could be dug in the Black Bush Polder to facilitate the farmers.

I know that the hon. Minister knows of another case in an area nicknamed Zambia where the people do not have proper water facilities, and, as a result, the land development department in the area, on numerous occasions, have to assist those residents by providing water with trailers and tractors. As a result many of those persons do not have to do without water. I feel that the matter of pure water supply is an urgent matter for Guyana; this country has an abundance of water but it seems, not for the people to use.

The Government should spend more money so that urgent water facilities can be provided. Pure water is very important and I hope that the hon. Minister will look into the matter.

Atkinson Field, Maintenance of ...

Subhead 28, \$224,000. We have been told that this particular airfield was renovated and a new building constructed. I wish to ask what reasons the Government has to spend so large an amount of money to maintain this field. In my view, I do not think that this amount of money is really needed. Some of it can be used to provide pure water supply which is needed urgently in the country.

The other questions are, to some extent, the same; why is there so much expenditure in this Ministry and I hope that the Minister will give an explanation.

The Chairman: The hon. Member Mr. Maccie Hamid.

Overhaul pontoons, Tugs

Mr. Hamid: Subhead 13. I would be glad if the hon. Minister can inform us how many pontoons were received from the United States of America and what it cost to repair them? I am of the opinion that these pontoons that were given by the U.S.A. cost a considerable amount of money to be repaired. I see that the amount of \$35,500 is earmarked for 1969. During last year the cost of repair to these pontoons was very high and one wonders if the hon. Minister could tell this House if it would not have been cheaper to have them made locally in view of the fact that we have local companies which can build them very rigid.

It is no sense telling us to buy local and be local. We should be more loyal and purchase from local manufacturers so that we can make our country self-supporting. Let the hon. Minister tell us what it cost to repair these pontoons and whether it would not have been better, to his mind, if these had been made locally.

Stone Crushing Plant, Makouria

On subhead 15 I wish to say that this Government has been producing road building material in stone from this plant. When one considers the overhead expenses incurred, one can see that it is not feasible for Government to carry on such a concession. The local suppliers can do so. They can sell at the rate of \$8.00 a ton for the ordinary stone and at the rate of \$13.00 a ton for crushed stone compared with Government's production at \$10 a ton and \$16 a ton respectively. I hope that the hon. Minister will see that some light be thrown on this and, if it is more important to purchase locally, he should do so. He might say that this is finding employment for the locals but the Government should look into itself; if the overhead is responsible for this then some approach should be made to cut it down so that we can use more and pay less.

Pay 94, subhead 24 –

The Chairman: That has been dealt with Mr. Balchand Persaud. Go on to subhead 26.

Unallocated Stores

Mr. Hamid: This is a very important head. In the past nothing particular was shown and now the Government shows the sum of \$2,500,000 for the allocation of stores. I recall that, in the past P.P.P. regime, the Government of that day left nearly \$0.5 million in stores and it has now been exhausted. This is very good. The P.P.P. did something that the Government could carry on without seeking to have another \$2,000,000 worth of supplies. Why is it that the Central Stores make all the purchases? Now that various departments are sending out tenders for purchase of materials, this is not done. In the past, an order could be received and by tender shipped in 24 hours. Right now many Government departments have to wait two or three months to have materials shipped on site and this is working in to too much cost. As I said, I would like the hon. Minister to state why Government is not making a central place for their purchases to be supplied from but, instead, is doing it departmentally.

Special Grants to Drainage and Irrigation Board in lieu of Rates on Area Incompletely Served in the Mahaica/Abary Drainage and Irrigation Area

5.30 p.m.

In the past it was known that the irrigation board was formed by members of the area, persons qualified to serve, persons with Knowledge of the need of drainage and what-have-you and they would be like village fathers of the area; they would make necessary recommendations to Government. Lately this is not so. We find that, on these boards, the Government has been nominating persons with no qualifications and no experience. Whatever recommendation is given is not in the interest of the people. I hope that the Minister will take cognisance of the fact that more qualified persons should be put to serve on the boards.

In relation to ex gratia payment for crops lost through construction, I should like to know why no money has been set aside for crops destroyed. One must take into consideration that during last year, many other places in the country made an approach to Government for compensation for crops lost. For instance, Cane Grove, where there has been severe flooding and there was loss of crops. I should like to know what arrangements have been made by the Government to assist these farmers. For example, Buxton had problems of drainage and the Government saw it fit to assist these farmers but, nothing was done for the people at Cane Grove and other places. In fact, Buxton applied for assistance long after these places.

Mr. Green: Page 93, subhead 1: Maintenance of Public Buildings. The hon. Member's argument is completely inaccurate because he attempted to lump 4, 6 and 7 and propose a general attitude.

Speaking on behalf of the Ministry, we now have, as I said earlier, a planning unit which is designed to examine the entire workings of the Ministry. We consider now that the attitude of the previous Government was a penny wise and a pound foolish and this we are aiming at wiping out with respect to maintaining Government buildings. The position today is that, there are a large number of buildings that are in a state of serious disrepairs, and to suggest that this sum is exorbitant is not to understand the situation with respect to the maintenance of Government buildings. Perhaps some hon. Members are not aware of the large number of buildings which are old and are the responsibility of this Ministry to maintain. It is an extended list, with which I shall not burden this session, but to state that if we are to maintain all Government buildings this year, this sum will not be adequate.

Subhead 11: Interior Trails. There is an increase merely because a decision was taken by the Ministry to improve the present standard of maintenance. In fact, it is to maintain some of the trails which will be leading towards the south of our territory.

Subhead 13: Maintenance and Running Expenses. The hon. Member Mr. Hamid asked certain questions with respect to the fact that the Ministry acquired free of charge a number of pontoons. In reply to him, I wish to state that these pontoons were acquired in the year 1966 as gifts and we do not consider the maintenance costs above what was estimated as normal maintenance. There is only one problem and that involves skilled labour necessary to maintain the equipment, to use a loose term, exported from the centre; the result is that overtime and subsidies are involved. This is one of the facts of life in Guyana which we have to face individually as there is a chance for the full use of regional skill in all areas where work is to be done.

Subhead 15: Stone Crushing Plant Makouria. Here again, I must advert to the fact that the planning unit recently submitted its report to me and we are in fact, perhaps this House will be interested to know, determined to improve Makouria and to produce enough stone. The sly suggestion that the Government purchases stone from private individuals and private entrepreneurs – obviously my hon. Friend is aware that there is sea defence works and roads to be built, and the demand for stone will go up several hundred times. For the next two years over \$5,000 will be spent. The present supply of stone comes from a company which is subsidized by the Government. This matter is one of great concern and the Government – [Mr. Ram Karran: “Tell us the cost.”] – is trying to produce its own supply of stone at Makouria. The attitude in the past is that Government would only enter business that is not profitable and leave private enterprises to come into the fields where there is likelihood for profit. Why must we always carry the burden? The Government, apart from stone, is having a very close look, not only at stone, but in other areas where the Government itself is a big customer. [Mr. Ram Karran: “Wonderful.”] And we will attempt to use whatever expertise we can to see that the Government makes money.

Subhead 19, 20, 21 and 22 were lumped by my Friend the hon. Member Mr. Balchand Persaud. There is, over the past few years, an attack by the sea on our northern coast; and this act of nature, over which we have no control, has indeed cost the Government substantial sums

of money but one has only to look around by the Seawalls and other places, and see that the Ministry is tackling, and will continue to tackle, this very serious problem. This is one exercise that there is not an immediate return. It is the responsibility of the Government to protect the citizens from the ravages of the sea.

5.40 p.m.

On page 94 there was a question with respect to Maintenance of Pure Water Supply Systems. The previous figure took into account anticipated collection of rates, but we are faced with an unfortunate situation where the majority – I was nearly tempted to say all – of the local authorities failed to pay their rates. We have been excessively generous in the Ministry and have continued to offer these services – hence the situation. We are doing repairs, new pipe rehabilitation and so on, in addition to the potable water supply to which I referred earlier.

Subhead 26, Unallocated Stores. Here again, this is a question of simple homework. The situation here is not as my hon. Friend attempted to point out to this House. There is no chicanery here; there is nothing dishonest. It is merely an attempt to tidy up the accounting system. There is no problem here.

Subhead 28. I do not quite follow the question. Maintenance has to continue unless the hon. Member is suggesting that we close shop in certain areas.

Subhead 30. What is there to explain? The legend says, “Increased number of buildings to be catered for.” I am really concerned if hon. Members on the opposite side are not aware that things have been happening since they were removed by the will of the people from office. There are more Government buildings; there are schemes; there are projects and hence the consequential increase in certain areas.

With respect to subhead 34, this is likely to be less because we gave to the Drainage and Irrigation Board the challenge which they required. In fact, this sum appeared in the Estimates of 1967.

