

THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
OFFICIAL REPORTS

[Volume 9]

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE SECOND SESSION (1982) OF THE
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FOURTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER
THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA

10th Sitting	14:00 hrs	Thursday, 1982-07-08
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MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (75)

Speaker (1)

*Cde. Sase Narain, O.R., J.P., M.P.

Speaker of the National Assembly

Members of the Government – People’s National Congress (62)

Prime Minister (1)

*Cde. Dr. P.A. Reid, O.E., M.P.,

Prime Minister

Other Vice-Presidents (4)

Cde. S.S. Naraine, A.A., M.P.,

Vice-President, Works and Transport

Cde. H.D. Hoyte, S.C., M.P.,

Vice-President, Economic Planning and Finance

Cde. H. Green, M.P.,

Vice-President, Agriculture

Cde. B. Ramsaroop, M.P.,

Vice-President, Party and State Matters

Senior Ministers (7)

Cde. R. Chandisingh, M.P.,

Minister of Education

Cde. R.H.O. Corbin, M.P.,

Minister of National and Regional Development

*Cde. F.E. Hope, M.P.,

Minister of Internal Trade and Consumer Protection

*Cde. H.O. Jack, M.P.,

Minister of Energy and Mines

*Cde. Dr. M. Shahabuddeen, O.R., S.C., M.P.,

Attorney General and Minister of Justice

*Cde. R.E. Jackson, M.P.,

Minister of Foreign Affairs

*Cde. J.R. Thomas, M.P.,

Minister of Home Affairs

*Non-elected Member

Ministers (7)

- Cde. U. E. Johnson, M.P.,
Minister of Co-operatives
- Cde. J. N. Maitland-Singh, M.P.,
Minister in the Ministry of Agriculture
- Cde. Sallahuddin, M.P.,
Minister, Finance, in the Ministry of
Economic Planning and Finance
- *Cde. Y. V. Harewood-Benn, M.P.,
Minister, in the Office of the Prime Minister
- *Cde. H. Rashid, M.P.,
Minister, Office of the President
- *Cde. R.A. Van West-Charles, M. P.,
Minister of Health (Absent)
- *Cde. K. W. E. Denny, M.P.,
Minister of Labour, Manufacturing
and Industrial Development

Ministers of State (2)

- Cde. M. Corrica, M.P.,
Minister of State in the Ministry of Internal Trade
and Consumer Protection
- Cde. R.C. Fredericks, A.A., M.P.,
Minister of State for Youth and Sport,
in the Ministry of Education

Parliamentary Secretaries (3)

- Cde. A.W. Bend-Kirton-Holder, M.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of
Works, Transport and Housing
- Cde. D.A.N. Ainsworth, M.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of
Education
- Cde. B. Bhaggan, M.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of
Foreign Affairs

*Non-elected Member

Other Members (26)

Cde. M. Ally, M.P.
Cde. M. Armogan, M.P.
Cde. B. Beniprashad, M.P.
Cde. J.B. Caldeira, M.P.
Cde. A.A. Chin, M.P.
Cde. J.P. Chowritmootoo, J.P., M.P.
Cde. O.E. Clarke, M.P.
Cde. E. B. Davidson, M.P.
Cde. H. Doobay, M.P.
Cde. A.B. Felix, M.P.
Cde. E.H.A. Fowler, M.P.
Cde. P. Fredericks, M.P.
Cde. E.F. Gilbert, M.P.
Cde. J. Gill-Mingo, M.P.
Cde. A. McRae, M.P.
Cde. J.M. Munroe, J.P., M.P.
Cde. S. Prashad, M.P.
Cde. R.N. Primo, M.P.
Cde. P.A. Rayman, M.P.
Cde. C.G. Sharma, J.P., M.P.
Cde. H.L.B. Singh, M.P.
Cde. S.H. Sukhu, M.S., M.P.
Cde. B. Tiwari, M.P.
Cde. C. Vandenburg, M.P.
Cde. H.B. Walcott-Nascimento, J.P., M.P.
Government Chief Whip
Cde. R.E. Williams, M.P.

Members from the National Congress of Local Democratic Organs (2)

Cde. R. Bishop, M.S., M.P.
Cde. B. Latchminarayan, M.P.

Members from the Regional Democratic Councils (10)

Cde. K.N. Jones, M.P. (Region No. 1 – Barima/Waini)
Cde. K.V. Jairam, M.P. (Region No. 2 – Pomeroon/Supenaam)
Cde. C.A. Singh, M.P. (Region No. 3 – Essequibo Islands/West Demerara)
Cde. W. Bipat, M.P. (Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica)
Cde. H.I. London, M.S., M.P. (Region No. 5 – Mahaica/Berbice)
Cde. I. Chowritmootoo, M.P. (Region No. 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne)
Cde. N.R. Charles, M.P. (Region No. 7 – Cuyuni/Mazaruni) (Absent)
Cde. D. Abraham, M.P. (Region No. 8 – Potaro/Siparuni)
Cde. A. Dorrick, M.P. (Region No. 9 – Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo) (Absent)
Cde. D. Hinds, M.P. (Region No. 10 – Upper Demerara/Berbice)

Members of the Minority (12)

(i) People's Progressive Party (10)

Minority Leader (1)

Cde. Dr. C. Jagan, M.P.,
Minority Leader

Deputy Speaker (1)

Cde. Ram Karran, M.P., (Absent)
Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly

Other Members (8)

Cde. J. Jagan, M.P.
Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud, J.P., M.P.
Minority Chief Whip
Cde. N. Persaud, M.P.
Cde. C.C. Collymore, M.P.
Cde. S. F. Mohamed, M.P. (Absent)
Cde. I. Basir, M.P.
Cde. C.C. Belgrave, M.P. (Absent)
Cde. Dalchand, J.P., M.P.

(ii) United Force (2)

Mr. M. F. Singh, J.P., M.P. (Absent – on leave)
Mr. M. A. Abraham, M.P.

OFFICERS

Clerk of the National Assembly – Cde. F. A. Narain, A.A.
Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly – Cde. M. B. Henry

PRAYERS

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

OATHS

The Speaker: I have been informed that Cde. Kenneth Wesley Edward Denny was appointed to be a Minister with effect from 1st May, 1982. Although Cde. Denny is not an elected Member of the National Assembly, he has, by virtue of holding the office of Minister, become a Member of the Assembly.

Before Cde. Denny can take part in the proceedings of the Assembly, he will have to make and subscribe the oath which will now be administered to him by the Clerk.

[The Oath of Officer was administered to and made and subscribed by Cde. Kenneth Wesley Edward Denny.]

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Changes in the National Assembly

The Speaker: In a Press Release date 1st May, 1982, from the Office of the President, it was announced that with a view to streamlining the Ministerial System and adjusting it to the requirements of dealing effectively with current circumstances, a number of changes had been made by the President. Subjects within the System have been regrouped and responsibilities reassigned.

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The Speaker: For our records, I would like to announce those changes which affect our membership and the designations of Members.

Cde. S. S. Naraine, who was Vice-President, Works and Transport, was re-designated Vice-President, Works, Transport and Housing;

Cde. H. Green, who was Vice President, Public Welfare, was re-designated Vice-President, Agriculture;

Cde. B. Ramsaroop, who was Vice-President, Parliamentary Affairs and Party/State Relations, was re-designated Vice President, Party and State Matters;

Cde. R. Chandisingh, who was Minister of Higher Education, was re-designated Minister of Education;

Cde. O.E. Clarke ceased to be Minister of Regional Development;

Cde. R.H.O. Corbin, who was Minister of National Development, was re-designated Minister of National and Regional Development;

Cde. F. E. Hope, who was Minister of Trade and Consumer Protection, was re-designated Minister of Internal Trade and Consumer Protection;

Cde. J. A. Tyndall and S. A. Moore, who were Minister of Agriculture and Minister of Home Affairs, respectively, ceased to be Ministers. As they were not elected Members of the National Assembly, they have also ceased to be Members of the Assembly;

Cde. J. R. Thomas, who was Minister of Education, was re-designated Minister of Home Affairs;

Cde. J. N. Maitland-Singh, who was Minister, Consumer Protection, in the

Ministry of Trade and Consumer Protection, was re-designated Minister in the Ministry of Agriculture;

Cde. R. E. Williams ceased to be Minister, Fisheries in the Ministry of Agriculture;

Cde. R. A. Van West-Charles, who was Minister, Health, in the Ministry of Public Welfare was re-designated Minister of Health;

Cde. K.W.E. Denny who was appointed a Minister, was designated Minister of Labour, Manufacturing and Industrial Development;

Cde. M. Corrica, who was Minister of State for Culture, in the Ministry of Education Social Development and Culture was re-designated Minister of State in the Ministry of Internal Trade and Consumer Protection;

Cde. R. C. Fredericks, who was Minister of State for Youth and Sport, in the Ministry of National Development, was re-designated Minister of State for Youth and Sport in the Ministry of Education;

Cde. C. E. Wright, who was Minister of State for Construction, in the Ministry of Works and Transport ceased to be a Minister. As Cde. Wright was not an elected Member of the National Assembly, he was also ceased to be a Member of the Assembly;

Cde. A. W. Bend-Kirton-Holder, who was Parliamentary Secretary, Women's Affairs and Housing, was re-designated Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Works, Transport and Housing;

Cde. D.A. N. Ainsworth, who was Parliamentary Secretary, Education, Social Development and Culture, was re-designated Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Education

All of these changes took effect from 1st May, 1982.

Comrades and Hon. Members, on behalf of the Members of the Assembly, and myself, I would like to congratulate Cde. Denny on his appointment, to welcome him to the Assembly, and to extend best wishes to the other Members in their new assignments.

Leave to Members

The Speaker: Leave from today's Sitting has been granted to:

Cde. Doobay

Mr. M. F. Singh

Broadcasting of Proceedings

Following an application from the Guyana Broadcasting Corporation, I have given permission for speeches which will be made on items 1 and 2 on the Order Paper to be recorded by the Corporation for subsequent broadcast in edited form. The broadcasts will have to be subject to the usual conditions, i.e. the total broadcast time being used must be allotted to Members in proportion to the Party representation in Assembly.

The Speaker: Cde. Naraine.

Presentation of Papers and Reports

The following papers were laid:

- (1) (a) Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic (Amendment of Fees) Regulations 1982 (No.6), made under section 98 of the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Act, Chapter 51:02, on 25th March, 1982, and published in the Gazette on 3rd April, 1982.
- (b) Demerara Harbour Bridge (Amendment) Regulations 1982 (No. 14), made under section 25 of the Roads Act, Chapter 51:01, on 20th May, 1982, and published in the Gazette on 22nd May, 1982.
- (c) Roads (Demerara Harbour Bridge) (Amendment) By-laws 1982, made under section 24 of the Roads Act, Chapter 51:01, on 20th May, 1982, and published in the Gazette on 22nd May, 1982.

[The Vice President, Works, Transport and Housing.]

- (2) (a) Co-operative Financial Institutions Act (Modification) Order 1982 (No. 30), made under section 15(11) of the Co-operative Financial Institutions Act, Chapter 75:01, on 23rd April, 1982, and published in the Gazette on 8th May, 1982.

- (b) Coasting and Passenger Trade (Amendment) Regulations 1982 No. 10), made under section 25 of the Shipping Casualties (Investigation and Prevention) Act, Chapter 49:07, on 22nd April, 1982, and published in the Gazette on 24th April, 1982.
- (c) Consumption Tax (Amendment) Order 1982 (No.31), made under Section 4 of the Consumption Tax Act, Chapter 80:02, on 30th April, 1982, and published in the Gazette on 8th May, 1982.
- (d) Agreement made on 21st December, 1981, between the Government of Guyana and the Government of Canada re line of credit for the Fisheries Sector.
- (e) National Insurance and Social Security (Industrial Benefit) (Amendment) Regulations 1982 (No. 15), made under sections 20, 21 and 51 of the National Insurance and Social Security Act, Chapter 36:01, on 26th May, 1982 and published in the Gazette on 29th May, 1982.
- (f) National Insurance and Social Security (Benefit) (Amendment) Regulations 1982 (No. 16), made under sections 14, 20, 21, 39 and 51 of the National Insurance and Social Security Act, Chapter 36:01, on 26th May, 1982 and published in the Gazette on 29th May, 1982.
- (g) National Insurance and Social Security (Claims and Payments) (Amendment) Regulations 1982 (No. 17), made under sections 21 and 51 of the National Insurance and Social Security Act, Chapter 36:01, on 26th May, 1982, and published in the Gazette on 29th May, 1982.
- (h) Loan Agreement (Corn and Soyabean Regional Project – Guyana) between Caribbean Development Bank and Guyana, St. Kitts/Nevis and Trinidad and Tobago and Caricom Corn and Soyabean Company Limited – Dated August 18, 1981.
- (i) Agreement amending Loan Agreement (Clinker Grinding/Cement Packing Plant) (Feasibility Study) (Additional Loan) between

Caribbean Development Bank and Guyana – Dated: February 12, 1981.

- (j) Development Credit Agreement (Credit Number 1098 GUA) dated February 17, 1981, between Guyana and International Development Association re-Structural Adjustment Program.
- (k) Loan Agreement (Loan Number 1948 GUA) dated February 17, 1981, between Guyana and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development re Structural Adjustment Program.
- (l) Joint Project Agreement (Loan Number 1948 GUA: Credit Number 1098 GUA) dated February 17, 1981, between International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, International Development Association and Bank of Guyana re Structural Adjustment Program.
- (m) Loan Agreement (Loan Number 1949 GUA) dated February 17, 1981, between Guyana and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development re manufacturing sector, export development fund, 1980-82 public sector investment program, and non-traditional export industries.
- (n) Rate of Interest Order 1982 (No. 36), made under Section 6 of the Rate of Interest Act 1972 (No. 13), on 21st June, 1982, and published in the Gazette on 21st June, 1982.

[Vice President, Economic Planning and Finance.]

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- (3) (a) Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic (Regulation of Premises and Register of Repairs and Sales) (Amendment) Regulations 1982 (No. 8), made under Section 103 of the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Act, Chapter 51:02, on 1982-03-24 and published in the Gazette on 1982-04-03.
- (b) Annual Report of the Guyana Prison Service for 1981. [The Minister of Home Affairs.]
- (4) Annual Report of the Ministry of Public Welfare (Labour) for the year 1981. [The Minister of Labour, Manufacturing and Industrial Development.]

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS – First Reading

The following Bill was introduced and read the First time:

Miscellaneous Enactments (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 1982 Bill No. 5/1982 published 1982-05-22. [The Vice-President Economic Planning and Finance.]

PUBLIC BUSINESS

MOTIONS

SYMPATHY ON DEATH OF CDE. SHIRLEY MERLE FIELD-RIDLEY

“Be it resolved that this National Assembly records its deep regret at the death of Cde. Shirley Merle Field-Ridley and pays tribute to the distinguished service which she rendered to Guyana and to its Parliament and directs that an expression of its sympathy be conveyed to her sorrowing widower, children and relatives”. [The Vice President, Works, Transport and Housing, on behalf of the Attorney General and Minister of Justice.]

Vice-President, Works, Transport and Housing (Cde. S. Naraine): Cde. Speaker, I beg to move the motion on the sympathy on the death of Cde. Shirley Merle Field-Ridley put on the Order Paper in the name of the Attorney General and Minister of

Justice. The Cde. Attorney General and Minister of Justice should have been moving this motion today. However, as he already spoke on this matter in the full court of the Supreme Court it was considered appropriate therefore that somebody else should be given this task. It is in these circumstances I rise to speak on the motion.

We meet to mourn the loss of our esteemed colleague whose person once filled these historical walls with scholarship, grace and charm, and whose learning of history, law and politics has enriched the pages of our Hansards in many significant ways. The loss we mourn today, Cde. Speaker, is the irreparable loss of Shirley Merle Field-Ridley, student, historian, politician and above all an outstanding social reformer. When it was known that Shirley had died many were the expressions of shock and grief throughout the People's National Congress, a party she served with great loyalty and dedication ever since she returned to this county from her studies abroad.

