

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
OF THE 31ST SITTING OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST
SESSION (1998 - 1999) OF THE SEVENTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA HELD
AT 2.00 P.M.
ON THURSDAY, 22ND APRIL, 1999
IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, GEORGETOWN

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (77)

Speaker (1)

The Hon. Derek C. Jagan, C.C.H., S.C., J.P., M.P., Speaker of the National Assembly

Members of the Government - People's Progressive Party/Civic (47)

The Hon. Samuel A. A. Hinds, M.P., Prime Minister

The Hon. Reepu Daman Persaud, O.R., J.P., M.P., Minister of Agriculture and
Parliamentary Affairs

The Hon. Clement J. Rohee, M.P., Minister of Foreign Affairs

The Hon. Bharrat Jagdeo, M.P., Minister of Finance (Absent)

*The Hon. Charles R. Ramson, S.C., M.P., Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs

*The Hon. Rev. Dr. Ramnauth D.A. Bisnauth, M.P., Minister of Education (Absent)

The Hon. M. Shree Chan, M.P., Minister of Trade, Tourism and Industry

*The Hon. Indranie Chandarpal, M.P., Minister of Human Services and Social Security

*The Hon. Clinton C. Collymore, M.P., Minister in the Ministry of Local Government

*The Hon. F. Vibert DeSouza, M.P., Minister of Amerindian Affairs

*The Hon. George E. Fung-On, M.P., Minister of the Public Service

*The Hon. Dr. Henry B. Jeffrey, M.P., Minister of Health and Labour

The Hon. Moses V. Nagamootoo, J.P., M.P., Minister of Information

The Hon. Harripersaud Nokta, M.P., Minister of Local Government

*The Hon. Satyadeow Sawh, M.P., Minister of Livestock and Fisheries

The Hon. Gail Teixeira, M.P., Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports

*The Hon. C. Anthony Xavier, M.P., Minister of Transport and Hydraulics (Absent - on leave)

*The Hon. Shaik K. Z. Baksh, M.P., Minister of Housing and Water (Absent)

*The Hon. J. Ronald Gajraj, M.P., Minister of Home Affairs

***Non elected Minister**

Mr. S. Feroze Mohamed, M.P., Chief Whip

Mr. Cyril C. Belgrave, M.P.

Mr. Donald Ramotar, M.P.

Mr. Fazil M. Ali, M.P.

Mr. Husman Alli, M.P.

Mr. Komal Chand, C.C.H., J.P., M.P. (Absent - on leave)

Mr. Navindranauth O. Chandarpal, M.P. (Absent)

Mr. Bernard C. DeSantos, S.C., M.P.

Mrs. Shirley V. Edwards, J.P., M.P.

Dr. Hughley H. Hanoman, M.P.

Mr. Alston A. Kissoon, M.P. (Absent)

Dr. Moti Lall, C.C.H., M.P. (Absent - on leave)

Mr. Odinga N. Lumumba, M.P.

Mr. Khemraj Ramjattan, M.P. (Absent)

Mr. Hari Narayen Ramkarran, S.C., M.P.

Dr. Leslie S. Ramsammy, M.P.

Mr. Lawrence E. Rodney, M.P. (Absent - on leave)

Mrs. Philomena Sahoye-Shury, C.C.H., J.P., M.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Local Government

Mrs. Pauline R. Sukhai, M.P.

Mr. Winslow M. Zephyr, M.P. (Absent - on leave)

Dr. Bheri Ramsaran, M.P.

Mr. Joseph M. DeSouza, M.P. (Region No. 1 - Barima/Waini)

Mr. Heeralall Mohan, M.P. (Region No. 2 - Pomeroon/Supenaam)

Mr. Ramratan, M.P. (Region No. 3 - Essequibo Islands/West Demerara)

Mr. Geoffrey A. Fraser, M.P. (Region No. 5 - Mahaica/Berbice)

Mr. Ramsundar Sankat, M.S., M.P. (Region No. 6 - East Berbice/Corentyne)

Mr. Eustace S. Rodrigues, M.S., M.P. (National Congress of Local Democratic Organs)
(Absent - on leave)

Mr. Kumkaran Ramdas, M.P. (National Congress of Local Democratic Organs)

Members of the Minority (29)

(i) People's National Congress (25)

Mr. H. Desmond Hoyte, S.C., M.P. (Absent - on leave)

Mr. Winston S. Murray, C.C.H., M.P. (Absent - on leave)

Mr. Dunstan Barrow, M.P., Chief Whip

Mrs. Clarissa S. Riehl, M.P., Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly

Mr. E. Lance Carberry, M.P.