Subhead 40. The hon. Member referred to an amount which appeared in the 1966 Estimates. As you know, these figures are carried for three years. The expatriate payment was made. That is a *fait accompli*. We will not deny any person payment, when the Ministry has to construct work through this area, if he is entitled under the law for payment.

Head 37, Ministry of Works and Hydraulics, Annually Recurrent - \$6,825,472, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

DIVISION XVI – MINISTRY OF WORKS AND HYDRAULICS

Question proposed that this Division stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Which hon. Members would like to speak?

Mr. Balchand Persaud: I wish to make a few points generally and then to speak on subheads 6, 13, 18, 23, 33, 36 and 39.

Mr. Hamid: I should like to speak on page 96, subheads 37 and 38.

Mr. Balchand Persaud: Speaking on the amount sought by the hon. Minister of Works and Hydraulics for capital expenditure to the tune of \$24,715,000, why has he not taken into consideration certain fields that the Government hopes –

The Chairman: We are dealing with page 96, Division XVI.

Mr. Balchand Persaud: One can see from the figures given, and the subheads, how this money is supposed to be spent. One can see quite clearly that the Government is spending more and more money on infrastructural work and very little money is to be spent to build industries, to establish land settlement schemes and to put people on the land. One can see quite clearly that the Ministry is usurping most of the total Budget, if not most then much more of the funds than any other Ministry. One would therefore feel that the Government's policy is only to carry out infrastructural work and to provide employment for some people for a limited time. In this way it is hoped to provide jobs for the boys.

This type of development will not generate rapidly the type of wealth needed for the advancement of our country. I feel that this trend will lead us nowhere and Government will put our country into more bankruptcy. Most of the development programme projects that the Government has here will be provided from loans from various sources. In other words, the Government will have to borrow and to pay back money. As such, the emphasis placed on infrastructural work is a trend which this Government should not pursue because of the fact that to pay back the loans with interest will mean further hardship on the Guyanese economy.

Speaking on subhead 6, Mahaicony/Abary, I notice there is no provision whatsoever although, according to the 1966-1972 Development Programme the sum of \$10,500,000 was to be spent in the Mahaicony/Abary area. So far nothing has been allocated by this Government to be spent in that area.

I should like to know what is the reason, because one would remember that there was a lot of talk about the Mahaicony/Abary Land Development Scheme which was supposed to be established by this Government and we have seen that for the last four years the Government has not allocated any sum whatsoever for this project. I should like the Minister to say how soon we can expect to have this project budgeted for.

On subhead 13, Essequibo Roads, the Government is asking for \$250,000 to continue rehabilitation of the road. As far as I know, in the Essequibo area there is only about 12 miles of good road from Adventure to Anna Regina. The rest of the road is mostly “fair weather” road because whenever the rainy season comes it means that trucks, cars and buses will be stuck on the road.

5.50 p.m.

The residents in these areas suffer severely because of lack of transportation. This also applies to the residents in the Essequibo Islands. The roads there are very miserable and during the rainy season it is very difficult for persons to travel on them. There is general hardship in moving from one place to another. I feel that this amount that the Government is spending on the Essequibo Roads is very limited and I should like an explanation from the Minister concerning this.

Subhead 18, East Bank Berbice Roads: I mentioned earlier about waste in this particular department. The Government is asking for \$70,000 to provide for the carrying out of necessary works. Early last year, during the period March/April, large amounts of sand and bricks were thrown throughout the road on East Bank Berbice and, up to the end of last month, they were not scattered on the road. As a result, when rain falls, a lot of it is washed away into the drains and nearby trenches. I feel that the Government is wasting public funds because if materials are put in certain areas for construction work to be carried out, then the Government must be in a position to have the necessary equipment and personnel to do the work. This is where the Government is losing a lot of money that could be used in other sectors.

The road is very bad. I was in that area around the end of last month and I can tell you that it is quite difficult for the two buses that operate in that area to travel to bring out people from Brandwagt Sari. It is also difficult for hire cars to travel in that area. More attention should be paid to the East Bank Berbice Roads.

Subhead 23, Asphalt Plant and Paver for Canje Road Project: I notice that no provision has been made under this subhead. The road going into the Canje district is a similar road to the East Bank Berbice Road. It is very bad. There is a particular drain at Pln. Rose Hall and for the last three months the bridge has so badly deteriorated that one can only travel on a pathway in the middle of the road. The sides of the bridge have completely deteriorated and there are large holes. Within the past three months, three fatal accidents occurred in that area. The Government has not been paying any particular attention to the Canje Road and I must point out that even the Police did not make any recommendation to this Ministry to repair this bridge. It is very dangerous for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists to travel on it.

Much more attention should be paid to the Canje Road because of the fact that there is a large population there and people have to travel there every day. The sugar estate is just there. Hundreds of workers have to go to work every day and their lives are in danger. Motorists try to drive on the best part of the road and pedestrians also try to walk on the best part of the road. As a result, the lives of the pedestrians in that area are in grave danger. I urge the Government to provide a sum of money to repair this road and to ensure that the people are saved from further fatality.

Subhead 33, Sea and River Defences - \$4,600,000: The legend states: "To continue reconstruction and rehabilitation works and improvements to the Wharf." Since the Government is providing for Sea and River Defences, I should like to know which Wharf it is. [**Mr. Green:** Read the next line."] It is correct; I am asking the hon. Minister to explain to us which wharf it is.

Subhead 36, Staff and Services, Development Projects - \$500,000: I wish to ask why we don't use our own engineers on this project.

Subhead 39, Hydrometeorology: The sum of \$130,000 is to provide for a contribution to the Hydrometeorology Building in Barbados and also for the continuation of the local

programme. I should like to know what benefits we would acquire from making such a contribution.

Mr. Hamid: I should like to combine subhead 37, Purchase of Equipment, with subhead 38, Purchase of Office Equipment, etc. Generally speaking, money spent by Government should be spent in the interest of all, and when office equipment is purchased by Government, it should be purchased for the purpose of improving the country as a whole. Will the Minister indicate what part of this amount will be allocated to cover the cost of furniture in his office, which includes a bedroom and a tiled bathroom? I understand that, in his office, there is plush wall to wall Axminster rubber-based carpeting and that the colour of the carpeting is in the name of the Minister – green. *[Laughter]* I understand that the Minister has taken over the Parliament Secretary's office also, making his sitting room much larger.

Two steel desks have been purchased and placed in his office. I understand that one of these steel desks is for the use of a series of telephone circuits and the other one is there for him to use in his capacity as Minister. Apart from this, the Minister has placed two air-conditioned units in this very large apartment in which he is living at the expense of the taxpayers.

The legend with respect to subhead 37 states: "To provide for the purchase of miscellaneous equipment including vehicles." I was told that even the vehicle which the Minister uses was purchased through the Ministry. I would be very glad if the Minister would explain more fully these very important points I have raised. This country cannot afford this sort of luxury. One would find bathrooms, rest rooms, etc. not only in his Ministry but in many of the Ministries.

6 p.m.

These things look so suspicious. I wonder what is really going on between the lines. If my information is wrong, then I think the Minister should open those offices for the Opposition

to visit, so that we may see for ourselves, and I would be pleased to pay a courtesy call. Perhaps he will have a house warming party. I am told, apart from the anxiety when a female approach the Minister, there seems to exist for the Minister a certain amount of fear. So, to let the nation be fully aware that there is nothing sinister in his actions, perhaps the Minister will be able to give a full explanation of all the points I have raised.

Mr. Green: The hon. Member, Mr. Balchand Persaud, I must congratulate him because he is extremely consistent with respect to his inconsistency, because in his opening remarks he attempted to criticize the Ministry and the Government for spending on matters which he considers to be infrastructure and to use his own language, he said that we were usurping large funds, but further on he bemoans the fact that we do not have a road in Canje and one at “X” and at “Y” points. Apparently, he feels that the roads must be fixed. I am a very simple person. I am no scholar, but this sort of inconsistency really bothers me at the level of this House.

With respect to the East Bank Berbice roads, there are a number of bridges to be reconstructed late in the year. This provision will be used in the main for this purpose.

Again, my hon. Friends do not seem to know their country. My friend at No. 33 is anxious to know where this wharf at Kingston is. If he proceeds north between the Ministry of Works and Hydraulics and the Forestry Department, this is along Water Street, and he turns due west, he would see that there is a wharf which we are reconstructing and making strong because we expect, what with our sea defence works and other works, to have particularly heavy equipment, stock, etc. off-loaded, and it is necessary in advance to have the sort of facility to take this type of equipment and stock which will be off-loaded very shortly for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of sea defences and river defences which are going on throughout the territory.

At subhead 36, this is the explanation with respect to the provision:

“To provide for consultants’ fees and for additional staff to implement the Ministry’s development programme.”

It is a fact that we are required in most instances to provide fees for the services of consultants.

The hon. Member, Mr. Maccie Hamid must have been in an extremely good mood. The tea we had was of a high quality, hence his quality, but as you know, personal equipment and office equipment we supply to all the Ministries in the territory and I will welcome any Member of this honourable House to visit not only my office but any of the Ministers’ offices and he will see that in some cases we have attempted to be frugal because what is required with respect to the work and efficiency of an office, we put in and any Member is most welcome.

