

**THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
OFFICIAL REPORT**

[VOLUME 7]

**PROCEEDING AND DEBATES OF THE FIRST SESSION OF THE NATIONAL
ASSEMBLY OF THE THIRD PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE
CONSTITUTION OF GUYANA**

149th Sitting

2 p.m.

Tuesday, 14th March, 1978

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Speaker

Cde. Sase Narain, O.R., J.P., Speaker

Members of the Government – People’s National Congress (49)

Prime Minister (1)

Cde. L. F. S. Burnham, O.E., S.C.,
Prime Minister

(Absent – on leave)

Deputy Prime Minister (1)

Cde. P. A. Reid,
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of
National Development

Senior Ministers (8)

Cde. H. D. Hoyte, S.C.,
Minister of Economic Development and Co-operatives

* Cde. H. Green,
Minister of Health, Housing and Labour

* Cde. H. O. Jack,
Minister of Energy and Natural Resources

*** Non-elected Ministers**

- * Cde. F. E. Hope,
Minister of Finance
- * Cde. S. S. Naraine, A.A.,
Minister of Works and Transport
- * Cde. G. A. King,
Minister of Trade and Consumer Protection
- * Cde. G. B. Kennard, C.C.H.,
Minister of Agriculture
- * Cde. M. Shahabuddeen, C.C.H., S.C.,
Attorney General and
Minister of Justice **(Absent – on leave)**

Ministers (5)

- Cde. S. M. Field-Ridley,
Minister of Information
- Cde. B. Ramsaroop,
Minister of Parliamentary Affairs
and Leader of the House
- * Cde. C. V. Mingo,
Minister of Home Affairs
- * Cde. V. R. Teekah,
Minister of Education, Social
Development and Culture
- * Cde. R. E. Jackson,
Minister of Foreign Affairs **(Absent – on leave)**

Ministers of State (9)

- Cde. O. E. Clarke,
Minister of State – Regional
(East Berbice/Corentyne)
- Cde. P. Duncan, J.P.,
Minister of State, Ministry of
Economic Development and Co-operatives
- Cde. C. A. Nascimento,
Minister of State,
Office of the Prime Minister
- * **Non-elected Ministers**

- Cde. K. B. Bancroft, J.P.,
Minister of State – Regional
(Mazaruni/Potaro)
- Cde. J. P. Chowritmootoo, J.P.,
Minister of State – Regional
(Essequibo Coast/West Demerara)
- Cde. J. R. Thomas,
Minister of State, Ministry of
Health, Housing and Labour
- Cde. R. H. O. Corbin,
Minister of State, Ministry of
National Development
- Cde. A. Salim,
Minister of State – Regional
(East Demerara/West Coast Berbice)
- Cde. F. U. A. Carmichael,
Minister of State – Regional (North West)

Parliamentary Secretaries (4)

- Cde. M. M. Ackman, C.C.H.,
Parliamentary Secretary,
Office of the Prime Minister,
and Government Chief Whip
- Cde. E. L. Ambrose,
Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of Agriculture
- Cde. S. Prashad,
Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of Economic Development
and Co-operatives
- Cde. M. Corrica,
Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of Education, Social
Development and Culture

Other Members (21)

- Cde. E. M. Bynoe
Cde. W. G. Carrington
Cde. L. A. Durant

Cde. E. H. A. Fowler
Cde. J. Gill
Cde. W. Hussain
Cde. S. Jaiserrisingh
Cde. K. M. E. Jonas
Cde. M. Kasim, A.A.
Cde. M. Nissar
Cde. L. E. Ramsahoye
Cde. J. G. Ramson
Cde. P. A. Rayman
Cde. E. M. Stoby, J.P.
Cde. S. H. Sukhu, M.S.
Cde. C. Sukul, M.S.
Cde. H. A. Taylor
Cde. R. C. Van Sluytman, J.P.
Cde. L. E. Willems
Cde. C. E. Wrights, J.P.
Cde. M. Zaheeruddeen