Dr. Faith A. Harding, M.P. (Absent - on leave)

Mr. Ivor Allen, M.P. (Absent)

Mr. Kadim A. Khan, M.P. (Absent - on leave)

Miss Jean M.G. Persico, A.A., M.P.

Mrs. Cyrilda A. DeJesus, M.P.

Mr. Andy Gouveia, M.P. (Absent)

Mrs. Deborah J. Backer, M.P.

Mr. John S. DeFreitas, M.P.

Mr. Raphael G.C. Trotman, M.P.

Dr. Dagleish Joseph, M.P.

Mrs. Volda A. Lawrence, M.P. (Absent)

Mr. Joseph L. Hamilton, M.P. (Region No. 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Mr. Sherwood A. J. Lowe, M.P.

Mr. Andrew Hicks, M.P.

Mr. Neaz Subhan, M.P. (Absent - on leave)

Mr. Colin Bynoe, M.P.

Ms Sandra M. Adams, M.P. (Region No. 10 - Upper Demerara/Berbice)

Mr. Kelley Andres, M.P. (Region No. 7 - Cuyuni/Mazaruni)

Mr. Thakechand Ramnauth, M.P.

Mr. Aubrey C. Norton, M.P. (Absent)

(ii) The United Force (2)

Mr. Manzoor Nadir, M.P.

Mr. Matthew R. Charlie, M.P. (Region No. 9 - Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo)

(iii) Alliance for Guyana (2)

Dr. Rupert Roopnaraine, M.P.

Mr. Albertino Peters, M.P. (Region No. 8 - Potaro/Siparuni) (Absent)

OFFICERS

Mr. Frank A. Narain, C.C.H., Clerk of the National Assembly

Mr. Sherlock E. Isaacs, Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly

COMMENCEMENT OF SITTING

The Sitting commenced at 2.00 p.m.

PRAYERS

The Clerk read Prayers.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Leave

The Speaker announced that leave from that day's sitting had been granted to the following Members:-

The Hon. Anthony Xavier,
Mr. Komal Chand,
Dr. Moti Lall,
Mr. H. Desmond Hoyte,
Mr. Winston S. Murray,
Dr. Faith A. Harding, and
Mr. Kadim A. Khan.

QUESTIONS TO MINISTERS -

No. 31 - GUYANA NATIONAL CO-OPERATIVE BANK TRUST

Mr. Dunstan Barrow asked the Minister of Finance the following question:

*Would the Minister of Finance tell us what plans and strategies his Government has for the future development and growth of the Guyana National Co-operative Bank (GNCB) Trust ?

(Notice Paper No. 35 (Q 18 Opp 18) published 17.12.98)

The Minister of Trade, Tourism and Industry gave an oral answer, on behalf of the Minister of Finance.

A Supplementary Question was asked by Mr. Barrow and was answered by the Minister of Trade, Tourism and Industry.

No. 32 - SEVERANCE PAY TO GMI STAFF

Mr. Sherwood Lowe asked the Minister of the Public Service the following questions:

**(i)* What are the reasons for the non-payment up to November 17, 1998, of severance packages to the staff of the Guyana Management Institute, which was dissolved by Government in February 1998?

**(ii)* Can the Minister ensure the payment of severance pay to the GMI staff ?

(Notice Paper No. 53 (Q 33 Opp 33) published 3.2.99)

The Minister of the Public Service gave an oral answer.

A Supplementary Question was asked by Mr. Lowe and was answered by the Minister of the Public Service.

Nos. 33 - 39

The Questions at Nos. 33 to 39 were for written replies and the answers were circulated (See Appendix for the Questions and the Answers).

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS -

Presentation and First Reading

(i) FACTORIES HOURS AND HOLIDAYS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1999 - Bill No. 9/1999

The Minister of Health and Labour, on behalf of the Government, presented the following Bill which was read the first time:

A BILL intituled AN ACT to amend the
Factories Hours and Holidays Act.