At subhead 39, Hydrometeorology, we are moving towards providing the sort of technical information service that will complement the improved works we are doing in many areas and the water level recorders and information must be recorded so that we have the proper prognosis in the many areas. I do not know that information from hydrometeorology can be used by agriculturalists is attempting to ascertain in “X” area, the rain cycle, so that there can be proper planning. This explains this particular Head.

Division XVI, Ministry of Works and Hydraulics - \$24,715,000 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

**Division XVIA – MINISTRY OF WORKS AND HYDRAULICS
IBRD/IDA PROJECTS**

Question proposed that this Division stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Balchand Persaud: I wish to speak on subhead 3. The Minister is seeking to have \$72,000 voted for consultant fees. What I observed in my criticisms throughout the Ministry of

Works and Hydraulics was based on the fact that we have been importing too many consultant engineers in the Service of the Ministry of Works and Hydraulics. We have people in our country that can do these jobs but the Government does not want to give Guyanese a chance to use their knowledge for the purpose of gaining experience in these professions.

One is in a position to ask if every year we are going to import persons to be engineers and to be consultants because whenever they come here, the Government has to pay large sums of money, hotel bills, and a lot of allowances, and the same type of advice they give we can give. Most of the capital expenditure of the Government comes from loans. When the Government receives those loans, these consultants have to come in.

6.10 p.m.

The fact is that whenever we borrow \$1,000,000 from any foreign service a quarter of that money has to be spent towards consultant fees. This Government should eradicate this because it hinders the development of intellectuals who are engineers. This is one reason why there is a brain-drain. The Government does not provide the opportunity for them to develop their knowledge and so be better equipped to tackle the problems of this country. The Government is always importing consultants; it is time that this is stopped. We have to pay back all the loans borrowed and, if we are going to borrow loans with strings attached, then why have the loans, for we will only burden the country further. The Government should stop the practice of importing consultant engineers.

The Chairman: The hon. Minister of Works and Hydraulics (Mr. Green).

Mr. Green (replying): I refer to my hon. friend's inconsistency throughout; he seems to have some extravagant fancies. The position, re this talk of Guyanese intellectuals, is that our engineers are fully used. As a matter of fact, it is of interest to note that the consultants at the Ministry of Works and Hydraulics work along with the engineers and – in any case it is no use

attempting to pretend. This is a requirement of the World Bank. They (the Opposition) wish to level criticisms but let them tell us if, during their rickety term of office, they were able to get better terms and conditions from either East or West. The only observation I can make is to repeat that our engineers are, in fact, used. There is no prostitution with respect to local talent and, providing we have them available, they will work along with foreign consultants.

Division XVIA – Ministry of Works and Hydraulics – IBRD/IDA Projects - \$1,504,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Will hon. Members turn back to the Ministry of Communications, page 80, Head 32.

HEAD 32 – MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS

Question proposed that this Head stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Will hon. Members indicate the subheads on which they wish to speak?

Mr. Wilson: I wish to make a general comment on this page. I would also like to speak on the Guyana Airways Corporation—

The Chairman: Subhead 5?

Mr. Wilson: Yes, sir; also the item between subheads 3 and 4 – Grant towards running expenses of Georgetown Mariner's Club.

The Chairman: Let us begin. The hon. Member Mr. Wilson.

Mr. Wilson: There is no particular item here with respect to road service but I do know that the hon. Minister (Mr. Kasim) is responsible for awarding road licenses. It was reported to me that persons requiring hire car licenses experience great difficulty in getting them.

They are told that, first of all, they must be employed; on the other hand, they are told by the employer that they must bring their hire car license or they cannot be employed; they are being pushed around in a ring. If a person has the competence, two years is usually required for a person to have a private driver's license, he should be able to get a hire car license; but I understand that the hon. Minister is insisting that the applicant must first produce some document from the employer before he can get his license.

Grant towards running expenses of Georgetown Mariner's Club

As regards the subhead dealing with the Mariner's Club, I notice that this year the legend says "Provision no longer required." I would like to know how the services carried out by this club are being done now; what body or what institution is doing this? Is it considered unnecessary?

The Chairman: Subhead 5.

Subsidy, Guyana Airways Corporation

Mr. Wilson: The only observation I will make about this Corporation is that, during the time that the P.P.P. were in office, there were representatives from all the parties – Mr. Alwin Holder of the P.N.C. was appointed by me and after I left made Chairman. Is the appointment of members to this Corporation being done on a national basis or is it just a one-sided affair? The tax-payers' money is being used and we should be able to take a look and see what is being done with it. We should be able to have a representative on all the Boards and Corporations so that we can know what is going on.

Dr. Jagan: I just want to make an observation.

The Chairman: You were not in your seat when we began but we had decided that, in order to balance our time, we try to get everyone to speak within a certain time; but I will allow you to speak.

Dr. Jagan: There has been a grave violation of the rights of the people of Guyana. The Government has taken to looking into people's personal business – I mean telephone tapping, opening of mails and so on. This has been admitted by the Government in a recent statement. This is a very dangerous practice and the Government must give an undertaking to the country at large that this will cease. I do not know if this is still going on.

The Chairman: This should come under the head Post Office. We are only at Personal Emoluments. The hon. Minister of Communications (Mr. Kasim) will reply.

The Minister of Communications (Mr. Kasim): Mr. Chairman, as a general comment Mr. Wilson asked about the road services, licenses for chauffeurs and so on. His information is not correct. I think this is information which is a very dangerous charge against the Ministry and I am refuting it categorically.

6.20 p.m.

The next item deals with the Mariners Club. The Shipping Company is now contributing to the upkeep of this Club and there is no necessity for the Government to do so. As a result of this, the subsidy is now withdrawn.

Regarding the appointment of Members to the Guyana Airways Corporation, I am not aware of anyone being appointed through political affiliation. Members are appointed according to their merit. [**Mr. Ram Karran:** "That is not true."]

The Chairman: We shall turn to page 81, Head 33: Post Offices which continue on page 82. The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Dr. Jagan: I hope that the Minister will comment on what I said earlier. There is no need for me to repeat what I said.

Mr. Singh: Subhead 1: items 15 and 16.

Mr. Lall: Subhead 18.

Mr. Ambrose: Subhead 2.

Mr. Wilson: Subhead 1: items 4, 15, 24, 30, 35 and 37. Subheads 8, 12, 18, 19 and 22.

The Chairman: Perhaps, as we have just a short bit of time left, we will allow the hon. Member Mr. Singh to speak seeing he has only two items.

Mr. M.F. Singh: We know that with any undertaking, for it to be run properly and competently, we must have a competent person at the head; like any ship, we must have a proper captain. I am a bit alarmed in respect of items 15 and 16 where there has been a small expenditure in the Revised Estimates as compared with the Approved Estimates for 1968. I should like to know whether there existed vacancies in this post. There are Chief Postmasters but the sum of \$14,400 was provided for in 1968 for these individuals and only the sum of \$4,800 was put in the Revised Estimates. Presumably that was the only amount envisaged that would be spent. What is the position? How is the work going on? Are the departments headed by these Postmasters run efficiently? Or are they run by subordinate officers?

The same applies to the general heading: Postmasters. The sum provided in the Approved Estimates for 1968 was \$163,343. In fact, \$144,280 was envisaged to be spent in

1968 – a reduction of \$19,000 for what was originally thought would be spent on a total of forty-seven postmasters where there were vacancies unfilled. We should like to know, first of all, how many vacancies will be filled this year so that these undertakings could be properly run.

Mr. Lall: Subhead: Subhead 18. I have noticed that the sum of \$40,000 has been provided for Postal Deliveries on Sugar Estates. I should like to draw to the attention of hon. Members the fact that persons employed as Letter Carriers on the sugar estates are asked to serve letters in villages outside of the sugar estate areas. In one particular instance, a Letter Carrier was asked to serve letters outside of the sugar estate area and he was told that he would be given an extra hour's pay every day. This was given to him for two years, and after that, although he was still serving letters in the village district, the hour's pay was withdrawn. Several letters were sent to the Ministry concerned and no action was taken. I understand the Minister is looking into the matter and I do hope that the Government will see to it that the individual receives his retroactive payment effective from the day the hour's pay was withdrawn.

We would like to warn Heads of Departments not to treat their subordinates as sub-human beings. We are here to look after everyone's interest and when the time shall have come to look after their interest I do hope that the Government would allow us to look after their interest without fear, favour or partiality.

Assembly resumed.

Sitting suspended at 6.30 p.m.

8.05

On resumption --

The Chairman: At the suspension earlier this evening we were dealing with Head 33, Ministry of Communications, Post Office. I think it is the turn of the hon. Member Mr. Wilson to speak.