Cde. Speaker, to her family, her parents, her brothers and sisters and to the Executive President and leader of the Party Shirley was a leading light. Her sudden departure from this life meant to them that their leading light had suddenly gone out of their life. Her passing had left a hall of gloom over the Party and the Women's Revolutionary Socialist Movement. She was first Vice-Chairman of that Movement which was very near and dear to her in so far as her struggle for the rights of women and children were concerned. She was also a Member of the Central Executive and General Council of the Party. Further a field in the Caribbean her loss was felt with equal sadness by her colleagues in the Caribbean Women's Association in which she served with much zeal and enthusiasm as Vice-President. To understand the significance and meaning of these sentiments, Cde. Speaker, all we need to do is recall the life and times of this remarkable young woman and to remark on her outstanding achievements – achievements which came out of a small beginning to mingle with an iron will which made them possible, the courage and determination which saw them through and the dignity, grace and scholarship with which they are attained.

Shirley Merle Field-Ridley was one of the few young women who could have adorned a hall of fame in her own lifetime with splendor and distinction. She gave public service in the most liberal sense with conviction, commitment and courage, whether it was in the field of history, law, politics, social services or as the unflinching advocate of the rights of women and children. Shirley Merle Field-Ridley, Cde. Speaker, was born on 1937-08-24 of Royden and Anna Field-Ridley. She was the eldest of seven children. She attended Smith's Church Congregational School. In 1947 she won one of the coveted Government County Scholarships that took her to Bishops High School. At Bishops High School she spent seven years and there she secured both her ordinary and

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advanced levels. She also won the Basket Memorial Prize for English. At Bishops not only was she outstanding scholastically she was a great all-rounder excelling in almost every extra-curricula activity in which she participated.

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(Cde. S. Naraine continues)

In 1955 she was the runner-up for the Guyana Scholarship and also won an open scholarship offered by the University College of the West Indies. That scholarship enabled her to attend university at no cost to her parents. In 1957 she was acclaimed student of the one year on the Mona Campus in Jamaica. In 1958 she took her finals and graduated with First Class Honours in History. This earned her a post-graduate scholarship which took her to London University to read law. In 1962 she graduated with the LLB Degree and in 1963 she qualified in law from the honourable Society of the Middle Temple. She returned to her native land the same year and joined the firm of Clarke and Martin to practice as a lawyer.

In 1967 she joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She remained in that Ministry until 1969, giving very valuable service in connection with our relations with neighbouring countries and in other areas of international relations.

In 1969 she was appointed Minister of Education. She retained that portfolio until 1971 when she was appointed Minister of Health. In 1972, after a short term as Minister of Health, she was appointed Minister of Information, Culture and Youth, a portfolio she retained until February 1979.

It was, Cde. Speaker, during her seven years as Minister responsible for Information, Culture, Youth and Sports that many significant things happened in these fields. Greater emphasis was placed on re-organising the news media to make their objectives and strategies more relevant to the needs of Guyana and Guyanese. The National Sports Hall, the National Film Centre and the National Cultural Centre were all commissioned as a result of her efforts as Minister.

Shirley's concern for women took her outside the realm of partisan politics in the W.R.S.M. She was Chairman of the Guyana's women national organization, the Conference on the Affairs and Status of Women in Guyana. She prepared and presented several papers at conferences and seminars which were held in Guyana and overseas. Those of us whose privilege it was to have served in this honourable Assembly during 1976 would certainly recall the sterling contribution which she made to the debate on the motion dealing with the affairs and status of women and children in Guyana. She highlighted the impediments suffered by common-law wives, unwedded mothers and

children classified by the law as illegitimate. None of us who listened to her in the course of her submissions in that debate could have failed to recognise the depth of her feeling on the matter and her growing concern for those who were disadvantaged, handicapped, under-privileged or who suffered impediments of one kind or another.

At regional and international levels, Cde. Speaker, her organising skill, the abilities and industry manifested themselves in many different ways. These were evident in the tremendous success of the Caribbean Festival of Art and Culture, CARIFESTA, which was first held here in Guyana in 1972. She was deeply involved in organising the Festival of Black and African Arts and Culture, FESTAC. Shirley was one of the sixteen Vice Presidents of that organisation, the only woman, Cde. Speaker, among her peers, the rest of whom were men. She was responsible for the Caribbean zone. When the time came for the second World Festival, FESTAC 79, the task of heading the organisation committee was assigned to her. That the festival was a success for black and african culture and art was due largely to her untiring efforts.

In addition to her many duties as a Minister of Government, she served on a number of Party committees. She was among those upon whom the Leader of the Party would rely to undertake urgent assignments cheerfully and to execute them efficiently.

Shirley was a member of the Parliamentary Committee which drafted the new Guyana Constitution. She also contributed in no small way to the making of the Constitution of the People's National Congress. At the time of her death she was working on a biography of the Cde. Executive President and Leader of the People's National Congress. Her work should not be allowed to rest. Others should come forward to proceed from where she was stopped by death.

On both sides of this Honourable Assembly Shirley will be remembered for her thorough scholarly presentation, her incisive wit and her cheerful laughter. Her memory will live in the hearts of her colleagues in Cabinet for her wisdom and decisive approach to issues which marked her contribution at all levels of Government and Party. You will recall, Cde. Speaker, that Shirley was also for a short time Leader of the Assembly in this Chamber, a task which she performed with great ease and charm. Her contribution in the field of international relations were most outstanding on the Guyana/Venezuela Mixed Commission on which she served as an advisor for two years to the Guyana Members: the late Sir Donald Jackson and my good and learned friend the Cde. Attorney General and Minister of Justice. Later today this Honourable Assembly will be considering an issue which was one of her major concerns. I have no doubt that the scholarship and ideals of Shirley Field-Ridley will be reflected in many different ways and in many

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interesting thoughts in the course of the discussion that will follow. I refer here to the Guyana/Venezuela border matter which will be considered in this Honourable Assembly after this eulogy will have passed into the pages of our Hansard.

Shirley will be remembered for her many years together in this Honourable Assembly and elsewhere. But above all, to her beloved ones her memory will be everlasting and her loss complete. “In the midst of life there is death. For certain is death for the born and certain is birth for the dead.” Therefore, over the inevitable we should not grieve. This familiar stanza from the Bhagwat Geeta expresses the certainties with which we travel life’s journey. However, against these realities we can take much comfort from the fact that out of our own effort we can be led from the unreal to the real, from darkness to light, from death to immortality.

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(Cde. Naraine continues)

Cde. Speaker, Shirley has completed her journey in this life. Hers was a full life. Her affable nature, her warmth, her friendliness and generosity with all, combined with her other good qualities to earn for her the immortality to which expression is given in this stanza.

To her husband, my good friend and colleague, the Vice President for Agriculture, her children, her parents and brothers and sisters and other relatives. I wish on behalf of the Government and the People's National Congress, which she served with distinction and on my own behalf to extend our deepest sympathy on the tremendous loss they have suffered. I wish also in saying our last farewell to Shirley, to leave with them the thought that they should take comfort in the belief that Shirley has earned for herself everlasting peace.

A name such as hers cannot die. It will live on as being a celebrated example of a brilliant mind which broke out to challenge the inequalities of our time and to establish a career of substantial achievements, bringing glory to herself, her family, her party and her country.

Motion proposed.

The Speaker: Cde Persaud:

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud (Minority Chief Whip): Cde. Speaker, permit me on behalf of members of this side of the House, to express profound sympathy on the death of a former colleague in the Parliament.

From her side in Parliament, we have had differences of opinion. We did not share on many occasions her views and stand. Despite these realities, we nevertheless admire her academic brilliance.

My information is that in the early days of the P.P.P., her father was very active. In fact, when Shirley expressed ideas in this House, which sometimes agree with progressive thinkers, one is compelled to recognise that those ideas may have merged from the early days of the vibration which her father shared among members of the P.P.P. in the early days.

Death, the last speaker quite correctly said is inevitable. I am sure, we will all concede this afternoon that when it occurs so early in the life of anyone, every person is compelled to recognise such early call to the end of the life of someone who was in public service.

With the very comprehensive presentation by the speaker, whom I am following, I do not think that my task is too great, but to simply on this occasion express our support to the motion of condolence and at the same time, to express sincere sympathies to Shirley's bereaved husband, who is a member of this House, children and all her dear, near and loved ones.

Once again Cde. Speaker, our sympathy on the death of Shirley Merle Field Ridley. Thank you.

The Speaker: Honourable Member, Mr. Abraham.

Mr. Abraham: Cde. Speaker, permit me on behalf of my Leader, Mr. M. F. Singh, my party, on my own behalf and that of my family to extend to the sorrowing widower, children and relatives of the late Shirley Merle Field Ridley our deepest sentiments of sorrow.

It was not possible for me to be present at her funeral, but I can assure you Sir, that both my Leader and his wife were at the Cultural Centre when last respects were being paid to Shirley. My leader told me that it was not possible for his wife and him to hold back their tears. Shirley was a dear and personal friend of theirs.

Mr. Singh is presently ill and upon doctors advice has been confined to bed. He has requested that I read the following statement on his behalf:

"I got to know Shirley shortly after I began practicing law in Guyana in 1963. At our first meeting, I was immediately struck by her charming personality, her winsome smile, her contagious laughter, her ready wit and her brilliant and intellectual mind. My esteem and respect for her has never diminished, rather it increased over the years. It is true that I did not always agree with her. Indeed, many were the clashes we have had in Parliament and you will testify to that, but there was never any wrong or ill words. Shirley was never like that. Invariably, the clashes in Parliament was followed by a kiss outside. I really liked Shirley. I remember vividly just a few months ago when this year's budget was being presented to Parliament, she was outside demonstrating with

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those in favour of the budget. As I was entering the compound, we greeted each other with a kiss – on the cheek of course, and the crowd cheered. My wife and I have lost a very dear friend. Guyana and particularly the women of Guyana have lost a particularly great woman. I am sure, her passing has left a space that will not be easy to fill. To her sorrowing husband Hammie, her children and to her relatives, my party the United Force, my wife and myself, we extend our deepest and most heartfelt sympathy.”

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Motion put.

[Members of the National Assembly stood in silence for one minute.]

Motion carried.

Welcome to Prime Minister of Belize
the Hon. George C. Price, M.H.R.

The Speaker: Comrades and Hon. Member, to day we are once more privileged to have the distinguished Head of the Government of the Nation of Belize to be present with us in this Parliament. You will recall that on another occasion we had the good fortune to have His Excellency present with us when we passed a Resolution in support of the Independence of Belize. Today is another historic occasion when we are debating the Venezuela/Guyana problem and I am sure you would wish to extend to him our good wishes for a pleasant stay in Guyana and our hope that his discourse with the President will be a fruitful one. [Applause] Short as his stay is we wish him all the joys Guyana can offer.

Cde. Prime Minister.

VENEZUELA'S CLAIM TO GUYANA

Whereas the existing boundary between Guyana and Venezuela was definitively laid down by a unanimous international Arbitral Award in 1899, was jointly demarcated on the ground by a Venezuela/British Mixed Boundary Commission during the years 1901-1905, was actively and positively observed and respected by both sides and the international community for over six decades since 1899 and is still so observed and respected by Guyana and the international community;

Whereas under Article 13 of the Treaty of Washington 1897 Venezuela and the United Kingdom undertook to consider the said Arbitral Award “as a full perfect and final settlement of all the questions referred to the Arbitrators” who made the said Award;

Whereas contrary to the foregoing and in breach of the said Treaty, in 1962 Venezuela challenged the Arbitral Award of 1899 on a wholly untenable contention that it was null and void:

Be it resolved that this National Assembly –

- (i) re-affirms the continuing validity in its entirety of the existing boundary between Guyana and Venezuela;
- (ii) rejects the untenable claim by Venezuela to the territory of Guyana;
- (iii) directs that the Guyana Government seek the support of the international community through and at all forums, including the United Nations;

And be it further resolved:

That this National Assembly constitutes a Parliamentary Committee consisting of Members of the Assembly to be known as “The Parliamentary Committee on the Territorial Integrity of Guyana” for the purpose of keeping under constant review developments relating to Venezuela’s untenable claim; and that no determination of the claim shall be made without the approval of the National Assembly. [The Prime Minister]

The Prime Minister (Cde. Dr. Reid): Cde. Speaker, today we debate a nationwide question, a Motion which in substance reaffirms the determination of the people of Guyana, of all political persuasions, beliefs and creeds, to reject the absurd claim of the Republic of Venezuela to a part of Guyana. It is a claim which extends over approximately 70 percent of our total land mass. It is a claim which is baseless in law, myopic in its historical perspective, imperialist in its assertion and arrogant even to absurdity.

Yet, despite all this, I regretfully stand before this August House to declare that Venezuela persists in her claim to our territory, to the colonisation of a significant percentage of our population and to being the sole arbiter and judge of what is right in international law and morality.

It is not my intention to burden this House with a detailed analysis of this irritating Venezuela claim. Other comrades in their several statements later today will chronicle the legal, historical and political justification of Guyana’s right to remain in absolute possession of her present geographical frontiers; and for the people of Guyana to

be left free to pursue, without fear of external aggression, their own path to social, economic and political development.

The Motion before the House today calls for:

- (i) a re-affirmation of continuing validity in its entirety of the existing boundary between Guyana and Venezuela;
- (ii) a rejection of the untenable claim by Venezuela to our territory;
and
- (iii) the continued campaign for international support at all forums.

This is not an emotional appeal, without substance or foundation, designed to elicit popular support and sympathy. Other countries may resort to such dubious tactics when they know their case is weak. But ours is strong and supportable in accordance with all the rules and norms of international law and justice.

It is a fact that in 1897 Venezuela and the United Kingdom signed in Washington a treaty by which they agreed to submit to arbitration the question of the boundary between the then British Guiana and Venezuela and to accept the judgement – the Arbitral Award – as “a full perfect and final settlement” of the question.

It is a fact that on October 3rd, 1899, there was a unanimous Arbitral Award setting out the basis upon which the existing boundary between Guyana and Venezuela was finally determined.

It is a fact that in 1905 duly authorised representatives of Venezuela and the United Kingdom on behalf of British Guiana signed an Agreement and a Map showing the results of the demarcation of the boundary, in accordance with the 1899 Arbitral Award.

It is a fact that in 1932 Venezuela, together with Brazil and the United Kingdom on behalf of British Guiana, fixed a tri-junction point on Mt. Roraima where they agreed the boundaries of the three countries met.

It is also a fact that for over half of a century, Venezuela, along with other members of the international community, accepted and honoured the frontier so determined by the 1899 Arbitral Award.

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It is sadly the fact as well that in 1962, when the question of Guyana's independence was engaging the attention of the Fourth Committee of the United Nations, Venezuela for the first time asserted a claim to all of our territory west of the Essequibo River.

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(Cde. Dr. Reid continues)

After all that time had elapsed, Venezuela introduced into her relations with Guyana a conflict which exists to this day and which, with her superior resources, she pursues with varying degrees of intensity. Where formerly there were possibilities for peaceful, harmonious and beneficial relations between neighbours there were now deliberately sown seeds of conflict.

Cde. Speaker, may I digress for just a moment to show the size of Venezuela, the population of Venezuela, and the gross national product of Venezuela for 1978 as compared with Guyana. The area of Venezuela is 916,490 square kilometers while the area of Guyana is 216,000 square kilometers. The population of Venezuela is 13.1 million, while Guyana has a population of 824,000. Caracas alone has 3 million people as compared with 183,000 in Georgetown. The gross national product for 1978 in terms of U.S. dollars for Venezuela is \$19 billion. For Guyana in terms of Guyana dollars, it is \$1 billion.

Cde. Speaker, let me further mention that Dr. Eric Williams, late Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago in his presentation “Threat to the Caribbean Community” June, 1975, after an in depth analysis of Venezuela’s theory and practice in regard to Venezuela’s Caribbean responsibility and destiny as pronounced by Venezuela stated:

“The Venezuelans claim as their historical justification the Bull of Pope Alexander VI in 1492 sanctioning and sanctifying Spanish discoveries in the Western Hemisphere. Venezuela has a formidable boundary problem in the south with Brazil”.

