



no mention is ever made, no recollection is ever enumerated or no “note” is ever taken of the countless rulings I have made in favour of the Government or the numerous times I have stopped Members of the Opposition for various reasons. I do get the impression from your letter that it consists of a snide and implicit agreement with the notion that I am biased in favour of the Opposition. I am deeply distressed by it.

The views I express herein are not intended to convey any position I might adopt on any issue in the National Assembly and I will not allow this letter to be used as evidence of any undertaking or otherwise on my part.

Questions on Notice

99th Sitting dated October 22, 2009

A STATEMENT MADE BY HON. MEMBER DEBORAH BACKER ON THE MOTION DEPLOYMENT OF GDF PERSONNEL

Preamble

Dr. Ashni Singh moved a motion of privilege with respect to a statement made by Mrs. Deborah Backer during the Sitting of the 15th October, 2009 about soldiers going to Trinidad to torture people.

Verbatim

Hon. Dr. Ashni Singh: Mr. Speaker, it would be recalled that at last week’s Sitting of this Honourable House, during and in the course of the debate of the deployment of our Forces, of our disciplined services, specifically to Trinidad and Tobago for the purposes of the upcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting, the Hon. Member, Mrs. Deborah Backer, on the other side of the House made certain statements in relation to the professionalism of our armed Forces and, in particular, certain statements that cast aspersions on the professionalism of the hundreds, indeed thousands, of hardworking Guyanese men and women who serve the people of this country everyday in uniform, and, indeed, who have served the people of this region with distinction in uniform, most recently during the Summit of the Americas.

The Hon. Member, Mr. Speaker, specifically sought to suggest...in fact, more than sought to suggest...very explicitly said, “It is soldiers who we are worried about



going to torture people.” This statement, Mr. Speaker, has caused understandably great consternation and affront, and, as I said, is a most unfortunate attempt to cast aspersions, as I indicated earlier, on the professionalism of our armed Forces.

As a result of and in response to the offensive statement made, Mr. Speaker, you would recall, that the Hon. Prime Minister has written to you on this matter, indicating his concern as it relates to the statement made, and an intended course of action. And it is in this regard, Mr. Speaker, that I now rise to move that indeed to state that as a self-respecting legislature it is incumbent upon us to condemn this statement as harshly as we possibly can and indeed to disassociate ourselves, as a Legislature, from this statement.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I move that this House signals our unanimous disapproval of the offensive statement made by the Hon. Member, the aspersions cast by the Hon. Member, and, in particular, that this matter be referred to the Committee of Privileges, in keeping with Standing Order No. 32, with a view to finding the Member in contempt of this honourable House and I so move.

I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hari N. Ramkarran): Thank you Hon. Member.

I had sought to attend especially early so that the Hon. Member, Mrs. Backer, could have a copy of the letter to which you referred, written to me by the Prime Minister, which I received last this morning, but I was unable to contact her to enable her to give a response. I was unable to contact Mrs. Backer and she is not here. I do not believe that any reason has been given for her absence, or those of any Member of the PNCR-1G.

Hon. Member, I had a chance to examine the matter under reference, and all...my duty is only to determine whether there is... a *prima facie* case has been made out, nothing more; and that if such a case has been made out, to refer the matter to the Committee of Privileges. I find that a *prima facie* case has been made out and the matter is therefore referred to the Committee of Privileges.

Thank you.