Mr. Wilson: My general comment is this: I should like to draw attention to the very unsatisfactory manner in which mail is being delivered. The service is very slow. On occasions, right here in Guyana, letters are not received until 4 or 7 days after they have been posted. In particular, it has been drawn to my attention that mail moving between Georgetown and Mackenzie moves very slowly. I observed, sometime after the withdrawal of the "R.H. Carr" that mail to Mackenzie was being transported by road. I wonder if mail is sent there every day now that buses go daily or whether the postal department is still sending mail every other day as was the practice at the time when the "R.H. Carr" used to perform the service.

I think something should be done to speed up delivery of mail and I should like, in passing, to emphasize the question of tampering with mail which was raised by the hon. Leader of the Opposition. I just repeat it for emphasis. At the same time I wish to mention the lack of confidence in the Post Office so far as the mail service is concerned, particularly mail moving overseas. I have a very painful personal experience which was reported to the postal authorities. Sometime last year, about April, my brother in the United States asked me to get some jewellery for him valued at \$400. This we put in the post here and that was the last we heard about it. He writes me often about it and up to now we cannot hear anything further of it. This gives an idea of what happens. Up to now this \$400 worth of jewellery cannot be traced. It has just disappeared.

Item (4), Controller of Posts. I observe that last year there were two Controllers of Posts and this year there is only one. I wonder what the explanation for this reduction is. I should have thought that, rather than reducing the number of Controllers of Posts, there should have been an increase seeing how inefficient the postal service is.

I shall now speak generally on items (15), (24) and (30), Chief Postmasters, Rural Postal Assistants and Postal Apprentices. I shall make one general comment on them with regard to recruitment and promotion.

Sometime before I left the Ministry we were trying to work out a scheme whereby persons who pass through the postal services, persons who tramped the streets in the villages and delivered mail, should be able to reach the highest position in the postal services, that is, the position of Postmaster General, as happens in the Police Force.

I observed that the reason why it was almost impossible for such persons to arrive at the highest post was that when they were recruited their standard of education was very low, the school-leaving certificate, as they had to get into the postal services before the age of 14 years 9 months. If they missed that opportunity they could not get in at a later date. It was not possible for youngsters to remain in school long enough to obtain the G.C.E.

The Minister (Mr. Kasim) will find the files that I was putting forward a plan, which would have been implemented early had it not been for the fraud of the 1964 Elections, whereby persons could be recruited up to the age of 19, if they had the necessary qualifications, and could be placed in higher positions, that is, they would not need to start at the bottom, except that they would be given an opportunity of doing some field work. They would not have been required to spend the number of years that they usually spend working up from postal apprentices to rural postmen, then to town postmen, which is a very tedious, long drawn out process. As a matter of fact, very few of them can reach the stage of becoming Chief Postmasters. General or even Deputy Postmaster General.

I have every regard for the present holders of the posts. They are efficient. I do not see why men should come from outside for higher positions or why the people who went through the grind of meeting and getting to know the people, meeting with all sorts of difficulties in the

fields and in the yards, with dogs biting them and the like, why it is not possible for such persons to reach the highest positions as is happening in the Police Force. I understand that Dr. Collins has put forward some proposals. I do not know what they are, but I understand that if those proposals are accepted there will be some improvement with regard to the rate at which postal personnel will move through the service and perhaps they will be given an opportunity to arrive at the highest posts before their time for retirement.

I should like to say that I think that the number of postal apprentices, rural postal assistants and town postmen on the Establishment should be increased. The need for this is indicated by the very slow way in which our mail is being delivered. The Minister should consider increasing the Establishment. Those are all the remarks I wish to make.

8.15 p.m.

The Chairman: I think you have a few questions to ask on page 82.

Mr. Wilson: Item 35, Postal Agents: I think that there is great need for an increase in the number of Postal Agents. Let us take the East Coast, for example, between Plaisance and Beterverwagting. There is no Postal Agent within a distance of three miles and the population in the intervening area is very high. There has been a great shift of population and I think we should move away from the situation where there are Post Offices in the village only. There was a time when there were more people in the villages. The people in the sugar estates did not have so much correspondence and their mails used to go through their managers, perhaps for them to tamper with as they like. Now that this situation has been changed, I think there should be Postal Agents in very thickly populated areas between villages. For example, there should be a Postal Agency at Success, between Beterverwagting and Buxton. There should be one at Lusignan, and this should apply to other similar areas.

Item 37, Casual Postal Apprentices: There is a system whereby many youngsters who serve as Casual Postal Apprentices can never – I emphasize the word “never” – enter into the normal postal service. That is to say, if they get permanent employment before they reach the age of 14 years 9 months, there is no hope for them to enter into the service. This should be discontinued. I trust that the Collins Report has taken care of this.

Subhead 8, Postal Training: When I was a Minister a postal training school was established for the specific purpose of assisting these very youngsters whom I mentioned before, to enable them to have the necessary education and training which would fit them to move rapidly through the service so that, before their time of retirement, they could be appointed to the highest post in the department, namely the post of Postmaster General. I understand that this school has been closed, even though the Government spent \$9,000 last year and it is proposed to spend another \$9,000 this year. I do not know how the Minister will account for the spending of this amount if the school has been closed. I hope that the Ministry would not undertake such a retrograde step as to close this very valuable institution. I should repeat that this could serve as a means whereby the training the postmen in the rural areas would receive would not only enable them to give more efficient service as they go along, but would also assist them to be promoted.

Subhead 12, Conveyance of Mails: The remarks that I made before generally apply to this subhead, so I would not say anything more.

Subhead 18, Postal Deliveries on Sugar Estates: I think that the officers or the men who perform these tasks should be integrated into the normal service. There are two departments – one fish and the other fowl – and the postal officers who deliver mails on the sugar estates are treated as if they are of a very inferior category, with regard to their terms of emoluments, uniform and the like. I think the time has come for them to be integrated into the normal service.

Subhead 22, Philatelic Services: I should like to say that almost every week there are new stamps coming out – one time fish, another time bird. We will soon get butterflies, different

kinds of grasses and the like. This is cheapening the philatelic services of this country. If you make use of certain things too often you cheapen them. I am sure that our stamps are the cheapest on the market, because of this commercializing. The Minister should call a halt to this.

The Chairman: I think the hon. Member Mr. Ambrose wanted to speak on subhead 2.

Mr. Ambrose: My point has been taken care of.

The Chairman: The hon. Minister will now reply. We are a little behind hand on this Head so I would be glad if the Minister will be brief.

Mr. Kasim: the hon. Member Mr. Fielden Singh asked questions with respect to items 15 and 16. I notice that the hon. Member Mr. Wilson also asked a question with respect to item 15 so I will reply to both of them at the same time. The hon. Leader of the Opposition (Dr. Jagan) who is not here had asked me to reply to the remarks he made. [**Mr. Ram Karran:** "If your reply is worthwhile, I will convey it."] Very well. The complaint made by these gentlemen was that mails are being tampered with.

The Chairman: By these "hon. Members."

Mr. Kasim: The complaint made by these hon. Members was that mails are being tampered with. I have also heard that rumour and we are taking the necessary precautions to see that this does not happen in the Post Office Department. It is a rumour that is going around but no one has come forward with concrete evidence to prove it. After taking this matter into consideration, we invited the Press on the 2nd February to come when we were opening the bags containing the foreign mail. When we opened the bags in the presence of the Press we found that mails were tampered with. This is something that we are looking into. We have reported the matter to the authorities in the U.S.A. and I think the situation is improving quite a lot. As

20.3.69

National Assembly

8.15 – 8.25 p.m.

long as I am Minister of Communications, I will do everything in my power to see that the mails belonging to the people of this country are secured.

I will now deal with the questions raised by the hon. Member Mr. Fielden Singh on items 15 and 16. From April 1968 the substantive holder of the post has been seconded to the Ministry of Information from which Head his salary is being met.

8.25 p.m.

I should like to finish off with the hon. Member, Mr. Fielden Singh. On the 31st July, 1968, three posts of Chief Postmaster were vacant and held by officers in an acting capacity. Provision in the revised estimates for 1968 was therefore made for \$4,800. The position now is that two posts are filled and one is still being held by an acting appointment.

Item (16), Postmasters. Due to a number of vacancies in the grade of Postmaster, the full amount of the voted provision was not enough and the revised estimates accordingly show a reduction. The hon. Member, Mr. Ambrose, I think, gave way to the hon. Member, Mr. Wilson.

Item (2), Deputy Postmaster General. The substantive holder of the post was seconded to the Ministry of Information from April, 1968, from where his salary was met and it was not therefore necessary to use the full amount of the voted provision. I think that deals with it.

Item (4). It was anticipated that the post of Controller of Posts which was vacant when the estimates were being prepared would be filled before the end of 1968 and provision was therefore made for this post. The additional post was a supernumerary post.

Item (24), Rural Postal Assistants. There are also a number of vacancies for rural postal assistants which should be filled this year by the Public Service Commission.