Cde. Speaker, can Venezuela do an Ankoko on Brazil? Cde. Speaker, would Venezuela do an Eteringbang incursion into Brazil? But the quotation goes on:

“With the re-opening of the Venezuelan claim in the 1960’s on the eve of the Independence of Guyana, rationalised on the basis that new light had been thrown on the 1899 Arbitration, the entire basis of present day Independent Guyana is threatened and its future existence as a State precarious”.

For Trinidad itself it is said that it was 16 years of fruitless negotiation on a matter of surtax with Trinidad and Tobago that occasioned the remark way back in 1900 by a British Minister and I quote:

“It is a fundamental principle of the Venezuela Government to avoid settlement of all questions, for they hope that somehow or at some time or other they may gain some profit”.

Cde. Speaker, I have used that kind of information so that we can all be aware of the present situation, but the Assembly will today hear as it has heard in the past, that Guyana has sought on all occasions to avoid and to prevent the escalation of this controversy. We have always been aware of its dangers not only in Guyana, but to the peace and security of the region as well. Recent examples of similar situations have proved our position to have been the correct one. But even if we have sought to avoid conflict we have always been resolute in asserting the justice of our case. Today is another opportunity to remind ourselves of this and to let Venezuela and the world know that we stand together and that we stand firm in resisting attempts to despoil us of our territory.

On what basis, Cde. Speaker, does Venezuela’s claim derive its justification? It is ridiculous as it may seem, on that of a memorandum written over forty years later by a junior member of the Venezuela team at the 1899 proceedings. In this memorandum which he specifically requested should not be made public until after his death, so much so that sometimes I am tempted to say this must be a kind of jumbie story – [Laughter] – was sought to recall conversations which had taken place in 1899 during the Arbitral proceedings, conversations which he claimed convinced him that the 1899 Arbitral Award was the result in part of a deal among the arbitrators and such evidence made public when all the active participants were dead. All of them, eminent men who had occasion to study this matter in great detail, Cde. Speaker, great detail, and I want to take time to look at some of the men who had this task.

Charles Russel: Charles Russel later to become Lord Chief Justice of England, and to be known as Lord Russel of Killowen, was born on the 10th November, 1832. His family was devoutly Catholic. For it happens that Lord Russel of Killowen was one of the most gifted of the distinguished panel of Legal men that were signatories to the International Arbitral Award, on the Guyana – Venezuela boundary dispute at the end of the 19th century.

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Melville Weston Fuller: He was the nominee of the President of the United States of Venezuela to this five-member Tribunal, set up under Article 2 of the Treaty of Arbitration. From 1900 until his death in 1910, Fuller was a member of the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague in Holland.

David Josiah Brewer: Honourable David Josiah Brewer, a Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States of America. His father was a man of God – a missionary – the Reverend Josiah Brewer, and his maternal uncle had been Justice Stephen J. Field.

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15:05

(Cde. Dr. Reid continues)

He was awarded the Doctorate of Laws by the University of Iowa in 1884, by the University of Yale in 1891, by the University of Wisconsin in 1900 and by the University of Vermont in 1904. He was also Professor of Corporate Law at George Washington University, President of the Universal Congress of Lawyers and Jurists and in 1889 he was chosen as a Member of the British-Venezuelan Arbitration Tribunal.

Frederick DeMartens – He was educated at the University of St. Petersburg, where he was later to become Professor of International Law. So widely acknowledged were his skill and integrity that his was the only name to appear on both the Venezuela and the British lists of acceptable candidates for appointment to the 1897 International Arbitral Tribunal. Unanimously elected by the members themselves to chair this awesome array of distinguished legal minds was the Russian Frederick Farnhold DeMartens.

Richard Henn Collins – He was made Queen's Counsel on 27th October, 1883, and appointed a Judge of the Queen's Bench Division of the High Court of Justice on 11th April, 1891. His biographers say of him, that he had a most assuming and sympathetic manner, with a strong undercurrent of humour. He took no part in politics and died in 1911.

That was the kind of team, Cde. Speaker, that had to do in this matter. All the participants in the 1899 proceedings had then passed away. None was alive. This was written by a man who only a short while previously had received one of Venezuela's highest national honours. On such evidence, Cde. Speaker, our country stands in danger of losing its present geographical form and our people their birthright. Need I add that I and several members of this House as well as thousands of other Guyanese will revert to the condition of colonialism and would be refugees in their own land should Venezuela be allowed to succeed in her claim. Fortunately, for all of us here in Guyana colonialism and its unhappy consequences are now past history. Venezuela must not be allowed to succeed in turning the clock back.

But, Cde. Speaker, since 1962 when our troubles began with Venezuela we have sought to deal with each new situation, each new aggression, intimidation and hostility with calm and a sense of responsibility. It has not always been easy for the provocations have been many and we are for the most part a newly independent nation.

We participated in the Geneva Agreement to allow the continuation of the process which had begun a few years earlier when experts from the United Kingdom and Venezuela examined documents to determine whether there was any justification for the Venezuelan contention of the nullity of the 1899 Award. In the same year that the Geneva Agreement was signed Venezuela invaded and occupied the Guyana half of Ankoko Island. She remains in occupation to this day. During the life of the Mixed Commission several acts of intimidation and subversion took place despite the fact that the Geneva Agreement specifically enjoined the parties to refrain from such actions. Our protests of ten went unheeded. They were made to Venezuela but in vain.

This dismal record of breaches did not deter us from continuing the search for an end to the controversy, nor our efforts to develop friendly and harmonious relations with our neighbours. The Agreement with Venezuela to conclude in 1970 a Protocol to the Geneva Agreement, the Protocol of Port-of-Spain was an indication of our goodwill and our desire to live in peace and harmony with our territory intact.

This Protocol imposed a moratorium, in the first instance of twelve years, on the pursuit of claims by either side to the territory of the other. It also specifically stated that during this period there should be intensive efforts to develop and strengthen relations of friendship between the people of Guyana and the people of Venezuela.

Cde. Speaker, on our part we took seriously this obligation. We signed a cultural agreement with Venezuela. We discussed and identified many areas of co-operation that could be developed for the benefit of our two peoples. I myself visited Venezuela in 1971 and several other changes at ministerial level ending with the visits of President Andres Perez to Guyana in 1978 and our Cde. President to Caracas in 1981 illustrated the importance we placed on pursuing a policy of good neighbourliness and harmony with Venezuela. It is our view that by and large the Protocol of Port-of-Spain worked well and while there was a mechanism for its automatic renewal there were nevertheless provisions for its termination. On December 18, 1981 Venezuela formally indicated its intention not to agree to a renewal of the Protocol. That was indeed her right.

The signal of an intention to terminate the Protocol of Port-of-Spain also brought an end to the relative quiet in the relations between Guyana and Venezuela. As if on cue the official campaign of studied hostility to Guyana began and complemented the one which the media had begun earlier. Venezuela officially sought to deny Guyana international financing for our Hydroelectric Project in the Upper Mazaruni; Venezuela announced and advised foreign governments and international organisations that she would oppose any major developmental works which Guyana sought to undertake with

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their help and assistance in the Essequibo region; she had herself violated our airspace over and over again; she has acquiesced in the repeated violations of our airspace by other Venezuela agencies; on May 10 of this year armed personnel Venezuelan military crossed over into Guyana's territory with hostile intent; and in their national media there has been an orchestrated campaign by a powerful and vociferous section of the Venezuelan establishment calling for the use of military action against a country which, according to them, is only inhabited by descendants of slaves and Hindus.

I say all this Cde. Speaker, not to arouse passion. These are the facts of which we must all be aware. These are the facts upon which we make a determination as to how we must treat with Venezuela in the months and indeed the years ahead. Ours is the duty to continue to act responsibly. On June 18, the Cde. President in his address to the Nation declared that Guyana is prepared to continue the search for a solution to the controversy with Venezuela in the friendliest manner and he added, it is our hope that Venezuela stands to do likewise.

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(The Prime Minister continues)

Within the next three months, or to be more precise within three months after the Protocol came to an end on June 18 last, Guyana and Venezuela are to choose one of the means of peaceful settlement provided in Article 22 of the Charter of the United Nations. This is in accord with Article IV of the Geneva Agreement.

We, on our part, would like to enter this new phase in our relations with Venezuela as resolute as we have been in the past. As a result of the Venezuelan territorial claim, we have had to make many sacrifices and there has been a high cost to our country, a cost which has plagued us virtually from the very first day of our nationhood. There can be no denying that at a time when we can least afford the diversion of our resources from the urgent task of nation-building, a substantial part of our resources must be expended on improving and upgrading our preparedness to defend our territorial integrity. This expenditure is however necessary for though there have been expressions of support both within the immediate Caribbean region and further a field, the immediate task and responsibility for the defence of our country falls to every one of us.

We cannot leave the defence of our country to others and hope to retain our independence. Difficult and arduous as this may seem to us, it is not a task beyond our capacity and capability. We as a people have demonstrated our adaptability and determination to maintain our patrimony. The response to the sale of the Defence Premium Bonds have been heartening and reassuring. While the sum realised thus far can hardly pay for the wing of an F-16, it demonstrates the unity of all our people in every district of this Co-operative Republic, a unity equal to this threat to relieve us of the patrimony bequeathed to us by our ancestors who give their lives for our freedom.

For, Cde. Speaker, in the final analysis this absurd claim is about freedom, not the freedom of strangers, our freedom. For what Venezuela is claiming is not a region denuded of people. Thus to be a colonial people once again would force large scale migration of our indigenous population of the region to other parts of our country. I myself would be robbed of spending the last days of my life in my own native village of Dartmouth on the Essequibo Coast. What a situation, what a thought, Cde. Speaker, if we should lose our heritage.

As a nation we have supported materially and morally the struggle for freedom in Southern Africa. Can we contemplate allowing any part of our country, any section of our population to experience again the trials and tribulations of colonialism, or a new slavery or a new type of indentureship?

Fortunately, we are not without friends in this our struggle. The principled stand which we have always taken, from the day of independence, on international issues has won for us the admiration and support of the vast majority of the international community. The Cde. Minister of Foreign Affairs will deal some more with this aspect a little later. But it is enough at this stage for me to note that the support which we have received is based on what Guyana stands for; the shared ideals for international behaviour; and on the commitment to the preservation of the norms of international law and international justice. It is based, too, on the recognition of the fact of the interdependence of the international community and on the universal acknowledgement that illegal acts, however justifiable emotionally, remain illegal and should not merit international approval or consent.

Our President has often expressed the desire of the Guyanese people to live in peace with our neighbours and to pursue the development of this country, as we the Guyanese people, in our collective wisdom would wish. But even though our conduct over the years has amply demonstrated this, our commitment to living in peace must not be mistaken for a lack of determination on our part to defend our country. But the defence of our country requires the participation of all Guyanese irrespective of differences which are minor in comparison to this issue. We are united in that in common we hold that the 1899 Arbitral Award was a full, perfect and final settlement. So determined I think all of us are that Mr. Feilden Singh, the Leader of the United Force, just before I left the office, telephoned to report how ill he was and was advised that he should not get out of his bed. He was in real deep sorrow that he could not be here this afternoon. However, I believe Cde. Abraham of the United Force will play a role for him.

We hold that the delineation of the boundaries on the ground in 1905 was further confirmation of the acceptance by both sides of the validity of this Award. We hold that the integrity of our territory as bequeathed to us by our grandparents must be passed on intact to our grandchildren. That is our duty.

Today's historic discussions must be taken seriously by our neighbour. No attempt to divide us on this issue can be successful. The many manifestations by the

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young and the not so young and by the old need to be heeded. We are resolute in our determination to build a Guyana free from the tribulations created by festering territorial issues. We call on the international community to register our protest made in this hallowed Assembly today, to heed our determination and to honour our just cause.

As I have indicated to this Assembly earlier, the process of discussion on the choice of means of peaceful settlement in accordance with Article IV of the Geneva Agreement will take place during the next two and a half months.

The means have been clearly set out under Article 33 of the United Nations Charter and they are as follows: Negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means of their own choice, and in the final analysis the Secretary General of the United Nations himself. These means are, of course, not exhaustive and have not precluded ourselves and Venezuela from agreeing to any other method which we believe would likely lead to the desired result.

The Venezuela Government has formally proposed that we consider agreeing on the first of the means which I have specified, that is, on negotiations. Cde. Speaker, we hope for the best but we must be prepared for the worst. Words are air, deeds are realities.

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(The Prime Minister continues)

Ankoko occupation in 1966, came on the heels of 1966 Geneva Agreement. The evidences of economic and psychological aggression are all clear. The world environment is a constant reminder to us. 1969, generally, was an interrupted plan for a Guyana take-over. Thanks to our Defence Force, a speedy intervention by the Guyana Defence Force frustrated the plan of that implementation. Our territory was saved but some of our people were destroyed. As a matter of fact, we lost five of our Policemen.

In the days of world economic recession the stress and strain bear down on our country. Fortunately, our farmers and gardeners are responding to the food thrust. Encouraging too is the cultural change in our food habits. As we prepare ourselves, all our resources must be utilised to the maximum. In our world, food has been identified as a weapon to suppress and destroy some nations. I need not mention how during world wars one and two, our country, then a British colony, responded and developed its mass potential in food production and even initiated agro industries.

I must mention the response to the Defence Premium Bonds. Poor people and small communities have all accepted the challenge that this land, this our heritage must be upheld by us all. Where there are victors when military or other force is used, there are victims. Where there are conquerors, there are the vanquished. Those who know about war, those who have read about war must today inform our people what it means when the victors come marching through.

The proposed Parliamentary Committee on the territorial integrity of Guyana must work diligently and committedly, as we seek to interpret correctly the spurious claim by our physically bigger and financially stronger neighbour, with her military hardware preparedness, emphasis on “military hardware preparedness”, let us by our oneness on this issue, strengthen our will and embolden our spirit, never to capitulate to Venezuela’s unjust and untenable claim.

This committee, by its attitude in theory and in practice must ensure that our people in their innocence are not duped, as we are endeavouring to jump from one frying pan to be attracted into another frying pan, where we would become fish and chips.

Cde. Speaker, in the spirit of reasonableness, in our desire not to escalate the conflict, in our wish for friendly and harmonious relations with our neighbour Venezuela, we will sit with them and discuss with them in an open and frank manner the outstanding issues and the controversies that are before us.

At all times, Cde. Speaker, the interest of our nation will be paramount and that is why, in this motion before this House, there is a call for the constituting of a parliamentary committee on the territorial integrity of Guyana and our pledge that no determination of the claim shall be made without the approval of this National Assembly.

Cde. Speaker, I call upon all Members of this National Assembly to support this motion.

Motion proposed.

The Speaker: Dr. Jagan.

The Minority Leader (Cde. Dr. Jagan): Mr. Speaker [Interruptions]

The Speaker: Just a minute Dr. Jagan. I would like to know Cde. Leader of the House whether the proceedings of Dr. Jagan are being recorded?

The Vice President, Party and State Matters (Cde. Ramsaroop): It is being recorded.

The Speaker: Dr. Jagan.

Cde. Dr. Jagan: Mr. Speaker, the first question we must ask is what is the P.P.P.'s position with respect to the Venezuelan threat?

The P.P.P. has taken the following position:

- (1) Essequibo is an integral part of Guyana. There is no doubt about this. According to international law all that has been stated on many occasions.
- (2) We have said over and over that there should be no hurling of invectives such as “fascist” and “slavers”, “conquistadores”, “terrorists”, “bandits” and talk about war economy. It is our view that we must keep down the temperature. The Prime Minister just gave us comparative figures about

Guyana and Venezuela. We can see that militarily Guyana could never be a match, especially under the present conditions when the people are not united.

- (3) We had said when all this hysterical mouthing that the Venezuelans are coming – while we cannot say so a hundred percent – it will not be so. It is most unlikely that Venezuela will commit aggression against Guyana. In fact, we would like to say from this rostrum that if we are in trouble today and if there is anxiety in Guyana today among the Guyanese people especially in the days before the Protocol came to an end when there was all this talk that the Venezuelan invasion is imminent, the P.N.C. and Government to a large extent are contributors to this fact.

