

BRITISH GUIANA

FIRST LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIRST SESSION

1961 - 1962

MINUTES of the Proceedings of the 49th Sitting of the Legislative Assembly of the Colony of British Guiana under the British Guiana (Constitution) Order in Council, 1961, held in the Chamber of the Legislature at the Public Buildings, Georgetown, Demerara,

AT 2.00 P.M.

on

WEDNESDAY, 26TH SEPTEMBER, 1962.

PRESENT:

His Honour the Speaker, Mr. R.B. Gajraj.

(a) Members of the Government

People's Progressive Party

(i) Ministers

The Honourable B.H. Benn,
Minister of Natural Resources.
The Honourable Ram Karran,
Minister of Works and Hydraulics.
The Honourable R. Chandisingh,
Minister of Labour, Health and Housing.
Dr. the Honourable Charles Jacob, Jr.,
Minister of Finance.
Dr. the Honourable F.H.W. Ramsahoye,
Attorney-General.
The Honourable E.M.G. Wilson,
Minister of Communications.

(ii) Parliamentary Secretaries

Mr. G. Bowman, Parliamentary Secretary to the
Ministry of Natural Resources.
Mr. L.E.M. Mann, Parliamentary Secretary to the
Ministry of Finance.
Mr. S.M. Saffee, Parliamentary Secretary to the
Ministry of Works and Hydraulics.

(iii) Other Members

Mr. G.L. Robertson
Mr. M. Bhagwan
Mr. J.B. Caldeira
Mr. V. Downer
Mr. M. Hamid
Mr. D.C. Jagan
Mr. H. Lall
Mr. M. Shakoore

(b) Members Constituting the Minority

(i) People's National Congress

Mr. W.O.R. Kendall, Deputy Speaker
Mr. J. Carter
Mr. E.F. Correia
Mr. N.J. Bissember
Mr. W.A. Blair
Mr. J.G. Joaquin
Mr. R.J. Jordan
Mr. C.A. Merriman
Mr. H.M.S. Wharton

The Minister of Labour, Health and Housing gave the following reply:

ANSWER: The Schepmoed Dispensary launch is at present out of service as it requires general repairs to the hull to the extent of \$730. The Ministry called for tenders for this work and a contract was recently awarded to a Boatbuilder in New Amsterdam, and the work will shortly be undertaken. Meanwhile, the Ministry has arranged for the Dispenser at Ida Sabina to visit the lower settlements on the Berbice River as far as Torani and De Veldt until the Schepmoed launch is put back into service.

Question No. 36

Mr. Cheeks asked the Minister of Finance the following question:

QUESTION: According to Paragraph 46 of the Budget Speech, 1962, the Draft Estimates of Expenditure call for "\$2.6 mn. for revised salaries and cost-of-living allowances to pensioners". On March 2, 1962, the expenditure of the said sum of \$2.6 mn. was authorised by the Legislative Assembly. Will the Honourable Minister of Finance state whether Government pensioners have received their cost-of-living allowances? And if not, why not?

The Minister of Finance gave the following reply:

ANSWER: No, sir; the Government's proposals for revised cost-of-living allowances to pensioners could not be formulated until the levels of revised salaries and consequently of related pensions, with which the rates of allowances must be consistent, were settled. It is hoped to submit the proposals in the near future.

Supplementary Questions were asked by Mr. Cheeks.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

- (a) EXCHANGE CONTROL (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1962.
(Bill No. 23/1962 (L.A.) published 25.9.62).

The Minister of Finance, on behalf of the Government, presented the following Bill:

A BILL intituled AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE EXCHANGE CONTROL ORDINANCE, 1958.

The Bill was read the first time.

The Minister gave notice of his intention with the consent of the House in terms of Standing Order 46(2) to proceed with the remaining stages of the Bill the following day.

- (b) DEFENCE BILL, 1962.
(Bill No. 22/1962(L.A.) published 25.9.62).

The Acting Premier, on behalf of the Government, presented the following Bill:

FOR	AGAINST	DID NOT VOTE
Mr. Wharton	Nil	Mr. Melville
Mr. Merriman		Mr. Cheeks
Mr. Jordan		Mr. d'Aguiar
Mr. Joaquin		
Mr. Blair		
Mr. Bissember		
Mr. Correia		
Mr. Carter		
Mr. Kendall		
Mr. Shakoor		
Mr. Lall		
Mr. Jagan		
Mr. Hamid		
Mr. Downer		
Mr. Galdeira		
Mr. Bhagwan		
Mr. Robertson		
Mr. Saffee		
Mr. Mann		
Mr. Bowman		
Mr. Wilson		
Dr. Ramsahoye		
Dr. Jacob		
Mr. Chandisingh		
Mr. Ram Karran		
Mr. Benn		

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The amendment by the Minister of Finance was then put and carried.

Thereafter the motion as amended was put and carried.

Item 2 - MOTION TO REDUCE VOTING AGE FROM 21 TO 18.

BE IT RESOLVED:

That this Legislative Assembly approves of the reduction in the voting age for General Elections from 21 to 18 years.

As the Minister of Natural Resources rose to move this motion, Mr. Bissember, on a point of order, claimed that it was unconstitutional under Article 55 of the Constitution for the Assembly to consider such a motion.

His Honour the Speaker stated that the power to amend the Constitution was reserved to Her Majesty under section 22 of the British Guiana (Constitution) Order in Council, 1961. The motion could not therefore alter the Constitution. In effect it would merely express the view of the House on an important issue relating to the Constitution. The Chair, he added, could not therefore uphold the point of Order raised by Mr. Bissember and in the circumstances the Acting Premier would be permitted to proceed with the motion.

With due respect to His Honour's ruling, Mr. Carter expressed the view that to debate the motion now, having regard to the forthcoming talks in London on the question of a new Constitution for this territory, would be improper. In the circumstances he felt that the Members of his Party could take no part in the debate on the motion.

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