Item (30). There are a number of vacancies in the grade of postal apprentices. Accordingly, the figure shown in the revised estimates was reduced to be in line with the expenditure for 1968.

Item (35). I have a list of postal agencies to be opened in 1969. They are at New Amsterdam, Gangaram Settlement, Half Mile, Wismar, Karasabi, Adventure Steamer, Bartica Steamer, West Coast Railway, Paruima, Campbellville, Kurukabara, Aishalton, Liliendaal and Belgrade, and where the demands are great, we are giving them consideration.

Item (37), Casual Postal Apprentices. There are a number of vacancies in post offices. We have vacancies for one foreman mechanic, one town postman, one rural postal assistant, one machine operator.

The Chairman: The legend states, "Previous provision inadequate."

Mr. Kasim: The age qualification has just been put back by the Public Service Commission and it will now be 17 years. On account of vacancies existing in all postal grades, trainees could not be drawn from depleted staff to attend training school. It is proposed to reopen the school in the latter part of this year, and expenditure has been incurred in purchasing proper equipment for the school.

Subhead 12. We have no control over this expenditure as it depends on the volume of mail handled. The cost through the steamship companies and devaluation of the pound has to be taken into account.

Subhead 18, Postal Deliveries on Sugar Estates. The Postmaster General has informed me that after a survey was made, they found it was not necessary to pay any overtime because, within the normal eight-hour day, the letter carrier can do the job. I am sorry that the hon.

Member, Mr. Harry Lall has brought this matter here because we had discussed it and I had promised to go into the matter, which I shall still do, as he mentioned.

8.35 p.m.

Subhead 19. Mr. Wilson spoke about the Contribution to Universal Postal Union. [*Interruption*]
Well, he says subhead 19 here.

The Chairman: There is no need for that. Give the answer for subhead 22. Time is getting short.

Mr. Kasim: This is something, I must say, for which the Post Office must be given credit. As a matter of fact, when the hon. Member Mr. Wilson was the Minister of Communication during the regime of the P.P.P., he was given advice repeatedly to establish a philatelic bureau and, despite such advice, he never did. This country lost quite a lot of money through his lack of vision. From the time that this department was established, that is from 1968, we collected \$279,221 for stamp sales locally. The Crown Agents sold \$331,233 making a total of \$610,454.

This shows that, for seven years, the seven years in which the Opposition was in Government, if they had had the philatelic bureau, over \$4,000,000 would have been collected. The staff of the Post Office must be complimented for establishing this new section.

Head 33 – Ministry of Communications – Post Office - \$2,566,420 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: We spent two minutes more than we should have on that item.

**HEAD 34 – MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS
TRANSPORT AND HARBOURS**

Question proposed that this Head stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Ambrose: I would like to speak on subhead 1.

The Chairman: Well, there is only one subhead.

Mr. Wilson: I would like to speak generally.

The Chairman: I am sorry but, on the arrangements we agreed on, only one hon. Member is allowed to speak on a particular subhead. I would like you to choose which of the two of you is better qualified to speak.

Mr. Wilson: I want to speak on the Abstract of this.

The Chairman: Yes, but that is not before us.

Mr. Wilson: But this is based on what is here.

The Chairman: We have to deal with the page where money is involved.

Mr. Wilson: Are we going to meet a stage where we will deal with this?

The Chairman: Head 34, subhead 1.

Net Deficit on Transport Services

Mr. Ram Karran: Having a deficit here, I wonder if Your Honour will relax the rule particularly since this is the largest deficit for any Head. In addition to that -- *[Interruptions]*

The Chairman: let the hon. Member make his point.

Mr. Ram Karran: I wish to observe when the hon. Member (Mr. Wilson) is to speak.

The Chairman: I would like to hear what the hon. Member (Mr. Ram Karran) has to say.

Mr. Ram Karran: With regard to the fact that this is a service for the whole country and as the whole community is affected by its inefficiency, I crave your indulgence to allow hon. Members to have some more debate on this.

The Chairman: Two of your colleagues?

Mr. Ram Karran: I would like to raise a point. If we keep an eye on the clock I think we can get through.

The Chairman: There is this in your favour: we have 22 minutes to be used by the Opposition and 10 minutes by the Minister. As soon as the 22 minutes are up I shall close.

Mr. Ambrose: I am giving way to Mr. Wilson.

The Chairman: The hon. Member Mr. Wilson will speak. The time is now 8.42 p.m.

Mr. Wilson: First of all, I think that steps should be taken to have a Corporation established. I mentioned this in the Budget debate. I do not know what has happened to the

office space provided before I left the Ministry. We had office space and equipment was obtained for members of the Corporation. What is it being used for now? General storage?

The Chairman: Are they so rude as not to allow the former Minister of Communications (Mr. Wilson) to look at it? I would be disappointed to hear that.

Mr. Wilson: I would like to speak on Abstract III – East Coast Railway – page 156, subhead 1, item 2.

Maintenance of Permanent Way

In many areas where the railway track runs, the dam on both sides of the railway track is very steep and this causes damage to motor vehicles. The muffler of the vehicle is damaged when an attempt is made to cross the permanent way.

There is danger to vehicles crossing the railway track. Several times fatal accidents occur at Sheriff Street, at Beterverwagting, at Plaisance and at Buxton. I think that at such places there should be some sort of traffic light blinking at nights around the area, perhaps a red light to warn motorists of the fact that they are approaching the railway track and there may be a train coming.

8.45 p.m.

On page 157, item 18: Compensation Accident and Looses. I feel that when passengers use the Services and are involved in accidents which are caused mainly through the negligence of the officers in the department, it is my view that the process of compensation is too long and drawn out usually resulting in great hardships. Efforts should be made to expedite the process of payment for compensation.

Page 160: Shipping Services. I think we all know what has happened to the Powis. I do not know what is going to be the outcome of the investigation but someone is certainly to be blamed for that. I understand that the Harbour Master has made a serious blunder. He has the channel just where there is a wreck and there is no indication to warn vessels that this wreck is near the channel. The Department is likely to lose a large sum of money as a result of this; and I think that some action should be taken against those held responsible.

With regard to the Shipping Services, there is need for much improvement in the passenger service on the boats which go up the Berbice River and the Northwest District. It is really an ordeal for one to travel, especially on the Northwest District steamer. A recommendation was made some years ago that steps should be taken to acquire new vessels to improve the Service. This Government has been in office for over four years and nothing has been done to improve the Northwest District passenger travel service.

Page 163: Bartica/Potaro Road Services. I have been telling this House year after year that the Government upkeep this road but, a private operator, I understand by the name of Correia, competes against the Government Services, uses all the facilities – the garages and so on – and the Department gets very little work. Most of the passengers travel with the Correia Service and all the establishments are being maintained by the Department and yet very little work is done by the department vehicles. I think that that Service should be discontinued. If private individuals want to run the Service, by all means, let them run it but the Government should not upkeep vehicles and other things for the benefit of private enterprises.

Page 164. There are just two points I would like to make with respect to the Harbour Services. It is time that we establish a Port Authority, - [Mr. Correia: “What do you know about Port authority?”] – which will cater for the efficient turn-around of vessels. The turn-around of vessels is very inefficient at our Harbours; and I feel that there will be improvement if a Port Authority is established as quickly as possible.

The second point I wish to raise is one regarding the congestion of the West Coast railway. There seems to be need for some new and also improved carriages. The situation there is deplorable. I trust that the Government will do something to improve the service on the West Coast railways.

Mr. Ram Karran: I wish to join hands with my hon. Friend Mr. Wilson with respect to the quality of service provided by the Transport and Harbours Department which extends from the Railway to the Ferry Crossing. It is a disgusting site to see the big rush when people have to cross on the Demerara Ferry, particularly in the mornings and the evenings when people go to and from work; there are also children crossing to go to school.

In order to be able to catch the steamer one has to be at the Stelling at about 3.30 in the morning and on very many occasions cars are unable to cross because of the inability of the steamer to accommodate them. This Service was inaugurated about a decade ago, and the Government has been in office for as long a period to have in mind the provision for another vessel so that when traffic becomes heavy, as it is now, we would have a shuttle service. The people who travel on these Services are not only supporters of the PPP but, also supporters of the various parties represented in this House. I hope that the Government will do something to ensure that a proper Service is provided for people who have to use the various Services of the Transport and Harbours Department.

I wish to congratulate the Government on its acquisition of the white elephant the RH Carr. I think it is as old as the oldest Minister on the other side. One would have thought that the vessel, even though it is old, would have been put to better use. I understand that the Berbice Service is rotten and one could not expect anything worse than that. It is not a question of passenger traffic but one of heavy motorcar traffic. On account on the distance, the numbers of cars that have to be filed into the steamer are so many, that the steamer cannot accommodate them, as a result of this, people have to wait for long hours. One has to leave the Upper Corentyne at 2 a.m. in order to catch the 5.30 boat. It is expected that there will be more

motorcar traffic because of the improvement of the East Coast road because of the improvement of the East Road because people, rather than travelling by the railway service which is so rotten, would prefer to travel by the road. The Government's plans to have the superstructure the "R H Carr" to assist in the transporting of cars, is to my mind short-sighted.