Let us go back on this issue. This matter was dormant for many years. Let me say before I go to that, that we must see today the border questions as being part and parcel of imperialist and reactionary intrigues all over the world. Imperialism and reaction can no longer, willy-nilly, so easily as they did in the first part of this century, send their gun boots and occupy areas all over the world to impose their rule and their exploitative system. Today they use more subtle methods.

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(Cde. Dr. Jagan continues)

The border issue is one of them. It came up first in the early sixties when the P.P.P. was in the Government. It was raised as a part of the destabilisation exercise against the progressive government in Guyana. Actually, the Venezuelan Government had a progressive position after the overthrow of the Venezuela dictatorship from 1948 to 1958 and President Betancourt told me personally that they would neither raise nor renounce the claim. They would not raise it because they were a progressive government. They would not renounce it because, as they told me, it would allow the jingoistic elements to make political capital. However, the Betancourt government was thrown out in 1958.

This matter was raised in the sixties, particularly after the Venezuelan Government changed its position toward Cuba, the same Government which immediately after the Cuban revolution give Fidel Castro in Caracas one of the biggest hero's welcome. When pressure was mounted on the Venezuela Government and on other Governments in the hemisphere to isolate Cuba, the Venezuela Government succumbed. The Foreign Minister of that Government refused, at a Conference in San Jose, Costa Rica and he was forced to resign and his party to come out of the Coalition Government. It was in that context of cold war pressure against Venezuela that the Venezuela Government also raised the border claim against Guyana, when the P.P.P. was the Government.

What was the position then of the P.N.C.? Regrettably, the P.N.C. was part of that conspiracy. The P.N.C. in the election campaign of 1964 put out a propaganda in order to win the elections: "Please do not vote for the P.P.P. because Venezuela is not friendly to the P.P.P. and if the P.P.P. wins, Venezuela will march into the country". There was no recital then of the Award of 1899 and no patriotic stand which should have come then, because at that time the present ruling party was hand-in-glove with imperialism and world reaction. I mention that for the record.

What was our position? The then Guyana Government and the British Government allowed the Venezuelan Government to look at the records in the archives of the Foreign Office. They sent three Jesuits who were economists and who were versed in international relations to look at the record. They looked and found nothing and we said: "The matter is closed". But the new Government of the P.N.C./U.F. were persuaded, no doubt pressured, to sign the Geneva Agreement. We advised them not to sign any

agreement. We asked to go to Geneva as a part of the delegation. They refused and they signed.

It is that Geneva Agreement that the Venezuelans are now holding on to. They are saying, “If there was no claim at all, why did you sign?” Why? That was a blunder of the first order, for had the Guyana Government taken the stand of the P.P.P. that the matter was closed, on Independence in 1966 such a declaration would have been lodged in the United Nations and, in the same way we see Britain committed to the defence of Belize, such a declaration would have been made and internationally supported.

Unfortunately, the Geneva Agreement has clouded the waters and now, while the Guyana Government is sitting tight and saying, “Come and tell us why the Award was null and void”, the Venezuela Government is saying, “We are not talking about history and all that”. They bring in a dead man, Mallet – Provost, as evidence. They are saying, “If you felt the Award was sound, why did you sign the Agreement?” They are talking about a reasonable settlement under the Agreement. That is where it is now.

But more than that. Let us put aside the Geneva Agreement. What happened? Venezuela took over, first of all, the whole of Ankoko. Half of it belonged to us. Secondly, the reactionary Government of Venezuela, at that time under President Leoni of the Accion Democratic Party, made a decree not only that Essequibo belonged to them but all the waters belonged to them and they sent their naval craft to patrol our waters. That was aggression. Those two acts constituted aggression against Guyana’s territorial integrity and sovereignty. We urged the Government to take it to the United Nations Security Council for a debate and a discussion. Nothing was done. Why? Because in that period, 1964 to 1968, the Guyana Government was hand-in-glove with imperialism and even a little beyond that period it was working in concert with imperialism, and American imperialism did not want the matter to go to the Security Council lest it be embarrassed to decide either on the side of Guyana or Venezuela and, recognising how much interest it had in Venezuela as distinct from Guyana, naturally it would not have wanted to put its vote on our side even though by law we are on the right side. So the matter never went there.

Let me repeat: When the aggression was committed, this Government did nothing to protect our territorial integrity. Then came the Protocol of Port-of-Spain and we have to look at these incidents of Venezuela in the context of what was happening. First, imperialism was angry that its political/ideological friends, the United Force, had been expelled from the Government in 1968. It is said that because of that anger they supported a rebellion in the Rupununi savannahs which was led by people close to the

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United Force. They had some justification, but that is beside the point. Imperialism was angered by that expulsion of the United Force. It was also angry because of the nationalisation of the bauxite industry which came in 1971 and the compensation which was offered. Under pressure that compensation was revised upward without even parliamentary sanction.

It was in those conditions that we had further interventions across the border which we are hearing about now again. It was in that context that those things were taking place. Even at that point, instead of going to the Security Council when there were incursions, they did not do so. Instead, they buckled to imperialist pressure and increased the compensation to DEMBA.

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(Cde. Dr. Jagan continues)

The Prime Minister referred to Trinidad and the role of Dr. Eric Williams. Mention is made today about the statement made by Dr. Eric Williams in 1975 when he talked about Venezuelan imperialism. But we must put that in proper historical context in that the P.N.M. Government of Trinidad was speaking for the Venezuelans, for the Trinidad bourgeoisie which was extending its arm all over, including Guyana, and obviously was concerned about Venezuelan bourgeois penetration in the Caribbean also which is going on right now. It is in that context that one must weigh that statement of Dr. Eric Williams.

Let us go back to 1970 when Dr. Eric Williams' Government was threatened by a revolt of 60,000 people in the streets, led by Geddes Grainger, when his Government nearly fell, when an army mutiny was threatening, and when the Americans came to his rescue by bringing their warships in Trinidad waters. The British began parading their fleet in the Caribbean Sea and the Venezuelan Government moved up their troops to the Northern Coast near to the border of Trinidad. Imperialism came to the rescue of Eric Williams. In that context, since they did not want to go to the United Nations Security Council to charge aggression, Eric Williams became the broker of imperialism and said, "sign the Protocol." Sign the Protocol and put this matter in cold storage. So that is how the protocol came into being in that historical context.

When Eric Williams played a leading role in making the Protocol of Port of Spain, he was not talking then about imperialism. He had just a few months before had the active support of imperialism and Venezuela which was then playing a reactionary role. Now we must not get too heated up about Venezuela, and we must not be jingoistic about it too because there is a very complex situation in Venezuela. We must take a realistic view of what is going on there and examine the position of Venezuela to the world revolutionary process as a whole. The two wings and tendencies in the major ruling parties in Venezuela are C.O.P.E.I. and the Accion Democratica. One is Christian democratic and one is Social democratic. But let us put it this way – both are influenced and have a lot of links with the Venezuela bourgeoisie. The Venezuelan bourgeoisie itself has contradictions. One wing is linked to imperialism, and another wing is in contradiction with imperialism, and one is for expansion in Guyana and the Caribbean. This is the Venezuelan bourgeoisie.

In these two parties, C.O.P.E.I. and A.D., there are wings. Leonie of the A.D. was reactionary, while Perez took Venezuela on an anti-imperialist position. Simultaneously, when this Government moved in the 1974 – 1976 period to nationalise foreign companies – sugar and bauxite – the Perez Government had moved to a similar position and nationalised iron ore and the oil industries in Venezuela. Venezuela became one of the leading members of OPEC and as a result of it there was American aggression against all OPEC members including then, Peru, Ecuador and Venezuela, when they were removed from the most favoured nation status. That was incidentally a period when Guyana came under imperialist aggression mainly through Brazil and Venezuela became their friend. Not only became their friend politically and gave them political support, but gave them a loan of nearly \$30 million. So let us not just become jingoistic and hysterical about Venezuela. Even in the C.O.P.E.I. Party, President Caldeira, before he lost to Perez because of the general situation in the world in the mid 70s, called for a new economic international order, the coming of OPEC into being and so on, and began to play a progressive, somewhat anti-imperialist, role.

Unfortunately, there has been a change in Washington which has caused a change also in Venezuela. From Carter to Reagan there has been a change. The Reagan administration charges the Carter administration for selling out American interests by selling out, meaning, allowing Somaza to fall, allowing the Shan to fall, Signing the Panama Canal Treaty which is going to cede sovereignty of the Panama by the end of this century to Panama. That is the view of the Reagan administration, perturbed about changes particularly in the Caribbean and so they also began pressuring this Government.

Pressure was there from 1974 to 1976 because of the anti-imperialist position then taken. But Carter released that pressure when they got the Government to sign the IMF Agreement and go backward, more or less to the 1971-1973 period. However, their own rhetoric did not take such an ideological position, their own rhetoric influenced Washington. In the Santa Fe document, produced by the Reagan Advisers who formulated Reagan's policy for Latin America and the Caribbean, they bracketed Guyana's Government and Manley's Government in the same category and deemed the PNC Government as Marxist/Leninist. We who know what Marxism/Leninism means know that that is not so. But untutored people who are sitting around Reagan do not know the difference. They took what was said and so pressure began to mount, and this Government began to shift back to the outright reactionary position of 1964 to 1970. We see now the bankrupt position to which they have brought the country. They are now telling the World Bank that we are prepared to submit. Part of that pressure not only came directly through the World Bank or indirectly through the World Bank and the IMF but also through Venezuela. It is in this context we have to see the threat.

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15:55 hrs

(Cde. Dr. Jagan continues)

The Speaker: Cde. Jagan, before you proceed, how much longer will you be?

Cde. Jagan: I would take 15 minutes.

The Speaker: Then perhaps we can proceed to 4.15 and take the break when you are finished. Is that agreed, Comrades?

Cde. Jagan: Mr. Speaker, the same Government of C.O.P.E.I. which went along with the strategic thinking of Reagan, supported El Salvador with its warfare regime and brutal dictatorship there because of ideological connections with both C.O.P.E.I. and Duarte's party, the Christian Democratic. But that was not the only reason. They were going along with the new strategy of imperialism, American imperialism, by "hawking" around Reagan. Let me just read one statement to show how this is so. Reagan's view in the Caribbean, Latin American and Central America now is this. They claim that there is a threat to the area by Soviet expansionism and that Cuba is an agent of Soviet expansionism. Cuba, through Cuban terrorism, they say, is moving in to the whole area and must be stopped. More than that, the justification for action is that the Caribbean is the sea route for vital raw materials like oil, bauxite, some foods like sugar and cocoa, etc. and the United States cannot do without having control of the sea route. The Venezuelans have also projected a similar thinking.

This is a quotation from El Diario de Caracas of April 7, 1981. El diario de Caracas, closely associate with the ruling C.O.P.E.I. party, published a document entitled "Problems of war and strategies in the Caribbean" mimicking U.S. psychological warfare propaganda about Soviet military superiority, the Soviet menace and Soviet threat and referred to Cuba as having military superiority. It warned against aggression by Cuba and the danger that Cuba may block the flow of Venezuela oil to other parts of the world either by intercepting the tankers, destroying the refineries or even destroying the Venezuelan army and taking over Venezuela. It is in this context that the proposed purchase of F16 fighters must be seen. The Prime Minister referred to F16 fighters and protested to Washington. Clearly, if Venezuela wanted to attack Guyana, do you need a sledge hammer to hit a fly? Do you need F16 fighters? This is not to speak disparagingly of our brave military men [Applause]. Can you match 6,000 P.L.O – Palestine fighters, brave, willing to die with 80,000 troops with the most modern weapons of warfare? Well, Venezuela with or without F16 fighters is capable if they really want

to attack Guyana. That is why we have said deep down the temperature, keep it down. But a new element has come into the Venezuelan politics and that is the Falkland Islands issue. The Government here has said that Venezuela supported Argentina because they want to use that in parallel situation of their own claim on Guyana. But that is not recognising Latin American nationalism. One will remember when Nixon visited Venezuela in 1958 he was nearly killed on his ride from the Airport. From the time he landed, crowds of people were there, they spat on him and they nearly killed him. Only because the car was very sturdy it did not break up under the impact. That nationalism must be taken into consideration and today we see not only Venezuela but many Latin American countries supporting Argentina not because of right but because the Falklands had belonged to Argentina since 1810 and Britain committed aggression, not against Spain, but against Argentine in 1833 when it took away the islands. So both historically and also because of their own struggle with imperialism up to the early part of the century Latin America, including Venezuela and Argentina, had many common links. We must take that into consideration.

The whole Falklands issue is coming to a close now. The whole of American politics in the Latin Americas is in a state of shambles. The role that Venezuela was playing prior to Falklands is now changing. Venezuela is now applying for full membership in the Non-Aligned Movement. You will hear our friends probably saying that because of our influence in the Non-Aligned Movement they want to go there and establish some influence. That is not necessarily so. As I told you already, Venezuela is also anti-imperialist. They shift from time to time according to cold war pressures and according to the pressures of Washington, and even within the same party. What are we going to see now in the coming elections next year? This Party, the ruling party, C.O.P.E.I. has become very unpopular. Those of you who think oil is going to save us, look at Venezuela. Plenty of oil! But that is not the answer. The Government is very unpopular.

One thing they have in their favour is Caldeira, who is not just a party man but a man of national prestige and a former president and a man who in the latter part of his term of office took a progressive return. He is likely to win the coming elections. If not he, then it is Perez of Accion Democratica. We know the progressive role that Perez played. Perez supported the Nicaraguan Revolution and so we must see therefore that the Venezuelan situation is not one with which we must become emotional and with which we must begin to spar words which can endanger our own situation because when one raises up the temperature in this country you at the same time giving grist to the mills of the reactionaries in Venezuela and those people, right wing parties who also have influence in the military. We know that in certain countries it has been to the people's

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frustration, when the rightist and centrist parties move to the extreme right. If we are not careful in the way we deal with the situation, we can give grist to the mills, as I said, to those reactionary forces and we must understand too that the Government faced with an election also flexes its muscles to see what advantage it could get in the coming elections. Land is always something which politicians who cannot win support, who do not have support among the people look to, to bolster their support. We saw this recently in England in the Falkland Island issue and the Thatcher Government.

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16:05 hrs

(Cde. Dr. C. Jagan continues)

The Guyana Government perhaps had its own reasons for escalating this question. Like the Venezuelan Government, it wanted to do so because we all know that this Government also is isolated because it has decided to go along with imperialism and imperialist prescriptions dictated by the I.M.F. and the World Bank. Thus, the Guyana Government has escalated this so-called threat, escalated the danger in order to:

- (1) Divert attention from the pressures imposed by the International Monetary Fund.
- (2) Improve its image abroad. We know that the Guyana Government's image abroad was dirtied, sullied, after the Walter Rodney assassination, after the rigging of the last election. So it would like to put something else in its place and make the Venezuelan issue the number one question in the international arena. That is what it is trying to do to improve its image abroad.
- (3) Whip up some support at home.
- (4) Divert attention from the wages issue so they can have a wage freeze this year, as previously in 1979, and a wage restraint as in 1980 and 1981.
- (5) Use Venezuela as a scapegoat for its failure to implement the Mazaruni Project. Why haven't we had a debate in the Assembly on the Mazaruni Project? Why doesn't Mr. Jack, the Minister in charge of Mines tell us that the World Bank's advice is that the project was too large for our foreseeable needs and that we needed a big buyer if the project is to be financially feasible. Venezuela said they have no interest, they have their own sites and Brazil said the distance is too far. The Prime Minister told me this. So that they have to use Venezuela now as a scapegoat, especially after wasting about \$100,000 to build a highway, hard currency, with a lot of machinery lying idle, rusting – the road to Mazaruni, like so many other roads which have gone down the drain. Trees are taking over again.

- (6) They have escalated this so-called danger in order to expand the military and para-military forces to keep them in office. From \$15 million in 1970 for the army and the police, this year it has gone to \$116 million, \$100 million more when the people are starving. They are going around telling the people that the arms race must be linked to development, disarmament must be linked to development. They are criticising others who are spending money when they are doing the same thing here. If they were really serious about the war danger, how is it they have not once gone to the Security Council and asked for a debate? We have asked them over and over for that. Everyday they are stating how many aggressions have taken place. Why haven't they gone? Any country which has an aggression against it goes immediately and builds up support in the United Nations. That is more practical than hearing a secret talk in the corner with somebody somewhere.