**(ii) EMPLOYMENT OF YOUNG PERSONS AND CHILDREN (AMENDMENT)
BILL 1999 - Bill No. 10/1999**

The Minister of Health and Labour, on behalf of the Government, presented the following Bill which was read the first time:

A BILL intituled AN ACT to amend the Employment
of Young Persons and Children Act.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

MOTION

ITEM 1 - FINANCIAL PAPER NO. 1/1999

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply.

7.

In Committee of Supply

In accordance with article 171(2) of the Constitution, the Minister of Finance signified Cabinet's recommendation for the Assembly to proceed upon the motion to approve Financial Paper No. 1/1999 and thereafter moved the following motion:

BE IT RESOLVED:

That this Assembly approve of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 1/1999 - Supplementary Estimates (Current and Capital) totalling \$ 922,257,857, for the period ended 31st December, 1998 - Advances made from the Contingencies Fund.

After consideration of the Schedule, the motion was put and carried.

Assembly resumed.

On a motion by the Minister of Finance, the Assembly adopted the following Resolution:-

RESOLVED, That this Assembly agree with the Committee of Supply in the following Resolution:-

“RESOLVED, that this Assembly approve of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 1/1999 - Supplementary Estimates (Current and Capital) totalling \$ 922,257,857, for the period ended 31st December, 1998 - Advances made from the Contingencies Fund.”

8.

BILLS - Second Reading, Committee and Third Reading

ITEM 2 - CUSTOMS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1999 - Bill No. 7/1999 published 13.4.99

The Minister of Trade, Tourism and Industry, on behalf of the Minister of Finance, moved the second reading of the following Bill:

A BILL intituled AN ACT to amend
the Customs Act.

(Read a first time on 13.4.99)

The following Members spoke to the motion:

Mr. Dunstan Barrow

Mr. Manzoor Nadir

The Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Thereafter, the Minister of Trade, Tourism and Industry replied.

The motion was then put and carried.

The Bill was read a second time and was thereafter, taken through its remaining stages and passed as printed.

ITEM 3 - TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT AND SEVERANCE PAY (AMENDMENT)

BILL 1999 - Bill No. 6/1999 published 20.3.99

The Minister of Health and Labour moved the second reading of the following Bill:

A BILL intituled AN ACT to amend the Termination
of Employment and Severance Pay Act 1997.

(Read a first time on 18.3.99)

9.

The following Members spoke to the motion:

Miss Jean Persico
Dr. Rupert Roopnaraine
Mr. Manzoor Nadir
Mr. Raphael Trotman.

Thereafter, the Minister of Health and Labour replied.

The motion was then put and carried.

The Bill was read a second time.

Assembly resolved itself into Committee to consider the Bill Clause by Clause.

In Committee

Clauses 1 and 2 were passed as printed.

Clause 3

The following amendments by the Minister of Health and Labour were put and carried:-

(i) Addition of the words “excluding benefits received from the National Insurance Scheme” after the words “pension scheme” before the proviso in paragraph (d).

(ii) Addition of the words “instead of the gratuity” after the words “shall be paid” at the end of the proviso in paragraph (d).

Clause 3 was passed as amended.

Assembly Resumed.

On a motion by the Minister of Health and Labour, the Bill was read the third time and passed as amended.

ADJOURNMENT

At 4.27 p.m., on a motion by the Minister of Agriculture and Parliamentary Affairs, the Assembly was adjourned to a date to be fixed.


D. C. JAGAN
Speaker of the National Assembly

**PARLIAMENT OFFICE,
Public Buildings,
Georgetown.**

22nd April, 1999.

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS REQUIRING WRITTEN REPLIES

No. 33 - FIRE AT MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Questions by Miss Jean Persico:

- (i) Could the Prime Minister say whether or not the report on the fire which gutted the Ministry of Public Works and Communications is complete?
- (ii) What steps have been taken to replace lost documents?

(Notice Paper No. 54 (Q34 Opp34) published 4.3.99)

Reply submitted by the Minister of Transport and Hydraulics:

- (i) The Report on the fire which gutted one of the buildings of the Ministry of Public Works and Communications was completed in March, 1996.
- (ii) Since the destruction of the records, the Ministry's staff worked closely with the following institutions to reconstruct/replace lost records/documents and most of these have been restored: -

- Public Service Commission
- PSM, Office of the President
- Accountant General's Department
- Auditor General's Office

In addition, a lot of records were available in the Ministry's Library and the Data Bank of the Central Transport and Planning Unit which were not affected by the Fire.

