



Mr. Rohee: Mr. Speaker, I rise to seek your guidance on a matter. The Parliament of Guyana: Handbook for Members of the National Assembly has a list of unparliamentary expressions. It says:

“The following is a list found in the 19th Edition of Erskine May’s Parliamentary Practice.”

It lists “corrupt” and “corruption” as unparliamentary expressions.

Mr. Speaker, I am seeking your guidance as to whether this is applicable in the situation in which the Hon. Member is speaking.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members the words “corrupt” and “corruption” are unparliamentary, but I hasten to add that unparliamentary language is so rife within the House right now by both sides that it is totally impossible for me to bring any control to this matter. I try my best from time to time but Members who know better continue to violate this rule with great impunity. I just wish to make that statement.

143rd Sitting dated March 26, 2011

BUDGET SPEECH 2011 – MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 2011

Preamble

Ms. Manickchand used the word “ignorance” while making some explanations as to portions of Mrs. Holder’s speech from the previous day. The Speaker cautioned her about her language but she proceeded to explain that the word “ignorance” means lack of knowledge. The Speaker, however, made a ruling that the word is unparliamentary.

Verbatim

Ms. Manickchand: Mrs. Holder stood in this National Assembly last night and spoke in a manner that disparages all of my staff at the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security and all of the pensioners as a whole. Sir, I know you spoke earlier and you said that we are a small group and we are identifiable and pensioners are forty-two thousand persons, so perhaps they cannot sue. However, what this Prime Ministerial candidate...



Mr. Speaker: Hold on, just one moment. Mrs. Holder said that there were phantom persons who were drawing pension moneys. She was not attacking existing pensioners and I did not hear her attacking the members of your staff.

Ms. Manickchand: I am going to tell you why, Sir. If I were to draft this, it would be an attack and they can sue for liable, but she is covered by the skirt of the Committees of Privileges in this National Assembly. If you know the system, Mr. Speaker, to do what Mrs. Holder was accusing the Government of doing, the staff would have to do it. To say of a group of pensioners that 17,000 persons do not really exist but somebody is collecting the money for them implies that somewhere along the line we could distrust our pensioners and that is most disgusting.

Mrs. Holder stood in this National Assembly and in the usual rhetoric – I wrote it down somewhere – spoke about the massive corruption. Here it is. Let me repeat. She spoke of major discrepancies in numbers over the period 2002 to 2006 and that the number of pensioners had raised mysteriously, and that there were serious deficiencies discovered in the system. She said that there was a haemorrhaging from the Pension Fund. She accused this Government, through me – and I take it personally – of not being able to account for \$1.3 billion. The Hon. Member went on and on. We have raised objections and she was standing. Sir, if I refer to the Hon. Member as “she” it is only because I am trying to get this through. I do not disrespect the seat that Mrs. Holder sits in and so I mean “Hon. Member”.

Hon. Mr. Ramjattan, sitting next to her, eyes wild, arms flinging, saying, “corruption, corruption.” He is the Presidential candidate and she is the Prime Ministerial candidate. She spoke of this study that found huge discrepancies and 17,640 people are getting pensions. She called them phantoms. She said it was haemorrhaging the system - \$1.3 billion. This is her study. This is the study that I speak of. Every month, \$116 million is being haemorrhaged. We cannot account for it. It is being diverted. I sat here in horror because I do not deal with the pensioners and the pension system. I was wondering which study is this that the Hon. Member got all that information on. Oh my God, something is happening in the Ministry. Then when pressed, when Ms. Teixeira said, “What study are you speaking of?”... We asked her to cite her source, like we would, if somebody comes and says the Times Magazines states that the Government is corrupt. We usually ask for date, time, publication and page number. The Hon. Member confessed that it was she, herself, who did the study. The Hon. Member never told us and there is nowhere on the



record which gives Mrs. Holder, that Hon. Member, the credentials to do any study like this. Nothing that Mrs. Holder said could have authenticated this piece of paper. I have seen the Hon. Member backtracking in today's *Guyana Chronicle* in her post craziness on the corridor. She actually said that she knew holes will be borne into it because the Hon. Member knows that there is nothing in here that can hold water.

After she was asked to circulate this document, we saw how much we need remedial education in Mathematics for people like her. We saw how much we need remedial education in Grammar for persons who are grammatically and mathematically incorrect, and she comes to this National Assembly and seeks to rely on something like this. This is very unworthy of a Member who is of this National Assembly and our people deserve more.

Having looked at the Hon. Member Prime Ministerial candidate of the AFC's study - this was a study turned out by the Alliances For Change - from paragraph one, it misrepresents. We cannot use certain words here, deliberately to this honourable House - the facts. Mrs. Holder said to us sternly, but after she said it is her study: "I gathered information from answers Minister Manickchand gave in this House and an audit study that the Auditor General did - the Value-For-Money Audit - and 2002 census." She did not mention "Peeping Tom" but I am sure that she also had regard for that article. This paragraph one of this study seeks to quote, she said, the Hon. Member, "how people are eligible for pension." Do you know why I think that this is more than just ignorance and it is more mischievous?

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, please mind your language.

Ms. Manickchand: Sir, the word "ignorance" here is used as a lacking of information.

Mr. Speaker: There are certain types of words that are not permissible in this House. The word "ignorance" is one of them.

Ms. Manickchand: Sir, the reason I believe...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, will you follow my ruling?

Ms. Manickchand: I accepted your ruling, Mr. Speaker.