What has been done to unify this country? Cuba fought imperialism, defeated the Americans by arming all the people in the militia and the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution. Grenada, little as it is, is doing the same thing, standing up to imperialism. What are we doing? We are retreating and fooling the people that the Venezuelans are coming. They should have come already. Ask Urmia Johnson, she said so, the Assistant General Secretary. [Laughter] When I told Dr. Reid, he said, "but you know, who is she". [Laughter]

The Speaker: Order, please. Dr. Jagan your time is coming up to a close.

Cde. Dr. Jagan: And last, Cde. Speaker, the poor people who are starving cannot make two ends meet. They are being coerced to buy defence bonds. Because the treasury is empty they are fooling the people that we have to defend the country. What \$10 million will do? Look at the propaganda. The amount of \$10 million was the target. A Chronicle headline stated that we have over fulfilled the revised target. Now to be serious [Laughter] – I am asking you to be serious, not me. Seaga is now gyrating and saying he is willing to lend his good offices to solve this border problem. Imagine! Seaga! Seaga now wants to step in to play the role Eric Williams played in 1970. Please do not take this to mean I am attacking Eric Williams. He had his own pro-imperialist and anti-imperialist gyrations. This is a fact because of the nature of the petty bourgeois – to vacillate.

Seaga who is the U.S.A.'s man in the Caribbean – Belafonte gave him hell last night – is now saying he is going to intervene. What does this mean? That we will put the matter in cold storage for another twelve years? We say that this issue hanging over our heads like the sword of Damocles is not in the interest of the Guyanese nation. We must seek a speedy solution. We have told Government we must stop going in for all kinds of manoeuvres. We must end them in this one issue. You must take the Opposition in full confidence because we are committed to the proposition that Essequibo is part of our territory. We must try to get this matter speedily settled. Drift is not in our interest. Right is on our side. Caricom supports us. The Non-Aligned Movement supports us. World public opinion is on our side. The Non-Aligned Movement represents the majority of mankind and the majority of states in the world. Those who stand for the rule of law are on our side, because the 1899 Award is an international treaty. The rule of law, international law, is on our side.

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(Cde. Dr. C. Jagan continues)

So we say, let us bring the matter before the Secretary General of the United Nations as speedily as possible to work out a speedy solution and not to allow this matter to be drifting and to be used by imperialism as in keeping with its strategies wherever it is necessary from time to time, to make border issues become a weapon and to use proxy states like Israel to attack those who want to go forward to build a new future.

If we are to build it, we may differ how to build it, but we must not allow imperialism and the reactionary forces abroad or anywhere near to us to manipulate our situation. Unfortunately, the P.N.C. in the past allowed itself to put Guyana in this position today. As quickly as possible, if you are patriots you must find a solution to this problem.

The Speaker: Comrades, it is a convenient time to take the suspension.

Sitting suspended at 16.16 hours.

16:40 hrs.

On resumption --

The Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Education (Cde. D. A. Ainsworth):
Cde. Speaker, as I make my intervention in support of the motion before the Assembly this afternoon, which seeks in essence to put in place the sort of mechanism that will ensure that this green land of ours remains as we have always known it, that is a land mass of 216,000 square kilometers.

Let me at the very outset any that in order for us to achieve the tasks we have set ourselves, it is important that we all rise above the narrow path of partisan politics and ascend to the realm of national interest where the national good is paramount to all partisan consideration.

Cde. Speaker, in order to ensure that the struggle to protect our territorial integrity and defend our patrimony is successful, we have to show the sort of solidarity which will give us the necessary energy and resolve and allow us to face the challenge of our

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covetous and greedy neighbour as a united people determined to pursue a course of development in keeping with our historical circumstances and using the path chosen by the Guyanese people.

Cde. Speaker, for us to be successful in the face of naked and unbridled aggression, support has to be in more than words. We have to be seen to be doing the sort of things which will help us to thwart the efforts of our enemies. For example, we have to participate positively in the economic recovery of our nation, we have to use our energies in productive activities, we must encourage our members to join the Guyana Peoples Militia and to buy Defence bonds among other things. No doubt Cde. Speaker, the catalogue of things that can be done to defend this country is not exhausted and I am sure that all the Members of this Honourable Assembly are aware of other activities which are developmental in nature and would put them into practice so that our nation would not be dismembered or mutilated.

Cde. Speaker, we are all aware of the implications of the survival of this nation, were we to allow the richest part of Guyana to be stolen from us. Never-the-less, we have to continuously remind ourselves and the international community of the justness of our cause and the negative effects the loss of Essequibo would have on our efforts to develop our people and our country in conditions of peace and security.

Ours is the task to transfer economic power to the masses of this country, to end poverty and unemployment, release for meaningful and productive purpose, the energies of our people, to ensure social justice and generally to improve the quality of life of all the Guyanese people. We can only achieve these objectives with the exploitation of all our natural resources, which would then be used for the benefit of all the people of Guyana. This means that we have to preserve every square centimeter of our territory. This we will do regardless of the circumstances.

In the struggle to gain economic independence we have recorded many victories for the Guyanese people, but we still have a lot more to do. The temporary difficulties facing us as a result of world wide recession, could only do us good in the final analysis, because in our attempts to grapple with the prevailing situation, the knowledge gained and the experience had would help us to fashion and put in place the kinds of institutions which would allow us to get the greatest benefit for our people.

Cde. Speaker, might I remind this Assembly that we are engaged in a struggle which, by its very forms and dimensions, involves us all. Any reversal of the struggle

would return us to the dark days of colonialism and we would become second class citizens. We either succeed or as our Cde. Leader has said “become aliens and serfs in our own land.”

Our foreign policy which is an integral part of our national policy commits us to the pursuit of an independent political position, “We will not be pawns of anyone, either East or West. We are therefore prepared to enter into and develop relations with all countries based on mutual benefits and respect for sovereign equality and territorial integrity, as a developing nation we recognise the right of all peoples to self-determination and independence, the right of all states to pursue their own paths to political, economic, social and cultural development and to do so free from outside interference in their internal affairs”.

All we ask Cde. Speaker, is to be allowed to pursue our path of development free from external interference and pressure. We have no colonial ambitions nor any wish to dominate any nation. We believe in good neighbourly relations and peaceful co-existence between nations. We are prepared to have dialogue with the Venezuelans with a view that good sense will prevail and that they will be convinced of the baselessness of their claim. Our commitment to dialogue should not be interpreted as a weakening of our position on our ownership of Essequibo. As a peaceful people we are prepared to exhaust all avenues for the peaceful settlement but we are even more committed and resolute to our cause for justice and no price is too high for us to pay in defence of our motherland.

Cde. Speaker, the false claim by Venezuela to more than 70 percent of our territory not only threatens our physical existence, but is also having a negative effect on our developmental efforts. The international economic blackmail which they have launched has had its effect. At the moment we have to direct scarce resources and energies to the defence of our territorial integrity, as we are convinced that we must have a country to develop and without Essequibo it is as good as saying there is no Guyana.

Cde. Speaker, you are no doubt aware that the theme of the People’s National Congress 4th Biennial Congress held in August 1981 was “Organise for Production and Defence”, this theme Cde. Speaker, we have carried over to the national sphere of activities where we are seeking to mobilise the nation for production and defence. As a consequence, those who are committed to the defence of the nation must also be committed to the raising of the productive levels and capacities of this nation. It is contradictory if we are committed to one and not the other because there is a dialectical relationship between production and defence, they are both dependent on each other for their existence albeit if we do not produce we will not be able to provide the money for

the defence of the country and if we do not defend our homeland we will have no where to produce the wealth which will be redistributed for the benefit of the Guyanese people.

Cde. Speaker, a little earlier, I alluded to the fact that Venezuela has launched a campaign of Economic blackmail and aggression with the sole aim of thwarting our developmental efforts. Ever since 1968, even as discussion within the framework of the Geneva Agreement was taking place in flagrant disregard of it, Venezuela sought publicly and privately to discourage investment for development in the area which she claims. There is evidence to show that on May 15, 1968 there was published in “The Times” of London a paid advertisement entitled Communique from the Venezuela Ministry of Foreign Affairs dated May 14, 1968 in which the Government of Venezuela publicly and categorically stated “that they do not recognise any type of such supposed concessions, either granted or to be granted by the Government of Guyana over the territory, stretching to the West of the Essequibo River from its source to its mouth”. The Venezuelan Government was then reacting to information that with the help of the U.N. and the U.S.A. the Government of Guyana was seeking to develop the mineral sector of the country’s economy in the Essequibo region.

Cde. Speaker, at the conference on new and renewable sources of energy held in Nairobi, in 1981, Venezuela advised the international community that she would not recognise any form of co-operation which would be given for the development of Guyana if such development includes the area claimed by her. The Venezuelan Government is on record to have urged the European Economic Community to with-hold its participation in the development of the region.

It is clear, Cde. Speaker, as Cde. Hoyte, Vice-President for Economic Planning and Finance observed in his letter to the President of the World Bank in September of last year. This letter was in response to one sent by the Venezuelan Foreign Minister to that institution objecting to the involvement of the Bank in the realisation of the Upper Mazaruni Hydro-Project in Guyana.

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(Cde. Ainsworth continues)

I quote:

“The Government of Venezuela has embarked upon a course of economic terrorism against Guyana, calculated to stultify the development and growth of the country. The objective is to intimidate and coerce the Guyanese Government and people into surrendering the richest part of the country to an avaricious neighbour.”

The Vice-President also drew to the Bank’s attention the fact that Venezuela had been sending emissaries to persuade Governments and private corporations in various parts of the world not to participate in the economic development of Guyana. We all know how vital the realisation of the Upper Mazaruni Hydro-Electric Project is to the economic development of Guyana, especially in the light of the increasing cost of fuel and the possibilities that would be available to us for the further processing of our minerals.

Our perception that Venezuela is attempting to prevent the development of the Hydro-project power resources in the hope that Guyana’s dependence on imported oil would aggravate its current economic problems and render it vulnerable to Venezuela’s expansionist and colonial designs is verified by a statement made by one Mr. Villalobos, Employers’ Delegate of Venezuela during the 27th Sitting of the annual I.L.O. meeting in 1981. I quote:

“We have opposed any financial investments in the disputed territory because the treaty prohibits Venezuela and Guyana from undertaking any kind of action aimed at re-establishing sovereignty over it, and we have done so all the more strongly because our neighbour can perfectly well promote its labour intensive development activities more easily, more cheaply and more effectively outside the disputed area.”

Cde. Speaker, I draw your attention to the distortion of the facts about the Geneva Agreement.

While the Venezuelans have kept up their naked aggression against Guyana, as the acts of intimidation and provocation continue, there are sources which are attempting to tell the world that our response to their nefarious intent is to divert the local population from the economic difficulties facing us. We have made no secret of the trying times we are facing as a result of world recession. We have faced and are facing the problems

squarely. We have gone to the people throughout the length and breadth of this country explaining the problems and collectively seeking solutions to the economic issues before us. We have no need to deceive the working people of this nation. They are our main and closest allies in the struggle to make Guyana an economically independent nation where the workers will become the masters of their destiny.

At a time when the developing nations are struggling to reverse the order of the existing world economic system, which condemns them to perennial domination and exploitation, and to put in its place a more equitable International Economic Order, Venezuela, a developing nation like us, should not be expending its energies to thwart the economic development of Guyana. Rather, it should direct its attention to the league of internal economic and social problems facing it in its country. One gets the impression that the Venezuelans are seeking to divert the attention of their nationals from their many internal problems and at the same time misleading the international community. The social ills and problems of Venezuela are life long. The slums are prominent; poverty and disease are rampant.

With your permission, Cde. Speaker, I should like to refer to some news items emanating from sources in Venezuela:

El Diario de Caracas, 24th October, 1981: Malnutrition and measles attack the Panares. A native community might disappear in Bolivia State.

The Guyana Chronicle, 1st April, 1982: Report emanating from IPS in Caracas – “Caracas Short of Drinking Water – And there will be none by the end of the Century.” The article goes on:

“Unless water is transported from the Orinoco at a cost of \$5 billion, only a quarter of Caracas’s population of 4 million would continue to have a regular supply of potable water. One big problem is that 85 percent of the country’s water resources are located in the underpopulated south while 90 percent of the population and the most important agricultural areas are in the north. The available water in the south will run out by the year 2000. ‘Commercially bottled potable water now costs twice as much as gasoline.’”

It should be observed that while the capital and other parts of the country are facing severe water shortages the Caracas country golf clubs are watered day and night.

The Times of June 14, 1982. Headline: “Venezuela Loan talks with Banks Broken Off.” The article goes on:

“Because of a disagreement over the terms of a proposed jumbo Eurocredit Venezuela, which was seeking a two billion dollar facility as part of a 14 billion programme aimed at re-financing its short-term debt, has discontinued the talks.”

The Financial Times of June 17th goes on to say: “Hopes Fade Fast for Venezuelan Credit.”

“Hopes that Venezuela will be able to raise a large credit in the Euro market were fading fast yesterday after news that it had rejected terms offered by a syndicate of about 20 international banks ... Despite Venezuela’s insistence that it could raise the credit from a different group, most bankers doubted that such a large amount as 1.5 billion dollars would be forthcoming from a group which did not include the 20 leading U.S., Japanese, Arab and Canadian banks.”

War hysteria is being drummed up in Venezuela to create an anti-Guyana feeling and an assumed threat of Venezuelan security. For example, Cde. Speaker, the Venezuelans are made to feel that Guyana will be used as a launching pad for a Cuban invasion of Venezuela and our Guyana National Service Training Centres at Tumatumari, Konawaruk and Kimbia are being used as the training grounds and a military mechanism organised by the Cubans would have been fully operational by June 1982. This information is extracted from a magazine by the name of Zeta dated December 6, 1981 and published in Caracas.

Ultimas Noticias, 12th February, 1981, revealed a plan for the occupation, administration and development of what they called “Guyana’s Essequibo.”

In an interview on the programme “The World Today” on Channel 4 of Venevision on 14th May, 1981, Miguel Augel Capriles, an influential Venezuelan Newspaper publisher, advocated the recovery of Essequibo by force. He conceded that they could not hold on to the entire territory but that following negotiations they will retain the northern portion which gives them access to the Atlantic. He further said that he could not understand why the navy was not patrolling off the coast as a result of the Leoni decree.

The many violations of our air space, the incursion into our territory in May 1982 as well as the seizure of our part of Ankoko, along with what has been said just now, is more than enough evidence to convince us of the seriousness of the Venezuelans in pursuit of their spurious claim and aggressive intentions. Any Guyanese who thinks otherwise to my mind, Cde. Speaker, is an enemy of our people and is not worthy of Guyanese citizenship.

I wish to posit that the false Venezuelan claim to over 70 percent of our country if irrationally pursued could lead to the disruption of good neighbourly relations and cause undue tension in the region. There is also the potential to affect world peace and international security. It is common knowledge that in the European scramble for empires in the New World in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries and as late as the 19th century, lands throughout the world were carved up and many countries emerged without defined boundaries. These were left to be determined by the new states themselves through negotiation, arbitration and regrettably in some cases through armed conflict. Whatever the means, the boundaries of most, if not all, of the countries have been clearly defined. As civilisation and society have progressed certain accepted norms for international relations and practices have become institutionalised. Should Venezuela succeed with her total disregard for the territorial integrity of Guyana and our right to self-determination, what is there to stop all other nations from making claims and counter-claims and starting to engage in an ad hoc system of relocation of borders.

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17:00 hrs

(Cde. Ainsworth continues)

There will be utter chaos in the international community and the threat of war and a total innihilation of mankind would then become a reality.

Cde. Speaker, as a result of colonialism in Africa alone, there are over 400 borders between state and continent. It is hoped that the Venezuelans would emulate the maturity and statesmanship of the members of the OAU which entreated all members to respect the boundaries inherited from the colonial period. It is the duty of each nation to contribute towards the stability of international security, and the advance of humanity should be the concern of all. The Venezuelans would do well to remember the principles of the great liberator, Simon Bolivar who gave his life and energy for the liberation and freedom of mankind.