No. 34 - FIRE AT MINISTRY OF FINANCE

Question by Miss Jean Persico:

Has the probe into the fire at the Ministry of Finance begun?

(Notice Paper No. 55 (Q35 Opp35) published 4.3.99)

Reply submitted by the Minister of Finance:

On June 23, 1998 the Chief Fire Officer and Officers of the Fire Department visited the scene of the fire with a view to determine its origin. The Ministry of Finance received the report from the Fire Department which concluded as follows: "It is our opinion that an incendiary device may have been used to start the fire which ignited combustibles, causing the fire to spread. However, it was difficult to establish if such device was thrown or was placed in the building."

No. 35 - FIREARMS

Questions by Miss Jean Persico:

- (i) Could the Minister say how many firearm licences were issued per year and per Region, for the period 1992-1998?
- (ii) How many firearms were imported since December 15, 1998?

*(Notice Paper No. 56 (Q36 Opp36) published 4.3.99)***Reply submitted by the Minister of Home Affairs:**

- (i) The number of firearm licences issued per year per Region for the period 1992-1998 are as follows:-

Year	Regions									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1992	9	506	191	886	194	633	13	9	10	18
1993	18	467	195	2572	262	723	27	11	4	17
1994	76	455	203	2107	247	785	94	37	58	16
1995	45	491	220	2297	266	806	82	50	30	28
1996	22	510	219	2877	257	820	20	4	26	22
1997	15	519	263	3354	278	766	14	3	0	23
1998	22	506	192	2933	287	847	16	13	7	19

- (ii) The number of firearms imported since 15th day of December, 1998, is 114 (one hundred and fourteen)

No. 36 - INSPECTION VISITS

Questions by Miss Jean Persico:

In the 1996 Annual Report of the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security (the most recent report), item 4 on page 153 states that 1492 inspection visits were made to business premises.

- (i) Could the Minister say whether the premises included restaurants, garment factories, supermarkets and hotels?
- (ii) What were the findings?
- (iii) Was any action taken?

(Notice Paper No. 58 (Q38 Opp38) published 4.3.99)

Reply submitted by the Minister of Health and Labour:

Each Industry is coded. Code 851 which represents personal services in the report includes, Restaurants Cafes, Hotels, Laundry, Barber Shops and Photo Studios. Two hundred and seventy five inspections occurred in the above services.

Manufacture of Textiles falls under Code 239 where 8 inspections were done.

Supermarkets falls under Code 611 - which includes - Dry Goods Store, Hardware Stores, Wholesale and Retail Outlets, Supermarkets and Pharmaceutical products. Total inspections done in this area amounted to 824.

The purpose of inspection was to ensure compliance with the law and where breaches were identified employers were requested to rectify through compliance. Follow up inspections by officers are made to ensure this: On the same page breaches for 1996 are also stated.

STRIKES

Questions by Miss Jean Persico:

In the 1996 Annual Report of the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security (the most recent report), strikes were said to be on the downward slide between 1993 and 1996. Could the Minister say -

- (i) what was the position in 1997 and 1998?
- (ii) what Government did with the \$87,387,181.00 saved from wages because of strikes in 1996?
- (iii) whether the chart on page 232 of the Report correctly shows the number of strikes during that year?
(See page 153 of the Report).

(Notice Paper No. 59 (Q39 Opp39) published 4.3.99)

Reply submitted by the Minister of Health and Labour:

The downward slide continue in 1997 and 1998.

- (a) Strikes 1997 - 305
1998 - 263
- (b) Value of production cost may be more than wages lost.
- (c) The chart do not accurately reflect the true position of strikes for 1996. This obviously was a mistake.

No. 38 - EMPLOYERS PROSECUTED

Question by Miss Jean Persico:

Would the Minister say who were the thirty-five employers who were placed before the Courts in 1996 for failure to comply with the Labour Laws?

(Notice Paper No. 60 (Q40 Opp40) published 4.3.99).