8.55 p.m.

One would have thought that the Government would have given priority to passengers, human cargo, rather than to motor cars and that it would have arranged for the "R.H. Carr" – so long as it can limp along – to help in the Berbice River service until such times as either a pontoon or adequate facilities for the Pomeroon can be arranged.

The final point I wish to make is this: I understand that in this day and age there are clerical officers in the Post Office who work as many as 20 hours a week overtime without compensation for it. The present General Manager and many others in the clerical service used to work this number of hours cheerfully, but times have changed and certainly, even though people are paid monthly, one cannot expect them to give satisfactory service after 48 and 50 hours' work a week.

The deficit in this Department might appear to be frightening and we are always very critical of the money spent, but one cannot be very critical even though it is such a huge deficit, when we take into consideration the human factor involved. I hope that Station Masters, clerks and people who are monthly paid, and who have to work in the railway services for long hours, will be compensated or that additional staff will be taken on to give them adequate leisure time.

The Minister of Communications (Mr. Kasim): The hon. Member Mr. Wilson mentioned the office space. If he would take a walk he would see how usefully we are using the office space now. We use it for training purposes. He mentioned the level crossings. I would say that all these crossings have signs and we usually maintain both sides. On the question of

compensation: This is being sent to the Law Officers and as soon as we hear from them we will act upon their advice. As for the “Powis,” we are doing everything that is possible to salvage it.

The hon. Member spoke about the shipping services. I should like to inform him that the cabins on the ships that travel to the North West District are now air conditioned. I do admit there can be some more improvement on the Bartica-Tiboku Road. At the present, due to competition from other trucks and lorries, the Department is finding it a bit tough, but things are now picking up and we intend to improve that service.

As for the harbour services, this matter is under consideration. On the question of crowding on the West Coast trains, the Government is fully cognisant of this, but we have heard hon. Members on the other side repeatedly querying the subsidy of \$2 million which we give. How then can we improve the services? I would be only too glad if, rather than saying in this House that we are spending too much, the hon. Members would move a Motion asking the Minister of Finance to increase this subsidy.

The hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran mentioned the ferry that crosses from Georgetown to Vreed-en-Hoop at peak hours. We all know that there must be congestion at peak hours but what can we do? Where can we find the money? We are still thinking of ways and means. For instance, in the ferry service between New Amsterdam and Rosignol we have just acquired a gift from Sprostons and I was glad to hear the hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran congratulate us for receiving this ship. We are going to make this into a power pontoon to carry cars, lorries and other vehicles across the river at peak hours. When the hon. Member stated that there is not enough room for passengers, the human cargo, I think he was a stranger to the truth because we have enough space to bring over all the passengers.

As for the Berbice River service, there are not enough passengers and cargo to fill one ship, much less two.

The hon. Member stated that officers and people working very late in the Department do not get overtime. He should be happy to know that there are such patriotic officers in the Department who are prepared to serve, because the Department cannot afford to pay. We are doing everything possible to see how we can make this Department a paying concern. I thank you.

The Chairman: I shall now put the question.

Head 34, Ministry of Communications, Transport and Harbours - \$2,000,000, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

HEAD 35 – MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS CIVIL AVIATION

Question proposed that this Head stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Lall: Subhead 1 (4).

Mr. Sutton: Subhead 16.

Mr. Wilson: Subhead 1, item (2), (4) and (14). The hon. Member Mr. Lall will allow me to speak on subhead 1 (4).

The Chairman: Then, can we begin?

Mr. Wilson: On subhead 1 (2), Assistant Director of Civil Aviation. We notice that the legend states that the holder of the post has been seconded to the Ministry of Home Affairs, Police Department. It would appear that this officer was absent from this post also in 1968. I should like to know if anyone has been appointed to act and whether it is not unfair to the

Director of Civil Aviation to have him functioning without an Assistant. Or does the Government think that the post of Assistant Director is redundant?

On subhead 1 (4), the hon. Member Mr. Harry Lall would like to know what work this officer has to do.

9.05 p.m.

I should like to know whether a competent officer to fill this post has been found. I should also like to know whether there is anyone in training because the legend states: "Anticipated filling of vacant post." We would like to have two questions answered on this item. What are the duties of the Technical Officer likely to be, and is there an officer in training?

When I was a Minister a Guyanese had applied to fill this post but we had no control over the Public Service Commission and he was not appointed because it was felt that he was not a supporter of the then Opposition. While we were in the Government it seems as if the Opposition had more access to the Public Service Commission and it was able to get things done.

Subhead 14 – I think the hon. Member Mr. Lall said he wanted to speak on item 11.

The Chairman: You may go ahead.

Mr. Wilson: Subhead 14, Maintenance and Operation of Aircraft: I should like to know whether this aircraft is a Cessna which was purchased for this department during our time, what is the state now, and whether there is need for a new aircraft to take its place.

Mr. Lall: Subhead 1, item 11, Airport Attendants: We observe here that two new posts have been created under salary scale C8 and that the amount has been increased by \$1,000. The starting point of this salary scale is \$840 and \$840 multiplied by two would give \$1,680,

therefore, the amount should have been increased by \$1,680. I should like to know if there is a correction to be made or if I am wrong. I do not know if the Minister understands my point. I want to re-emphasize that there were six posts on the salary scale C8. The starting point of this scale is \$840 and the maximum of the scale is \$1,302. Now two extra posts have been created. If two extra posts were created under the salary scale C8, which starting point is \$840, the increase should be \$840 multiplied by two - \$1,680.

Mr. Sutton: Subhead 16, Maintenance of Atkinson Airport - \$76,000. Quite a few people – and I suppose all of us in this House – would like to know what is the trouble with the Atkinson Airport. We have a clear recollection of the building in question being handed over in December to the Prime Minister as complete. There is no doubt that the building itself is a credit to the Government and the contractors. Of course we will bear in mind that the former Minister of Works and Hydraulics (Mr. Feilden Singh) must take fitting pride in that building because when the putting up of that building was mooted and the money raised for it, he realized that the money then provided, to put it mildly, would have been inadequate and he succeeded in raising a further loan to provide the building we now see. He raised a loan by using his personal influence. This is well known to the members of the Government.

What is bothering us is that this building has been actually handed over since December 1968. Now we are in March, fast approaching April, and although the Government General of Canada was received in and shown over that building, we do not know what has gone wrong. For some reason or the other, this building cannot be opened and Guyanese who are so anxious to get there cannot get permission to use the building because the furnishings, etc. are not complete.

Certainly, the furnishings should have been timed. So much went wrong with the building – it was not completed on time, extra money had to be obtained – and now that the building is complete the internal furnishings are not ready. It means that there has been gross slackness somewhere, or else we could have been using this Airport some months ago. I should

like the Minister to tell us what is holding up the use of the Airport and why we were not able to get the use of it before.

Mr. Kasim: the hon. Member Mr. Lall spoke of Airport Attendants. I should like to inform him that the provision there is not for the whole year because the Airport building is not opened. We have made provision for two more posts to be added.

I have listened to the hon. Member Mr. Sutton who was paying tribute and compliments to the hon. Member Mr. Feilden Singh. He is now querying why the Airport terminal building is not yet opened. I do not like to say things that might reflect on an ex-Minister's ability, but as these remarks have been made by a member of the "mini" Opposition – as it is known in this House – I would say that when that building was completed there was no provision for the kitchen and all the necessary equipment and fixtures that are required for that kitchen. It showed that someone lacked vision.

9.15 p.m.

It also showed an operational centre where nothing was being done. I cannot understand it. If a man is putting up a building, I am sure he will realize that that building would need a kitchen, would need a stove and all the other equipment. It is now left to this Government to make the necessary provision. These are the things that have caused that airport terminal building to be closed to this day. We are doing everything that is possible to put it into operation. I do not think there is any other point I should answer.

Subhead 1, Item (2), Mr. Hutton Griffith, the holder of the post has been seconded to the Ministry of Home Affairs as Senior Superintendent of Police. The proposal is that he should fly the police aircraft. The post has been vacant ever since as no qualified person is there to fill it.

Head 35, Ministry of Communication, Civil Aviation - \$351,487 – agreed to, and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

DIVISION XV – MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS

Question proposed that this Division stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Wilson: I wish to speak on subheads 1, 5, 6, 27 and 28. Subhead 1, Postal Services. I think this amount is inadequate to improve the postal services and this \$25,000 is for the post office at Vreed-en-Hoop only. There are several other post offices required in various parts of the country. On the East Coast, there should be post offices or postal agencies at Success, and at Lusignan.