Cde. Speaker, twenty years after the passing of Resolution 1514 of 1960 at the United Nations on the declaration on the granting of Independence to Colonial countries and people, the Venezuelan claim can only be seen as expansionist in nature and colonialist in intent. The bellicose action of our neighbour to the West is a flagrant disregard of the principle enshrined in Resolution 1514 and the declaration there made. Might I remind them of Declaration 6 of Resolution 1514 and I quote:

“Any attempt aimed at the partial or total disruption of the National unity and the territorial integrity of a nation is incompatible with the purposes and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.”

Cde. Speaker, it is no accident that Venezuela has claims against Columbia, that Venezuela and Trinidad and Tobago have not yet settled the demarcation of their boundaries in all their aspects, that Grenada and Venezuela need to set the limit of their respective maritime jurisdiction. Venezuela has established her sovereignty over Bird Island in the Caribbean and she has yet to conclude discussions regarding demarcation of the sea between Bird Island and the French Territory of Martinique and that Venezuela claims over 70 percent of Guyana.

The Chairman: Cde. Ainsworth, five minutes more.

Cde. Ainsworth: The only one place she does not have a claim with in this region is the Federal Republic of Brazil. While Venezuela has all disputes with neighbouring

states, we have consistently been promoting among our Caribbean neighbours, the benefits that could be derived from Caribbean integration, and the use of the region's resources for the benefit of all Caricom countries. We are prepared to examine Venezuela's contention. Such an examination, without a shadow of a doubt, will leave us with our Territory intact.

Cde. Speaker, nevertheless, the international community must be informed about this emerging colonial nation. Venezuela has shown total disregard for the struggle of a people who have struggled against colonial domination and having tasted freedom will never be colonials again. We did not get rid of the British to be burdened by the Venezuelans. Again, Cde. Speaker, I repeat, while we are prepared to talk to the Venezuelans to seek a peaceable solution to this claim, we are resolute and firm in our sovereignty over all Guyana. Now that the Venezuelans have declared an option of not renewing the Protocol of Port of Spain, we hope that they will diligently observe the Geneva Agreement, and there will be a swift end to the impending dialogue which will for once and for all convince them that their claim is without foundation.

As an end, Cde. Speaker, may I quote from speech made to this Parliament in 1968 by our Cde. Leader, now President and the then Prime Minister:

“I cannot tell with any certainty where this ill-advised course of action on which the Government of Venezuela has embarked will lead us. We must be prepared, however, for further and even more aggressive demonstrations of international lawlessness from the Government of Venezuela. We will need all our courage and strength to withstand these efforts to break our will and despoil our land. Venezuela has now made clear her intention to seek relentlessly to re-impose the yoke of colonialism on a young and small nation that has only recently succeeded in freeing itself from the tutelage of another imperial power. We have no quarrel with the Venezuelan people but we shall not lack courage or resolve in resisting aggressive demands of a Venezuelan Government that is prepared to defile the traditions of Bolivar and to flout the precepts of Hemispheric and world order and security.

In our stand for survival we shall call upon the conscience of all peace-loving people to speak out in our cause and we shall need all our unity as a people so that our voice may be heard in all corners of the world and in all the Councils of the world's institutions for peace.”

[Applause]

The Speaker: Cde. Abraham.

Mr. Abraham: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my Party and Leader, Mr. Fielden Singh, I wish to state that the United Force's position can be summed up in the words of the poet, Sir Walter Scott:

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“Breathes there a man with soul so dead who never to himself hath said, this is my own, my native land.”

Sir, since we were boys we have always known Essequibo as part of Guyana. The Arbitral Award of 1899 was accepted by all parties as a full, perfect and final settlement of Guyana’s boundary, the then British Guiana. Essequibo is ours, there is no question about that. Venezuela has no justifiable claim to it and that is the United Force’s unequivocal position on the matter.

The P.N.C. is the de facto Government in Guyana and it has the legal responsibility to resist the claim and we in the United Force will help them in any way possible – [Applause] – to resist Venezuela’s spurious claim. Indeed, sir, we would consider it our duty to help any Government, even the People’s Progressive Party if they were in Government to resist the claim, for we consider that Venezuela’s ridiculous claim transcends political considerations and must be resisted at all cost. We have to tell our story to the world. We have to seek international support and that is why, sir, my Leader accepted the Government’s invitation to serve on this Defence Bonds Committee. Because money is needed to do such things as representing our cause and our case at the United Nations and the International Court of Justice. So, Mr. Speaker, we heartily support the motion and urge all Guyanese to do so because this is our dear land of Guyana including Essequibo. Essequibo is ours and we must not allow it to be decimated.

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(Mr. M. A. Abraham continues)

Finally, Cde. Speaker, my leader, Mr. Singh, is anxious that he be included in the Parliamentary Committee on the territorial integrity of Guyana so that he may serve on behalf of his party in resisting Venezuela's untenable claim. Mr. Speaker, the motion has the unqualified support of the United Force.

Cde. P. Fredericks: Cde. Speaker, I rise today to support the motion standing in the name of our Honourable Prime Minister, Cde. P. A. Reid. I, like other speakers, would like to reaffirm my continuing support for the stand of the Guyana Government in this issue. I have had the experience of living in no less than two of the regions of this country which are bordering Venezuela and to which Venezuela has made such an absurd claim. I have first hand knowledge of the vastness of these areas and the richness of these areas. These areas, although somewhat remote if we are speaking in geographical terms, hold the true wealth of the Guyanese nation in terms of fertile land, minerals, rivers and lakes, just to name a few. Any one who has visited or lived in these parts I am sure will agree with me when I say that the scenery and everything that goes with it have a beauty that cannot really be described appropriately even by the most fluent orator.

We, the people who live in these areas have a special love for these areas. We were born and bred there. We have always known it to belong to Guyana. We have always known it as Guyana and as our home and that is why I cannot help but stand here today to add my bit. It is common knowledge that long before the end of the life of the Protocol of Port-of-Spain Venezuela had been violating many of the conditions set out in that agreement, what with the many violations of our airspace and others which were mentioned before. There are some in Guyana who for their own dubious reasons continue to say they are just allegations on the part of the Guyana Government and that they are not true. Only those who have experience can speak with firm conviction and I have such experience. The Rupununi uprising of 1969 is history in Guyana and a bit of our history which I am sure all Guyanese would have preferred not to be written in Guyana's history pages. But it has occurred and we realise today that it was not an idea born in the minds of Guyanese but in the minds of our Venezuelan neighbours, who even at that time and even after they had unjustly taken the Guyana half of Ankoko Island, had plans afoot for the occupation of one of the largest and richest regions of our country. We realise also that in that uprising the indigenous people of this country were used by the Venezuelans to do as we would commonly say their dirty work. Even before the

uprising Amerindians were being lured by Venezuela to that country. They used the common colonial tactics to do this, like telling them stories of a luxurious life over there, of easy and beneficial employment, of their having a city all to themselves.

Fortunately and unfortunately some of my people fell for their bait. I say fortunately because some of them who went returned shortly after to tell others that like most fairy tales the picture painted was not the one which they saw there and all that glittered was not gold. I say unfortunately because some remained and are treated as second class citizens in that country. Even those Guyanese who were used in the Rupununi uprising and who fled to Venezuela are not enjoying life. They are a disillusioned people and a people who I am sure would give anything to return to their own country if they were free to do so.

Even in the present situation of this issue Venezuela has been trying to use the Amerindians indirectly by suggesting what would be the fate of Amerindians in the Mazaruni if the Hydro Electric Project was to come to a successful completion, allegations which are completely false. There is much proof that Venezuela has no place for indigenous people. History has shown where the Venezuelan Government from as early as 1839, forced the Indians to take refuge in the Barima district to escape enforced labour. In 1840 the Venezuelans interfered with the property and with the Indians of the Moruca. The Arawaks in Amakura complained that the Venezuelans had taken their people into bondage, beating them unmercifully and even violated their women folk before their eyes. This ill-treatment of Amerindians continued and even today there are reports of the trafficking in Indians. This has been so intensified of late that a Report from El Diario de Caracas of August,28, 1981 states that a special committee of the legislative Assembly, which investigated the case of trafficking in Indians slaves recommended that a number of persons be charged for dealing in the traffic of Indians from the area of San Francisco de Cara in the south of the State. The two tribes concerned were the Amoruas and Guahibos, who are settled in the area of Alto Apure and Caicara in the Orinoco region.

The people of the hinterland of Guyana do not want to be slaves to anyone. We are a free people and we intend to remain so. We refuse to yield to a nation which although it claims to be wealthy is sadly neglecting their inland communities. Again, Cde. Speaker, to stress my point allow me to repeat from El Diario de Caracas of October 24, 1981 which carried reports of attacks of malnutrition and measles in the Panaris where it was feared that the native community might disappear. At the time the measles epidemic had already caused 94 deaths and presumed negligence by the Commissioner of Health of the Bolivar State. The article continued to state that the main factor

determining the rise of diseases in the native settlements, a fact admitted by the Health Commissioner's Office in Bolivar, is malnutrition. That is not a novelty since the sub-human situation in which many Venezuelans live is well-known. From such reports it seems that the distant zones of that country probably because of the distance between the capital and the rural areas are sadly neglected. Would such a nation then, Cde. Speaker, care for the people of another state? Would they not allow us to die from diseases and famine?

The present Government has done much for the people of the hinterland, for the people who are living in the regions bordering Venezuela. What has been done has been related time and time again in this House and there is no need for me to repeat it in detail. We have improved medical facilities and we are not dying of disease and malnutrition. In fact, Cde. Speaker, these areas have the lowest mortality rate. We fully realise that no other Government would do it for us. No other Government would have given us the opportunity which this Government has given us and in fact no other country would treat us as first class citizens. Cde. Speaker, we refuse to be second class citizens and more so we refuse to be second class citizens in our own country and that is why we stand firm behind our Government in their stand in this issue. We agree that the Geneva Agreement is valid and we are prepared to do anything to keep Guyana as we know it, Guyana as it is today. We pledge to work honestly to develop our hinterland for the benefit of all Guyanese. We will not be moved. Thank you. [Applause]

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The Speaker: Cde. Jackson.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs (Cde. Jackson): Cde. Speaker, the Motion before this Assembly is inspired by many convictions of the people of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana who are totally represented by the Members of this National Assembly. Its unanimous adoption would not merely reflect another decision of our Parliament, it will do more. The adoption of the Motion will be a clear testimony to the resolve of this nation to stand united in the face of a deliberate, determined and sustained effort by external forces to rob us of our patrimony. It is a patrimony for which we have struggled, one, for the security of which, our foreparents suffered enough indignity and have given more than enough blood and labour. It is a patrimony, the defence of which may yet demand of us, all manner of sacrifices, not excluding the supreme one.

The facts of the Venezuelan claim to western Essequibo have been sufficiently chronicled inside and outside of this Parliament. We have been reminded of them in the course of this debate and more especially by the Cde. Prime Minister in his eloquent exposition. Suffice it to say that as we in Guyana know, as the world knows, and as the overwhelming majority of Venezuelans ought to know Guyana's western boundary which coincides with Venezuela's eastern border was legally and finally fixed and demarcated, having been in dispute in the late nineteenth century. Venezuela now wishes to have altered the configuration of our western border to our disadvantage.

Our meeting today results from Venezuelan contention, a mere allegation, a contentious asseveration. It is the assertion, the contention by Venezuela – that the Arbitral Award of 1899, unanimously arrived at should be set side as null and void. More latterly, Venezuela, through official spokesmen, has advanced the rather bizarre proposition that the Arbitral Award of 1899 does not even exist. It is, as if by Venezuelan fiat, the process of arbitration and the event of the Award itself, have been erased from the annals of history, and from the minds and memories of men.

No civilised nation should be party to such anomic behaviour, behaviour which reflects a breakdown in the normative standards of conduct and a flagrant disregard for international law. The Arbitral Award of 1899 exists; and it is well respected by Guyana and the rest of the international community, except until comparatively recently, by Venezuela itself.

If I may digress for a minute here, it is to say that the award itself, the existence of the Award is the real basis of Venezuela's contention. For if there were no Award, Venezuela would have no contention of nullity to advance. The award is a historical fact which no kind of semantic gymnastics, no kind of intellectual sleight-of-hand can alter or erase. Only a convenient memory can fail to take cognizance of it. A selective recourse to history cannot invalidate facts which such a recourse ignores.

In pursuing its line of argument, Venezuela has sought to suggest that because of fraud, the Award is null and void, and to promote the concept that the eastern boundary of Venezuela, inherited – be it noted – from Spanish colonialism, is the Essequibo River. I merely wish with your permission, to quote from a testator, Simon Bolivar, who in his message to the Constituent Congress of Colombia on the 20th January, 1830, had this to say:

“I am confident that your wisdom will reach the heights necessary to dominate courageously, the fashions of the minority and ignorance of the masses and to consult duly for enlightenment, the keen understanding of those judicious men whose respected opinions are a priceless aid in resolving problems of statecraft. You will moreover find valuable counsel in the very nature of our country which extends from the high peaks of the Andes to the torrid banks of the Orinoco.”

We are fully aware of the circumstances which led Venezuela to turn its back on the treaties and international agreements which it had solemnly entered into and fully subscribed to. I refer to the Treaty of Washington of 1897, the Arbitral Award of 1899 and the Boundary Agreement of 1905. Such a grave step Venezuela was apparently encouraged to take on the basis of a memorandum dictated by one of the junior Counsel for the Venezuelan case in Paris, Mallet Provoct at a time of failing memory and long after the other participants had departed. It is on that sliver of evidence – so-called evidence – that the burden of the Venezuelan case rests. Thus it was that in 1962 Venezuela sought the intervention of the United Nations on her behalf. Be it noted that the Venezuelan action coincided with the crucial phase of our liberation struggle against British colonialism.

The result of that exercise, that act on Venezuela's part of invoking the assistance of the United Nations, was an agreement to examine the documents relating to the Venezuelan allegation, that the 1899 Arbitral Award was null and void and in this respect the Leader of the Minority Party was absolutely correct in his description of those circumstances, in that the experts examined the documentary evidence and as far as we are concerned – and this does not impinge upon one's ideological colouration – there is absolutely no evidence to support the Venezuelan contention. Yet despite the best efforts

of the British experts and ourselves, the Venezuelans refused to accept the verdict of the evidential material. Instead, Venezuela continued to speak of its contention with evangelical zeal. It is well known to this Assembly, to Venezuela, and to the United Nations that at that time there was never the intention to engage in substantive talks about the revision of the frontier. This was made absolutely clear by the British representative at the United Nations.

It was our hope that the Geneva Agreement which was concluded in February 1966, three months before our independence, would carry forward that process, that process of examination of evidential material in dealing with the Venezuelan claim of nullity of the 1899 Arbitral Award. For this purpose a mixed commission was established and allowed a period of four years within which to complete its work. We all know the result. The mixed commission ended its work in failure. If we look at the report of the Guyanese Commissioners which they submitted to the Government of Guyana at the conclusion of their work, it would be to record their observation that the failure to fulfill the requirements of the Geneva Agreement is not the consequence of the failure to establish the nullity of the 1899 Award, but that fact that despite the best efforts of Guyana, Venezuela refused to address this question.

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(Cde. Jackson continues)

Such was our earnest to find an appropriate modality within which the Venezuelan contention of nullity could be properly examined that we agreed to interpose a period initially of twelve years within which we in Guyana hoped that the relations of friendship and cordiality could be established and developed, and that wiser counsel would prevail Venezuela.

We were encouraged in this view because Venezuela was more and more projecting itself as a progressive country within the third world, and on the wider international scene, professing adherence to concepts of equality and justice in international relations and mutually beneficial economic relations among developing countries, and between the developed and the developing world.

Unfortunately, Venezuela's profession in this regard did not always apply to Guyana, for there were many breaches and violations by her, both of the Geneva Agreement, and the Protocol of Port-of-Spain. It was, as was mentioned by other speakers, early in the life of the mixed commission that Venezuela gave a clear indication of her intention and capacity to use extra legal methods to achieve her political objectives, and I think we should bear this in mind when we contemplate the possibilities of the use by Venezuela of the military option. We already have evidence within the history of Venezuela's relations with Guyana, of her capacity to utilise extra legal methods for the achievement of political objectives. We should not be like ostriches nor should our thinking be confused by obscurantist arguments.