Reply submitted by the Minister of Health and Labour:

(1) Linden Aymer (2) Rosan Henry (3) Indeta Singh (4) Stephen Fraser (5) Dr. Balwant Singh (6) H. Imhoff (7) Ramkumar Persaud (Pete) (8) Guyana Co-op Ltd (Security Service) (9) Yacoob Ally (10) Didco Trading Company (11) Hamgar Badal (Security Service) (12) Tony Jackson (13) Ulic Harrison (14) R. Simpson (15) Hughley Hanoman (16) Onkar Persaud (17) John Melville (18) Hemraj Kisson (19) Royston Mohamed (20) Daphne Westmas (21) Wilfred John (22) Noel James (23) Lucille Joseph (24) Gomattie Persaud (25) Reginald Rodrigues (26) Stephen Medina (27) C. Prainchan (28) Perry Smith (29) W. Hermanstein (30) John Harding (31) Winston Rodney (32) Roshan Khan.

H. Imhoff-Yacoob Ally and John Harding was charged on two occasions during the year this made up the 35 employers.

No. 39 - ACCIDENTS AT WORKPLACES

Questions by Miss Jean Persico:

- (i) How many workplaces have so far set up Occupational Safety and Health Committees to deal with accidents at the workplace, since the enactment of the Occupational Safety and Health Act?
- (ii) What are these workplaces?
- (iii) Were any accidents reported so far?
- (iv) If so, were any fatal?
- (v) How many agencies have trained staff to deal with accidents, and which are these agencies?

(Notice Paper No. 61 (Q41 Opp41) published 4.3.99)

Reply submitted by the Minister of Health and Labour:

- (i) Approximately one-hundred (100) workplaces have established Safety and Health Committees. The committees have not only been established to deal with accidents at work but they have as their main objective "the promotion of co-operation between employers and employees in investigating, developing and carrying out measures to ensure the safety and Health at work of all employees.

(ii) ANSWER: The workplaces comprise a wide range of industries including, Bauxite Mining, food manufacturing, manufacturing of wood and furniture, electricity generation, water and sanitation services, hotels, sugar farming and milling, rice milling. To be more precise the following is a list of some of:-

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Guyana Sugar Corporation. | 23. Guyana Stores. |
| 2. Vitelli. | 24. Guyana National Shipping Company. |
| 3. Guyana Geology & Mines Commission. | 25. Seals & Packaging Industries. |
| 4. G/town Sewerage & Water Commission. | 26. Barama Company Ltd. |
| 5. Alesie Guyana. | 27. Omai Gold Mines Ltd. |
| 6. Caricom Rice Mill. | 28. Continental Industries. |
| 7. Stabrock News. | 29. Demerara Timbers. |
| 8. Guyana Confectionary Ltd. | 30. Sterling Products. |
| 9. G/town Seafoods Ltd. | 31. Mayor & City Council G/town. |
| 10. Hacks Hallow Blocks. | 32. Precision Woodworking Ltd. |
| 11. Le'Meriden Pegasus Hotel. | 33. Machinery Corporation. |
| 12. Oceanview International Hotel. | 34. Guy. National Industrial Company. |
| 13. Demerara Oxygen Company Ltd. | 35. Shell Antilles. |
| 14. Demerara Distillers Ltd. | 36. Guyana National Printers. |
| 15. Kayman Sankar Company Ltd. | 37. Linden Mining Company. |
| 16. Guyana Electricity Corporation. | 38. G.T. & T. Company Ltd. |
| 17. Berbice Mining Enterprise. | 39. Office of th Regional Democratic Council (New Amsterdam). |
| 18. Guy. Pharmaceutical Cor. Ltd. | 40. Public Hospital (New Amsterdam). |
| 19. National Milling Company. | 41. Public Hospital (Port Mourant). |
| 20. Brass Aluminum & Cast Iron Foundry. | 42. Public Hospital (Skeldon). |
| 21. Banks DIH Ltd. | 43. Chin's Manufacturing Company. |
| 22. Torginol Paints. | 44. Bakewell Bakery. |

(iii) Yes. There have been accidents reports but over the past years there has been a 13.6 % decline in the number of reports received.

(iv) Yes. There were fatalities but again there has been a 11.1% decline in the number of reports received.

(v) Workplaces are not required by law to have trained staff to deal with accidents on the job. This is the responsibility of the Occupational Safety and Health Division of the Ministry of Health and Labour. However there are over one-hundred (100) workplaces which have employees who were exposed to training in "hazard identification and control" and accident investigation procedures. This training was obtained by way of seminars and teach in sessions done at the level of the Ministry as well as by the training programmes in occupational safety and health offered by the University of Guyana. The agencies include bauxite mining, manufacturing, forestry, hotel and the service sectors.