Subhead 5, New Telecommunications Building, New Amsterdam. Is this building completed? I notice that sums of \$31,451 and \$18,510 were spent in 1966 and 1967 respectively. The Minister made great play of the fact that they were improving the telecommunications service and that equipment we purchased in our time, and for which we were paying storage in the United Kingdom, was brought here. It seems as if the building is very far away from the equipment. What have they done with the equipment brought here? Put it into other areas, I suppose, and this would show what happened. Why is it that the building has not been completed if the Government brought equipment from the United Kingdom?

Subhead 6, Purchase of Tugs and Barges. I think this is a step in the right direction. I hope there will be much improvement in the shipping service when these tugs and barges are put into service.

Subhead 27, Purchase of Aircraft, \$2,000,000. What kind of aircraft is that should all this money? What kind of service are they going to put up? Is it a jet to go to the United Kingdom, Canada or the like?

Subhead 28, Georgetown Aerodrome. The amount earmarked for the Georgetown Aerodrome is not intended to complete this aerodrome. It would seem that this \$36,000 is put against the total allocation of \$786,000 in the Development Programme. Why steps cannot be taken to complete the Georgetown Aerodrome in 1969?

Mr. Kasim: Subhead 1. The hon. Member, Mr. Wilson, has said that we made provision for only \$25,000 and he has seen in the legend, "To provide accommodation for the Vreed-en-Hoop Post Office on the site of the Postmaster's quarters."

Subhead 5. I think it was during the general debate on the Budget Speech that I made a number of points attacking the hon. Member, Mr. Wilson, on his inefficiency. He has come back here with the same question. I should like to tell him that there is no provision made here and I do not see why he is bringing this point again, but for his information, this Government is now contemplating an expansion programme at the Guyana Telecommunications Corporation and in due course we are going to start. New Amsterdam is going to be provided with one of the most modern telephone systems.

The hon. Member, Mr. Balchand Persaud, is asking where is the money, but he has to realize that this will fall under the Telecommunications Corporation and that provision will not be in here.

Subhead 6, Purchase of Tugs and Barges. I am very glad that the hon. Member, Mr. Wilson, has agreed that this is an improvement, so I do not think there is much for me to say on this.

9.25 p.m.

Item 27 – Purchase of Aircraft - \$2,000,000 to provide for the purchase of one aircraft. That is a foreign loan anticipated.

Mr. Wilson: What is it to be used for?

Mr. Kasim: For the purchase of an aircraft for services in Guyana. I mentioned that we are now negotiating with Bookers and quite a lot of work has been done at Ogle on the airstrip. I hope that, by the latter part of the year, we will have everything done.

Division XV – Ministry of Communications - \$5,913,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: I think that completes the Ministry of Communications. We shall now turn to another interesting Ministry, the Ministry of Housing and Reconstruction. If hon. Members will turn to page 126 we can begin Head 56.

HEAD 56 – MINISTRY OF HOUSING AND RECONSTRUCTION

Question proposed that this Head stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chandisingh: Mr. Chairman, I would like to make a few general remarks about staffing which will include subhead 1, items 10, 11, 12 and 13. I should also like to speak on subhead 1, items 14 and 20.

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

Mrs. Sahoye: I should like to speak generally.

The Chairman: The general comments will have to be short. Who wishes to speak first – Mrs. Sahoye or Mr. Chandisingh?

Mr. Chandisingh: There is just one point on the other page with which I wish to deal. I did not give you the subhead. It is subhead 10.

The Chairman: Will you give way to Mrs. Sahoye?

Mrs. Sahoye: Mr. Chairman, housing has been a problem not only for undeveloped but also for underdeveloped countries of the world. Here in Guyana, I realise that housing is indeed a grave problem, but I felt that the Government would have taken into consideration and tried to do its best to ease the housing problem in our country. They speak of various housing projects, but these projects which have been embarked upon and of which they speak so much are not Government projects. They are projects by the C.D.C. and the T.U.C., but none are by the Government.

The real thinking of the Government when they say that they wish to ease the housing problem shows itself in the face of what took place at Black Bush Polder where houses of poor farmers were not dismantled but destroyed; yet they speak of housing this nation properly.

Another aspect of housing of which I feel it is my duty, as a citizen of this country, to advise this Government is that in endeavouring to implement its housing project, the Government should not only take into consideration the erecting of buildings but, in the housing areas, there should be playgrounds and community centres. It is no use trying to ease the housing problem where -- [*Interruptions*] The population is growing day by day and we push families into these housing projects, families with three to seven children; these children are permitted to play on the roads.

This will cause another problem to arise; accidents will occur, delinquents, et cetera. I must convey a piece of advice to this Government: in handling housing construction it must not only take into consideration the building of houses but also the making of proper playing fields in such areas.

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

Mr. Chandisingh: Mr. Chairman, my first general observation, looking at the staffing position of the Ministry of Housing, is that we have quite a large number of posts there but very little is coming out of that Ministry in terms of houses being built. Looking at items 10 and 11, for instance, we can see the posts of Personnel Officer and Assistant Personnel Officer. These officers have to service, presumably, a staff of 107 if one is to judge from the figures concerned with this Head in the Estimates, whereas in the Ministry of Health which has a much larger staff; there are three Personnel Officers, that is, a Senior Personnel Officer, a Personnel Officer and an Assistant Personnel Officer. This is one point of observation, but, generally speaking, bearing in mind the small number of houses which the Government is actually building, it would seem to me that what is needed is some sort of scaling down of this Ministry.

I am not very happy to make this observation because I would have preferred to see the staff of the Ministry of Housing fully utilised to vigorously carry through a bold programme of providing cheap house, at low cost for the low-income group. Bearing in mind the prevailing circumstances, I must entertain the thought that this Ministry could do with a lot of cannibalising; I am sure that staff can be transferred to other Ministries which are more productive. This applies from the top posts right through to the lower posts. As for the Minister himself (Mr. Ramsaroop) I think that he can be cannibalised and I do not think that he will be missed. This may seem a bit vicious on my part but it emphasises the gravity of the situation in which the Ministry of Housing is. The Ministry of Housing is a separate Ministry with all the superstructure but we are not getting anything out of it. As a matter of fact, I would be inclined to go further to suggest that this Housing Ministry could now perhaps be a department within the Ministry of Information; and the whole thing should be handled by one Minister and we might get results.

Mr. Chairman, I should like to observe generally again, that the total expenses of the Ministry seem to have gone up. As we will see later on, only the sum of \$454,000 was spent in the whole of 1968 by way of capital works, that is, actual productive works.

There is another point I wish to make which will substantiate my claim that there should not be a Housing Ministry. Item 14: Housing Administrator. I note that the Housing Administrator is one who has expertise in that matter – I merely use the opportunity to speak on the item “Housing Administrator” to ask the Minister some pertinent questions. One of these questions is: What is being done by the Housing Administrator and his staff to produce plans and ideas for putting a stop to this scandal, disgrace and racket that is taking place all the time, namely, the increase of rents? I am sure that something must have been done and we would like to hear from the hon. Minister what his Ministry has been able to come up with to assure this House and a long-suffering public who have to pay higher rents, that this Ministry is actually striving to do something?

We know that since 1967 the Government indicated boldly that it would take legislative and other measures in order to put a stop to the rising of rents in this country. We have waited so long; even supporters of the Government are most anxious to know that the Government is doing something about this question. I am sure that if the Minister can tell us at least that work has been started and at what stage these ideas or plans are at the moment, and how soon we could expect action, I am sure the people of this country will at least be relieved in some way.

We would also like to know if any work has been done in the Ministry, what has been done and what ideas they have come up with so far as putting a curb on the prices of house lots. I am sure that all hon. Members will recall that only a few days ago the hon. Leader of the Opposition made reference to this and told the House that house lots which a few years ago – those on the outskirts of Georgetown – were being sold at say \$1,000 per lot, are now sold at an

average of \$10,000. The situation is getting very desperate and it is putting a number of people in debt; to live beyond their means so to speak. We would like concrete answers.

The third question arises from the same item and this is regarding the question of the 90 per cent guarantee on housing loans that Government promised. Here again, we have had these promises that the Government will guarantee up to 90 per cent borrowed by persons to build houses. We have seen nothing further by way of legislation to make these promises effective. I certainly hope that the hon. Minister will not brush aside by telling us that these matters are under consideration. What we want to know is how soon we can expect legislation coming before this House.