Thus it was in October 1966, Cde. Speaker, that Venezuela invaded Ankoko and militarily occupied the Guyana part of it. Despite our vigorous protest – and it is incorrect to say that the Government of Guyana did nothing about the invasion. Venezuela remains there, shades of South Africa in Namibia.

Other Comrades who have spoken before me have mentioned other infractions like Venezuela's involvement in the Rupununi uprising in 1969, a programme and campaign of economic harassment and blackmail, and her continued attempts at subversion and other forms of interference in our internal affairs.

Cde. Speaker, indeed there are some who believe that enough evidence of Venezuela's insincerity in honouring her international obligations has been manifested by

her many violations of the Geneva Agreement and the Protocol of Port-of-Spain. Those comrades have raised the question as to whether we can indeed expect that Venezuela will pursue in good faith, the processes of specific settlement as required by the Geneva Agreement.

Cde. Speaker, in focusing on this question, I think it might be useful to take account of what some prominent Venezuelans have said, I would like to quote from ex-President Rafael Caldeira, whose name and whose position figured so much as a progressive or as a man who was pursuing progressive policies in the presentation made by the Leader of the Minority Party. Incidentally, he –Caldeira- did make a comment about the Geneva Agreement which does not accord with the views of the Leader of the Minority Party. Caldeira said of the Geneva Agreement and I quote: “It may lead us along a path which, if not successful, can bring about the liquidation of our claim in the eyes of other nations. That is the negative side of the Geneva Agreement.” And that should be the path that we should seek and continue to pursue.

I wanted to continue to quote President Caldeira’s description of some of the reasons why his Government signed the Protocol of Port-of-Spain, and to link this with the clear military threat that exists and to high-light Venezuela’s duplicity in its international dealings.

In speaking about the state of the armed forces when he assumed office, and about the possibility of the use of the military option in 1970 to achieve the objective of the total “reclamation” of the Essequibo, he said this, and I quote: “The biggest naval units which we then had were under repair in English shipyards. The supposed enemy had them in her hands without herself having made any effort to secure them. Our aviation was in poor shape. The units which today make it a credible air force were acquired during my term of office after the Protocol of Port-of-Spain. The Mirage, CS 5, Hercules, T2D, OV-10 and the Noble Canberras were maintained by borrowing parts because of a lack of spares and it was only during my mandates” says ex-President Caldeira, “that they were re-conditioned and the air force strengthened. The army used to parade every July 5 with obsolete World War II tanks. It was only during my quinquennium that the modern armed units AMX 30 as well as mounted artillery, as well as other defensive equipment were acquired. The armed forces of co-operation, the custodians of our frontiers were not provided with equipment for effective action.” That is in 1970.

The lesson is clear. We have seen how Venezuela between 1970 and now proceeded with a careful campaign of purchasing the most sophisticated equipment.

Frigates from Italy, fighter bombers from Britain and France, and now we know of the deal to buy F16's. And as we have it in the words of the ex-President: "The armed forces of co-operation, the custodians of our frontier were not provided with equipment for effective action." What is the "effective action" of the armed forces of Venezuela in relation to the territorial claim to Guyana, I ask?

Cde. Speaker, we need also to look at the situation that has developed since the Cde. Leader paid a visit of peace, to Caracas last year. We recall that immediately after his return to Georgetown, there was issued from the Presidential Palace in Caracas, a statement which in effect said three or four important things. First of all, it said quite clearly that Venezuela was resuscitating the claim to Essequibo, to Western Essequibo, a statement which itself is in violation of the Protocol of Port-of-Spain, because the Protocol stipulated that while it was in force, no claim should be made. In that connection, the President of Venezuela said "there will be rejection of any compromise incompatible with Venezuela's claim." So it is all or no-thing. Any compromise which is incompatible with Venezuela's claim;

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(Cde. Jackson continues)

yet some people say we are not in danger of being attacked.

Next, he said that Venezuela reiterated its rejection of the Hydro-Electric Project in the Upper Mazaruni, I am sorry that Dr. Jagan is not here because I would have wished to inform him. I will nevertheless put it in the record. In examining the studies which have been done about the Upper Mazaruni Hydro-Electric Project the World Bank came to the clear and unequivocal conclusion that the project is technically and economically feasible. So there is no question of its unviability, economically or technically. We need to see therefore the role that Venezuela is playing in frustrating our achievement of the Upper Mazaruni Hydro-Electric Project.

Finally, the Venezuelan statement indicated that Venezuela was not renewing the Protocol of Port-of-Spain. As regards seeking support for Guyana, speakers, including the leader of the Minority Party, have mentioned support from CARICOM. We have done that on more than one occasion. We had support from the Commonwealth, I don't think I need to read these out; support from the Non-Aligned Movement. More generally, Cde. Speaker, we have exposed the facts to the world.

The apex of this effort in 1981 was, of course, the participation by the Cde. Prime Minister himself in the general debate of the United Nations at its last session, a presentation which, in all honesty, was extraordinarily well received by the international community and which has served Guyana in good stead in promoting its case before the world community. We have sought, as well, to establish contacts with other progressive movements, including students, at Universities, indeed with anyone who would lend an ear. And we have told our story like it is.

Cde. Speaker, when we look at our foreign policy initiatives and at what we have done since April 1981, we cannot ignore the developments in the South Atlantic. This is not the time for an analysis of cause and effect. What I can say, however, is that those development particularly since the invasion of the Falkland Islands by the armed forces of Argentina on April 2 of this year – those events – have served to strengthen the principles for which Guyana has always stood and stood with firmness and conviction. More countries have come to realise the danger of some countries taking in their own

hands the right to use force to achieve political objectives. We hope that the lesson would be that the unlawful use of force cannot be condoned.

The Leader of the Minority Party essayed a number of explanations about the whole approach towards sensitizing the international community and taking the matter to the appropriate organs of the United Nations. Perhaps this is something which can be discussed in greater depth by the Parliamentary Committee for the Territorial Integrity of Guyana, when it shall have been established. Let me however say this. There is an important factor which should not be left out of the equation, a factor which can help to inform decision-making on particular issues. It is the perception of what is best for one's national interest at a particular point in time. And, I am convinced – I remain firmly convinced – that in relation to all the acts of hostility and aggression which Venezuela has perpetrated against us, from Ankoko in 1966, to the military incursion at Eteringbang on May 10th, this year, 1982, this Government has taken appropriate and correct steps on every occasion. Maybe the time will come when there will be need for a debate in the Security Council. But that time has not yet arrived.

With the termination of the Protocol of Port-of-Spain on June 18, this year, at the request of the Government of Venezuela, the provisions of the Geneva Agreement have been resumed. This Government in conformity with its adherence to the norms of international law has always expressed its willingness, indeed its determination to abide by the provisions of the Geneva Agreement. This is a consistent position of the Government of Guyana, as exemplified by our scrupulous respect for every single treaty and legal instrument which regulates and relates to the boundary between ourselves and Venezuela. Our consistent attitude applies to the 1897 Treaty of Washington; our consistent attitude applies to the 1899 Arbitral Award; our consistent attitude applies to the 1905 Boundary Agreement and it applied to the Protocol of Port-of-Spain while it was still operative.

Incidentally, it is useful to recall at this stage that successive Governments in Venezuela during the period of the life of the Protocol at times questioned its validity. Yet, the present Government saw it necessary to formally communicate a desire that it be terminated.

This Assembly should take note of the almost whimsical attitude demonstrated by Venezuela whereby she seems to arrogate to herself the right to determine which treaty is valid, which is operative, and which is non-existent. All the treaties in this connection which Guyana has signed or to which she has acceded are legally binding unless they are

rendered not so by the processes and norms of international law. It is Guyana's position that the only such treaty affected is the Protocol of Port-of-Spain.

Earlier I alluded to the many violations of the Geneva Agreement and the Protocol of Port-of-Spain by Venezuela. That behaviour, notwithstanding, and I repeat in this House what I said in my statement on June 18, "the Government of Guyana reiterates its consistent resolve to participate in good faith in the processes provided for in Article IV of the Geneva Agreement for seeking a solution to the controversy which has arisen as a result of Venezuela's contention that the Arbitral Award of 1899 is null and void."

As has been pointed out earlier, under Article 4 of the Geneva Agreement, our two Governments, the Governments of Guyana and Venezuela, have until September 18, 1982, to endeavour to reach agreement on one of the methods of specific settlement of issues, controversies and disputes, provided for under Article 33 of the Charter.

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(Cde. Jackson continues)

The Cde. Prime Minister did enumerate these methods. This is a matter which requires most careful consideration. We in Guyana are convinced of the justice of our case in law and morality. We should therefore have to examine very closely, which means would respond most suitably to bring about a resolution of the controversy and to do so on a basis which is consistent with the precepts of law, morality and justice.

As this Assembly has already been informed, the Foreign Minister of Venezuela in his address to the Congress of his country, on June 17, did signal his Government's intention to propose the first of the aforementioned means as the procedure for settlement, that is negotiation. Since then I have been formally notified on July 1, of this proposal. Naturally, the Government of Guyana will give the most careful attention and consideration to this Venezuelan proposal. We will do so in a manner consistent with our interest and with the justice of our case. The Venezuelan proposal does not, I do hope it does not, intend to exclude the examination of the other means of peaceful settlement provided for under Article 33 of the Charter. But let me say this, in the search for a solution to the present controversy, which is not of Guyana's making, all avenues which can reasonably lead to a solution, provided they are in keeping with the legal requirements of Geneva Agreement, should not remain unexplored.

Cde. Speaker, it cannot be over-emphasised that the period which we mentioned in our relations with Venezuela calls for calm, resoluteness and determination. The Government of Guyana has always held itself ready and prepared to enter into discussions with the Government of Venezuela. We made positive efforts to engage in dialogue last year and this year. Indeed, the last proposal that the Cde. Leader made to the President of Venezuela on April 3, 1981, was that mechanisms should be set up whereby the respective Ministers – Foreign Ministers, Ministers of Energy and Ministers of Law, Attorneys General – should meet to discuss how we can so order our relations, to preserve a climate of peace and to encourage an atmosphere that will be conducive to successful discussions and we have pursued this line from time to time, I have myself held discussions with the Venezuelan Ambassador. The last occasion was on February 4 of this year, when we sought to engage them in dialogue. On each occasion, however we were received with a quasi stony silence. This effort on our part, Cde. Speaker, stands as a testimony of our desire to proceed in good faith to apply the provisions of the Geneva Agreement. I hope that on this occasion, when the dialogue shall hopefully be joined,

there will be a matching response from Venezuela and our two countries can embark on a new era of dialogue pursued with seriousness and purpose.

However, we need to look a little closely at the manifestations and indications of thinking within the Venezuelan society on the question of relations with Guyana, more particularly, on the Venezuelan claim to Western Essequibo and the manner of pursuit of that claim.

Cde. Speaker, Guyana is not the only country to have taken careful note of the way in which the Venezuelans gave support to the Argentine invasion of the Falkland Islands on April 2. If I might digress, I think the Leader of the Opposition was suffering from a lapse of memory in which he sought to quote the position of the Government of Guyana, but did not get it right. I will send him the correct statement. I would not want to correct it here, I merely wish to recall that he did not represent it correctly. I think that he probably had a lapse of memory on the Guyana position in relation to the Falkland Islands. Our position was that we were opposed to the use of force for the achievement of political objectives. As I said, Cde. Speaker, Guyana is not the only country to have taken careful note of the way in which Venezuela gave support to the Argentine invasion of the Falkland Islands on April 2. The difficult attempt by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Venezuela to seek to give legitimacy to the use of force by Argentina – a position which I think the Leader of the Minority Party came dangerously close to has been carefully noted. Whatever may be our position on the substance of the issue, we are glad that many states stood up for the principle, that is, that the unlawful use of force cannot and should not be condoned.

Let us recall, however, that there were several voices within Venezuela itself calling stridently for a Venezuelan emulation of the Argentine action. This is not fiction. This is real. Let us recall as well the numerous air and land violations, the last of which took place on May 10 of this year when a fully armed unit of the Venezuelan army crossed over into Eteringbang. Let us recall as well the boast of the Ministry of Youth of Venezuela last year of having violated our territorial integrity. And let us take note of arguments which have been surfacing again within Venezuela, particularly emanating from the military circles, that the Essequibo is strategically important to Venezuela. These are not my words, these are the words of the Venezuelan Military. Cde. Speaker, I do not want to bore the Assembly with more facts and figures, but I think it is necessary to correct an impression which I think the leader of the Minority Party may have unwittingly given; and it is that it is most unlikely that Venezuela will commit aggression against Guyana. I do hope he is right. I hope that he is right that Venezuela does not commit further aggression. But we cannot live on expressions of hope. We must look at,

he would agree, the objective conditions. We must see what are the forces operating within the Venezuela society. Earlier talked about the Venezuelan bourgeoisie wanting expansion in Trinidad in 1970, and we must ask whether we are willing to consider a similar desire on the part of the bourgeoisie in terms of the expansion of Capitalism in the Essequibo in 1982. I am not dealing here with wishful thinking, and I would urge that all the Members of this National Assembly pay due attention to those indications within the Venezuelan society and within the international community as a whole which can serve to encourage international lawlessness. In a certain sense I think we can legitimately take a pat on the back because I believe I am convinced – that it is because of the thrust of our diplomatic and political efforts that constraints and inhibitions have been put upon Venezuelan. The military opinion may have shifted from the front burner to somewhere on its ways to the back burner. But let us not be fooled. It is still on the stove.

Cde. Speaker, I think it would not be amiss if we were to look closely a lot at Venezuela's international behaviour in so far as it impinges, or it can affect the relations between that country and ourselves. I do not intend to traverse the gamut of Venezuela's action, I merely wish to draw the attention of this Parliament to some which should cause us to pause and to analyse deeply. For many years, Cde. Speaker, the movement of non-aligned countries, as part of its armoury to combat imperialism, to have accepted by the international community a declaration which would prescribe interference and intervention in the internal affairs of states.

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(Cde. R. Jackson continues)

Guyana was in the vanguard of the movement working for the adoption of such a declaration. After years of patient and consistent effort such a declaration was adopted last year by the General Assembly of the United Nations, by an overwhelming majority. Alas, Cde. Speaker, Venezuela was the only developing country, the only third-world country which voted against that resolution. There were no other third-world states which opposed the declaration. On this issue, Venezuela stands shoulder to shoulder with states of the developed capitalist world which voted against the declaration. Cde. Speaker, I should add that in the explanation of this vote it was clear that the reason why Venezuela voted against this declaration was because of her claim to the western Essequibo. Thus, Venezuela does not want any legal inhibition against interference, and intervention in the affairs of Guyana. So she voted against the resolution. Similarly, Cde. Speaker, one needs to ask the question, why did Venezuela vote against the resolution at the recently concluded session of the United Nations Conference on the law of the sea? Is it by chance? Is it related to the talk which is coming out of Venezuela that the Essequibo is of strategic importance to Venezuela? Does she want to have a division in the sea which is not in accordance with international law? Is she willing to talk about it or is she preparing to take it?

Cde. Speaker, I suppose legitimately we can ask where do we go from here? To answer that question fully, we need to take account of our geo-political circumstances. Today, there are turbulences and tension in Central America and the Caribbean and beyond; there are threats to peace generally, through the collapse of détente and the encouragement which the present climate gives to certain regional so-called “strong men”, like Israel and South Africa to pursue policies through the use of force in their region. We have to ask: “Who is the strong man in this region?” Cde. Speaker, as we continue the struggle for global peace, working hand in hand with like-minded states, the countries of the Movement of Non-Alignment, neutral and progressive countries and forces, we must pay attention to the threat to our territorial integrity and the threat which exists to our way of life.