I think we have heard a lot from the hon. Minister on previous occasions about classic mythology, and about Sisyphus and pussyfoot and so on. But the people of this country do not want hear that. They want to know why it is the Ministry of Housing is pussyfooting over these matters concerning our people. The next item I wish to speak on is item 20: Rent Collectors. I should like to have some idea from the hon. Minister as to what is the position with respect to the Rent Collectors. I presume that the six posts are filled – I am not sure whether they are filled – he could tell us if they are. If they are not filled, we should like to know why. This is a simple matter to have these appointments filled. We would also like to take the opportunity to ask the Minister how much rent is at the moment outstanding. I am sure the hon. Minister must be armed with the information at least to let us have an approximate figure, and I hope that she would tell us how—

[Interruptions]

The Chairman: Order, order. The hon. Minister is “he;” but in legal interpretation “she” can mean “he.” *[Interruption]*

Mr. Chandisingh: I should like the hon. Minister to tell us how much rent is at the moment in arrears with respect to Government housing estates. Let me make it positively clear, lest anyone believes that we on this side are urging the hon. Minister to collect the outstanding arrears. As the hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran said earlier, we are not telling the Government to take action against the tenants of those housing scheme: we understand the problems of unemployment and so on. All that we are saying is that the Government should have an investigation to consider the plight of the people in Georgetown and even be generous enough to waive the rents which are outstanding and start off from scratch. This is something for the Government to consider.

9.45 p.m.

If I may, I shall go on to two small points on the next page. First subhead 7, Rental of Buildings: I should like to know whether this sum is being paid as rent for the building which now houses the Ministry of Housing. Unfortunately I cannot get a reply before speaking again, therefore I have to assume this is so, in which case I would suggest that this is a very old building. I believe it is in a very dilapidated condition and seeing that such a large amount of money has to be paid for rent over the years I think it would be more beneficial if a Government building is set aside to house the Ministry or if some money is spent to provide accommodation.

Incidentally, I notice there is some discrepancy in the allocation in the Estimates. In 1967 the actual expenditure was \$3,658. In the approved Estimates for 1968 it is \$3,720, but according to the revised Estimates the sum is again \$3,658. Nevertheless in the Estimates for this year the same figure of \$3,720 is again provided. I do not know whether it is anticipated there will be a rise in the rental for the building. However, that is just a small point.

Subhead 10, Materials for Maintenance of Government Housing Estates. It is my understanding that repairs to and maintenance of houses in Government Housing Estates are not always effected with the despatch and speed that ought to be the case. I should just like to urge

on the hon. Minister to look into this question to make certain that every effort is made to help the people in these housing estates when repairs are needed so that they can have reasonably habitable accommodation.

It is my information that certain instances have occurred of what I may call political discrimination with respect to making repairs to houses. I have it on reliable information that when some persons whose politics may not be the same as the governing party make representations for housing repairs they have to wait an unduly long time – longer than other people have to wait. I should like the Minister to consider this impartially and to treat all repairs without regard to the political position or any other patronage.

The Minister of Housing and Reconstruction (Mr. Ramsaroop): On the last two occasions when I spoke to this House I spoke exhaustively on our plans to improve the housing situation in Guyana and our plans that are now extant.

Before I proceed to discuss the general remarks made by the hon. Member Mrs. Sahoye, I should like to inform my *alter ego* on my right, whom I had the misfortune to succeed, that the reason why we inherited the palpable mess in the housing situation in this country is precisely because when he was the Minister he sought to perform the functions of three major Ministries within one Ministry. It took this Government's imagination and initiative to separate Health and Housing as they are today.

Mealy-mouthed as he is, he tells us on this occasion – and this is mere guess work – that he hopes that this great bureaucracy of the Town Planning Department and the Housing Department of the Ministry will fulfil their functions. That is not a concrete criticism. He asks me to give concrete answers to questions by him which are imaginary and nebulous, but I wish to act in the highest tradition of this House and although some of his remarks may lack parliamentary ethics I will not descend into that abyss.

It is sufficient to say that it is generally accepted that there is a grave shortage of houses in this country. This not a problem for which we are solely and exclusively responsible. Housing is a problem throughout the underdeveloped countries of the world. We started a vigorous programme when we assumed office in December 1968 to rectify this situation and that problem is now in full flight and motion.

If I may refer to the criticism of my hon. Friend, she said that Government as such was not investing in housing accommodation, but if she had read about our capital expenditure and about the allocation made for the purchase and development of land she would have seen that we have allocated, under that item, the sum of \$120,000 for the purchase and development of land. How can one make a statement like that, namely that the Government as such is not doing anything to remove the housing imbalances in this country in the face of the fact that we are presently spending \$120,000 to purchase and to develop land?

That is the chief hall-mark of the criticisms that so unctuously come from my friends on the right. Instead of indulging in concrete attacks, if they are so capable, on our programme they seek to deceive us. I do not desire to anticipate what I will say later on this question, but may I point out for the benefit and assistance of the hon. Member Mrs. Sahoye that the Guyana Mortgage and Finance Company, under direction from this Government, has to employ 60 per cent of its capital for houses that fall within the category of \$10,000 and under. This is fixed undertaking that this Government has foisted on that company and we all know that \$10,000 and under would provide for people of the lower income group.

This is a fact, but my friends do not consider facts. They want us to be regaled with the fiction and romanticism that they peddle in this House. This is a most responsible institution; therefore, let us get facts.

The Co-operative Society also provides accommodation for – if one may use the common term – the lower income group. My friend speaks of the lack of provision in so far as providing proper siting amenities for schemes and so far as development and settlement are concerned. But speaking personally as an erstwhile member of the Central Housing and Planning Authority and as Minister responsible for Housing and Reconstruction I can say positively that I have never come across a scheme prepared by this Government where provision has not been made for public open spaces and other such conveniences.

9.55 p.m.

I am surprised when such strictures issue rather wrongly from the Benches of my friends on the right. So much for the hon. Member Mrs. Sahoye.

My friend the shadow Minister of Housing, the man whom I think was responsible in great measure for the difficult housing situation now ??? in this country, spoke unctuously about the question of Personnel Officers who are attached to the Housing Division of the Ministry of Housing. Here again we are being subjected to facts which are not true. [*Laughter*] He tells us that the two Personnel Officers service a Ministry comprising 107 workers, or members. That is not correct. The facts are that this Ministry services not only 107 members but also 300 subordinate workers, or open vote workers. The total, therefore, is not 107 but 470 and I cannot concede that these Personnel Officers would be sufficient to service a Ministry comprising 470 workers. That is the first criticism to which I have the honour to reply.

The hon. Member spoke of an increase in the amount provided for materials. Houses which have been built twelve years ago are by their very nature in a state of progressive disrepair and, year after year, as my hon. Friend the Minister of Hydraulics (Mr. Green) has had to remark, Government buildings, or buildings of this type, would progressively decline, so that the materials corresponding to this state of disrepair of such building have to be bought. This mere

proposition renders invalid the suggestion by my friend that it is for no reason at all that there has been an increase in this item of expenditure.

My hon. Friend spoke about the rise in rentals. We acknowledge as a common place observation that rentals are spiralling in this country and those who have eyes to see would have seen that in our Throne Speech this Government intends to promulgate legislation affecting landlord and tenant relationship. It is not for me, at this stage, to anticipate the details and ramifications of those bits of legislation. It is sufficient to state that we recognize the gravity and importance of these spiralling rentals and this Government will address its mind energetically to a solution to this problem. The question of rentals is a question that one has to consider very carefully because a solution to this problem, if haphazardly applied or if applied without regard for the reality of the housing situation in the country, can do great harm to the economy of Guyana. Be that as it may, I have given the House the assurance that this problem is going to be tackled by this Government during the year.

My hon. Friend also spoke about the question of 90 per cent guarantee on housing loans. This is a question which has been raised before and I wish to assure my hon. Friends that steps are now being taken to put such legislation on the statute book.

My hon. Friend spoke about the rise in the price of house lots. This is a concomitant of the supply and demand housing situation that prevails in this country. Because of the unavailability of houses and the great demand for houses, the prices must inevitably go up. This is inextricably bound up with the housing situation and while we address our minds to the gravity of the situation – [*Interruption*] You had seven years and you did nothing. This question is tied up with the general question of the spiralling of rentals in Guyana.

My hon. Friend wanted to know how many Rent Collectors we have. I wish to assure him that there are three substantive Rent Collectors attached to this Ministry; there are three

acting appointments now within the competence of the Public Service Commission and appointments would be made in due course.

My hon. Friend alluded to the question of Rental of Buildings. He speaks of the lamentations; he speaks as if he is the Jeremiah of this Government and he, as Minister of Housing for four years, had this problem in his lap and never solved it. As Disraeli said: "It is much easier to be critical than to be correct." One can always make asseverations and assertions when one cannot rectify. I forgive my friends when they make these glib and facile statements.

Subhead 10, Materials for Maintenance of Government Housing Estates: The amount provided for this reflects an increase and I have already answered that question.

I hope that I have dealt in some measure with the questions which have been posed by my friends, questions which do not show a realistic appraisal of the situation, but questions which come out of the frustration of those who have been sitting on their benches for a long time.

Head 56, Ministry of Housing and Reconstruction - \$1,232,718, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: I think this brings us to the end of this evening's work. The assembly will now resume.

Assembly resumed.

20.3.69

National Assembly

9.55 – 10.05 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, “That this Assembly do now adjourn until Friday, 21st March, 1969, at 2 p.m.”

[**Mr. Bissember**]

Adjourned accordingly at 10.05 p.m.