May I in conclusion Cde. Speaker, be permitted to make three or four observations. I think that in these circumstances, we must remain calm but firm. We must not allow ourselves to be bullied or to be brow-beaten. Secondly, we must be prepared, for preparedness is the principal basis of success. We must be prepared to talk,

but equally we must be prepared to defend. We must remain committed to the search for a settlement of the controversy; but I would suggest that any such search must respect our dignity as a sovereign and independent people and must be fully consistent with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the norms of international law. Cde. Speaker, we have a good case, let us defend it and protect it.

Question put.

Cde. Ramsaroop: Division.

Assembly divided: Ayes 52, Noes Nil, as follows:

<u>Ayes</u>	<u>Noes</u>
Mr. M. A. Abraham	Nil
Cde. Collymore	
Cde. N. Persaud	
Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud	
Cde. Hinds	
Cde. D. Abraham	
Cde. I. Chowritmootoo	
Cde. London	
Cde. Bipat	
Cde. C. A. Singh	
Cde. Jairam	
Cde. Jones	
Cde. Latchminarayan	
Cde. Bishop	
Cde. Williams	
Cde. Walcott-Nascimento	
Cde. Vandenburg	
Cde. Tiwari	
Cde. Sukhu	
Cde. H. L.B. Singh	
Cde. Sharma	
Cde. Rayman	
Cde. Primo	
Cde. Prashad	
Cde. Munroe	

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Cde. McRae
Cde. Gill-Mingo
Cde. Gilbert
Cde. P. Fredericks
Cde. Fowler
Cde. Felix
Cde. Doobay
Cde. Davidson
Cde. Chin
Cde. Caldeira
Cde. Beniprashad
Cde. Armogan
Cde. Ally
Cde. Ainsworth
Cde. Bend-Kirton-Holder
Cde. Corrica
Cde. Sallahuddin
Cde. Maitland-Singh
Cde. Johnson
Cde. Corbin
Cde. Chandisingh
Cde. Ramsaroop
Cde. Green
Cde. Hoyte
Cde. Naraine
Cde. Reid

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NIL

Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF INCREASES IN TONNAGE DUES, LIGHT DUES
AND SHIPPING DUES

“Be it resolved that this National Assembly, in accordance with section 24(2) of the Transport and Harbours Act, Chapter 49:04 approve of the increases in tonnage dues, light dues and shipping fees as set out hereunder in substitution for the dues and fees in the Third Schedule to the Act –

I	Tonnage Dues All vessels	-	\$1.20 per ton
II	Light Dues All vessels	-	20c per ton
III	Shipping Fees		
	(i) Upon the engagement of any seaman	..	\$5.00
	(ii) Upon the discharge of any seaman	..	\$5.00 [Vice President, Works, Transport and Housing]

Cde. S. Narine: Cde. Speaker, I beg to move the motion standing in my name with respect to the increased tonnage dues, light dues and shipping fees. These dues, Cde. Speaker, normally described as harbour dues must be differentiated from piloted fees. The tonnage dues are collected from vessels and charges are based on the nett registered tonnage. The light dues are collected to defray the cost of providing aid to navigation and again the charges are made on the nett registered tonnage. Shipping fees are fees levied on ships for the services of the shipping master for signing sea men on and off the vessels. The reason for this increase, Cde. Speaker, is these ships receive their freight in most cases based on U.S. currency and that has changed in the relative valuation of the Guyana dollar accounting for an increase of

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(Cde. S. Naraine continues)

the 10 percent increase is due mainly to additional costs on the maintenance of the services.

Cde. Speaker, this is the rationale behind the increases suggested in this Motion and I recommend it to the Assembly for its approval.

Motion proposed, put and agreed to.

Motion carried.

AFFIRMATION OF THE MOTOR VEHICLES AND ROAD TRAFFIC

(AMENDMENT OF FEES) REGULATIONS 1982

“Be it resolved that this National Assembly, in terms of section 98(3) of the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Act, Chapter 51:02, affirm the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic (Amendment of Fees) Regulations 1982 (No. 6), which were made on 25th March, 1982, and published in the Gazette on 3rd April, 1982. [The Vice President, Works, Transport and Housing.]

Cde. Naraine: Cde. Speaker, I beg to move the Motion standing in my name with respect to the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic (Amendment of Fees) Regulations 1982 (No. 6). In the past, hire car drivers’ licences were issued free of cost. This Motion seeks to place a charge on these licences at the same level of private car drivers’ licences. There is a cost attached to the issue of all these licences because you have to use the same office space, the stationery, the time of the officials. Maybe it was a matter that should have been regularised a long time ago.

We now seek to have uniformity in the payment of drivers’ licences and this charge of \$20 is what is now paid by private car drivers. Again, I recommend this Motion for the approval of the Assembly.

Motion proposed.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Cde. Speaker, I think we need to look at this Motion a little bit more objectively. One gets the impression, after hearing the Minister, that there are hire car men who are getting licences without paying. The position is, in the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Ordinance, from the time this concept of issuing of hire car licences came into force the rationale was not on the question of revenue collecting but it was to ensure that those who are going to be permitted to drive hire cars are men of character because they are going to be exposed to the public, people are going to travel with them and certain investigations have to be carried out before the licences are granted. It is not a question of payment of fees, but to ensure that only people with good character and so on are permitted to drive hire cars. Based on this consideration, though a person may have been in possession of a driver's licence for a good period, say one or two years, the prescribed authority in this case under the law reserves the right to grant or to refuse the granting of a hire car licence. I think what the Vice President should have said is that the hire car man will be paying a revenue for his driver's licence, in that he must first be in possession of a licence of confidence to drive a car and then he must be driving for a good period. He must be of good character and several other considerations and based on that investigation then and only then the licence is granted. Then the whole question of payment comes at the end. A man is permitted to drive a truck or a van in the course of his employment without having to pay an extra charge.

The Speaker: The Vice President probably omitted that, he did not see it.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: It cannot be. Now that you have raised it –

The Speaker: I have not raised it.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: It is not a question of payment. The man who drives the motor truck or van or the man who has a licence to drive a vehicle of any class, the law is so framed that he drives once he is in possession of a licence to drive the vehicle which is specified on the certificate. So that does not arise. I am sure he was advised by his technical advisers.

The point is that by law he must first obtain a hire car driver's licence before he can drive. Hence the Government exercising the right under that Section to fix a fee whereas the fee was not chargeable before. Many people earn their livelihood by driving hire cars.

Let me give you a suggestion which your technical advisers did not see. If a man is permitted by the prescribed authority to drive a hire car, to save that cost input all you

will have to do, like in the case of a motor car, motor van, is to write in at the same time when he gets that permission ...

Let us presume that the prescribed authority exercises his right under the provisions of the Act, which right he has, all that has to be done is that on the very driver's licence the disqualification or discontinuation of the permit to drive a hire car is removed and there is no extra input and one sees that. I want to make this point, that the rationale or the consideration which led to the creation of provisions within the statute of the granting of a driver's licence was never a question of money but it was a question of ensuring that only those whom the prescribed authority is satisfied should be given this right or permission that they should be given the right to drive a hire car.

My final point is that the Government is looking for revenue all around and it does appear that there is a team working and searching every conceivable corner to see whether the population could be squeezed more. I cannot sit here as a Member of Parliament without strongly placing that on record this afternoon. Because of that I am opposed to further revenue on the hire car men. You can see that hire car men are small men.

The Speaker: You are not living in Guyana.

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(Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud continues)

Generally, many owners are not drivers and many garages employ people and those are the people who are going to be called upon to pay the extra charge which I feel is a duplicity ... so far as the hire car men are concerned.

The Speaker: Cde. Naraine.

Cde. Naraine: Cde. Speaker, I would like to say this is not a question of increased revenue, it is actual cost, additional costs that are involved in the process of issuing the hire car licence and the purpose of it is to recover legitimate cost.

Question put and agreed.

Motion carried.

CONFIRMATION OF THE CONSUMPTION TAX (AMENDMENT)

ORDER 1982 (No. 31)

Be it resolved that this National Assembly, in accordance with section 5 of the Consumption Tax Act, Chapter 80:02, confirm the Consumption Tax (Amendment) Order 1982 (No. 31), which was made on 30th April, 1982, and published in the Gazette on 8th May, 1982. [The Minister, Finance, in the Ministry of Economic Planning and Finance, on behalf of the Vice President, Economic Planning and Finance.]

The Speaker: Cde. Sallahuddin.

The Minister, Finance, in the Ministry of Economic Planning and Finance (Cde. Sallahuddin): Cde. Speaker, I beg to move the motion standing in the name of the Vice President, Economic Planning and Finance.

Essentially, what the order states is that the consumption tax on gas oils is increased say from 10.53c per litre to 16.91c per litre and there are corresponding figures if we were to use gallons.

Essentially Cde. Speaker, it should be noted that every increase in the rate of consumption tax does not necessarily mean an increase in the price which the consumer pays, because an adjustment in the consumption tax is one mechanism used by the Government to regulate and stabilise the price of fuel. Thank you Cde. Speaker.

Motion carried.

Cde. N. Persaud: Cde. Speaker, the order before the Assembly this afternoon, as the Cde. Minister pointed out, seeks to increase the consumption tax on gas oil from 10.53c to 16.91c. Investigations of the Customs Department reveal however, that at the moment what is being charged is 14.5c. That figure was given only today. Now an order here that is 76 of 1981 dated 16th October, 1981 increased the consumption tax on gas oil to 10.53c. According to the Cde. Minister, that obtains until now and now the increase is moving from 10.53c to 16.91c. Departmental instructions were given and as from the 21st May this year an increase has already taken effect and that increase is as I said from 10.53c to 14.5c. Now, it is going to be removed to 16.91c.

Cde. Speaker, the question here this afternoon is not as the Minister said – is not necessary that because the consumption tax is going to be increased that the consumer would be called upon to pay the increase. We know however, trans-nationals do not work like that. Unfortunately, the Guyana Government does not on its own import these oils and the Companies still continue to import the oil. Here the Companies are being called upon to pay extra consumption tax, and one of the Company's Officials when I talked with him this morning said most likely they are not going to carry the extra consumption tax and they will call on the Government to have the price increased. That will depend on the Government, whether they want to keep the price controlled at what it is or ... special from the Companies and increase the price.

My point here this afternoon is that is a matter for the Government, but one thing has to be done before the other one comes. Surely, this will hamper production in this country should the price increase. Cde. Speaker, diesel oil for example is used primarily by the farmers and this call for production and productivity will have to be taken into consideration in any attempt to increase the price to the consumer. I must note however, that in the budget speech of this year on page seventy, Cde. Hoyte stated that the Government does not intend to impose or increase taxation to finance the 1982 programme, yet for all, we are seeing month after month, day after day taxation is being increased. Whether the taxation was passed down to the consumer or whether the Government corrects extra taxation, taxation is being imposed to finance the 1982 budget. I would think that, of course as my colleague who spoke on another matter

before me said – the Government is broke and every effort is now being made and sought for to increase the revenue in the country.

I would want to ask – the Minister did not say definitely no this does not mean an increase on the consumer, he said it does not necessarily mean so. I want to ask the Minister to ensure, because of all the burdens the people are already experiencing in the country, to add more on them would obviously hamper production – as I said to ensure that the increase does not go out.

The Speaker: Cde. Sallahuddin, do you wish to reply?

Cde. Sallahuddin: No, Cde. Speaker.

Question put and agreed to.

Motion carried.

The Speaker: Comrades, it is half past six, I propose with your concurrence to complete the agenda. Is that agreed?

[Comrades and Honourable Member indicated in the affirmative]

AFFIRMATION OF THE COASTING AND PASSENGER TRADE (AMENDMENT)
REGULATIONS 1982 (No. 10)

Be it resolved that this National Assembly, in accordance with section 25 of the Shipping Casualties (Investigation and Prevention) Act, Chapter 49:07, affirm the Coasting and Passenger Trade (Amendment) Regulations 1982 (No. 10), which were made on 22nd April, 1982, and published in the Gazette on 24th April, 1982. [The Minister, Finance, in the Ministry of Economic Planning and Finance, on behalf of the Vice President, Economic Planning and Finance]

The Speaker: Cde. Sallahuddin.

Cde. Sallahuddin: Cde. Speaker, I beg to move the motion listed the sixth on the order paper in the name of the Vice President, Economic Planning and Finance.

Essentially, what this motion seeks to do is to bring in line the cost of collection and administration of certain fees – in that the State does not loose administratively, and these fees have to do with the marine craft essentially. They are listed in the fourth schedule of the principal regulations and the increases are stipulated in detail for all to follow.

Question proposed, put and agreed to.

Motion carried.

BILL – Second and Third Readings

FORESTS (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL 1982

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to amend the Guyana Forestry Commission Act, the Forests Act and to provide for matters connected therewith”.

[The Vice President, Agriculture]

The Speaker: Cde. Green.

The Vice President, Agriculture (Cde. Green): Cde. Speaker, I beg to move that the Forests (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 1982, No. 4 be now read a second time.

Cde. Speaker, this I hope a non-controversial and straight forward matter. The bill seeks to do two things essentially. One is merely a cosmetic operation to change the titles of the person heading the sector, in other words the Conservator to the Commissioner, merely to bring it in line with the nomenclature and the establishment of the Forestry Commission.

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(Cde.Green continues)

Secondly, it is intended to make some alterations to existing regulations to grant the Forestry Commission more flexibility and at the same time to tighten up the arrangements insofar as the granting of permission to people involved in forestry is concerned. We propose to establish, in the place of the traditional lease, a Timber Sales Agreement. In the past the leases were issued without sound scientific background, without the kind of examination which would permit us to ensure that the leases issued were not used and prostituted by those persons who got those leases.

Briefly, taking into account the constant changes and the improvements in the forest industry, there is need at this point in time, not only for greater flexibility but for tightening up by Government on the granting of these leases. The Timbers Sales Agreement fulfils this need both for the benefit and the operators themselves for we intend, before the agreements are signed to ensure that they can give us a programme so that we know they both have the capacity and a commitment to use and to make maximum use of our forest resources.

I commend this Bill to this House and I anticipate that there will be no obstruction.

Question proposed.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: I wish, Cde. Speaker, to start off by saying that I shall not at all obstruct, but I shall enquire because this Bill is an offspring of an original Act which we passed some time ago. The whole question of the timber industry is tied up with a number of things – involvement of the people themselves who are operating the industry; the question of pricing and export of timber.

I think the Minister will be disposed to tell us what progress has been made since the creation of the Act to ensure that what he said can become a reality, that full and maximum use is made of the industry, because it is one of the areas from which we can earn foreign exchange.

My response to the House this afternoon is that it does appear to me that the timber industry, from some bit of examination and enquiry, is in chaos. I understand why we have not been doing well insofar as markets are concerned. There are a lot of areas of

disagreement involving those who are in charge of the Board, those who are appointed salesmen, bargaining agents, and that kind of thing. I know that the Minister is new in his Ministry but it does appear that he spoke this afternoon with some degree of confidence. I hope that he will address his mind to other implications of the industry to ensure that we get maximum benefit out of it. I am told that people who are experienced are not involved in the operations of the Board, the sales of our timbers, and hence during 1982 we have not secured any market and sales have been at a minimum, if at all.

It is in these areas I wish to enquire with a view to having a positive response from the Minister. He can probably tell us what is the position with respect to the composition of the Board bearing in mind that the Principal Act succeeded another one that was in force and bearing in mind that the Government has been losing in Demerara Woods. I don't want to go into all of that. I know that when we reach this kind of hour it is not a very pleasant time to speak.

The Speaker: Cde. Green, he has only been making some enquiries which you may respond to if you like. He has not addressed any of his contribution to the Bill.

Cde. Green (replying): Cde. Speaker, you are right but in deference to my good friend and the mood of the afternoon, I just want to assure him that we have met all the millers and the persons concerned. The Forestry Commission itself has been recently reconstituted and I have every confidence that the industry will move forward, but I think he should note that there is a recession and there has been a serious cut-back in the whole building and housing industry in the major capitals of West and East. We propose to make optimum use of our human and natural resources in this particular area.

Question put and agreed to.

Assembly in Committee.

Bill considered and approved.

Bill read the Third time and passed as printed.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, "That this Assembly do now adjourn to a date to be fixed".

[Vice President, Works, Transport and Housing]

Adjourned accordingly at 18:40 hrs.