Members of the Opposition (16)

(i) People's Progressive Party (14)

Leader of the Opposition (1)

Cde. C. Jagan
Leader of the Opposition

Deputy Speaker (1)

Cde. Ram Karran
Deputy Speaker

Other Members (12)

Cde. J. Jagan
Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud, J.P., Opposition Chief Whip
Cde. Narbada Persaud
Cde. C. Collymore
Cde. S. F. Mohamed
Cde. L. Lalbahadur
Cde. I. Basir
Cde. C. C. Belgrave
Cde. R. Ally
Cde. Dalchand, J.P.

(Absent – on leave)

Cde. Dindayal
Cde. H. Nokta

(ii) Liberator Party (1)

Mr. M. F. Singh, J.P.

OFFICERS

Clerk of the National Assembly – F. A. Narain, A.A.

Acting Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly – A. Knight

14.3.78
2.05 p.m.

National Assembly

2.05– 2.10 p.m.

PRAYERS

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Leave To Members

The Speaker: Leave has been granted to the Cde. Prime Minister, to Cde Shahabuddeen and Cde. Feroze Mohamed for today's sitting.

Sympathy on the Death of Mrs. Elinor DaSilva

I wish also to announce that I have received a cable from the Guyana Consulate in New York expressing deep regret at the death of Mrs. Elinor DaSilva.

Donation of Blood

I also wish to remind the two Whips that the blood bank is here and later on in the afternoon I will announce who has given blood. Not who has not given, but those who have given.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following Paper was laid:

Statements of Guarantees given by the Minister of Finance under Section 3 of the Guarantee of Loans (Public Corporations and Companies) Act, Chapter 77:01, for the quarters ended 30th September, 1977 and 31st December, 1977. **The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House, on behalf of the Minister of Finance.**

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS**Letter in the “Mirror” Newspaper of 10th March, 1978**

The Speaker: Cde King

The Minister of Trade and Consumer Protection (Cde. King): Cde. Speaker, I would like to refer to a letter which was published in one of our daily newspapers entitled the **Mirror** dated Friday, 10th March 1978. I would like to say, Cde. Speaker, that this is a newspaper for which I have a very high regard and one which, I believe, carries some influence in the society. But I also recognise that in the field of journalism if a letter is written on a given subject then a responsible editor should either make some comments or try to identify the truth because in the final analysis it is truth that shall prevail.

Cde. Speaker, this article in the issue to which I have already referred is entitled “**Where are the Hindu and Muslim Priests.**” It is signed by one Gopie Chan who describes himself as a patriot. The letter seeks to suggest that the Government through the Ministry of Trade is discriminating in terms of the religious sects in this country, that we are, in fact, giving or providing those ingredients or paraphernalia necessary for the promotion of the Christian religion and, in fact, we are stifling or withholding approval to those priests and Muslim and Hindu leaders who seek to lead their people along the correct and proper path.

Cde. Speaker, I wish to restate what has so often been stated by the Government of this country that we are a secular State, that we have no State church, that we support no particular religion but that all of our citizens are free to carry out the worship and to pursue the religion of their choice. Cde. Speaker, this is the particular paragraph to which I want to refer:

“The P.N.C. is even taking measures to ban items which the Hindus use for religious functions such as camphor, agarbatti, sartari and other items. Up to now among other voices of protest only the Christian organisations have come out in defence of the oppressed in this country.

2.10 p.m.

I wish to say, Cde. Speaker, that on reading this article, I was at great care to investigate some of the facts. What are the facts? Let us start with camphor. At the moment, there is in this country a stock of 4,100 pounds of camphor, and my information is that it is a very small amount of camphor which is used in the ceremonies of the Hindus and the Muslims. I believe that that information is reasonable. But what is more, is that apart from this, we had previous shipments in 1977 of 80 cases of 100 pounds each and since 1978, we have received a further 50 cases. We have granted to the Hindu and Muslim leaders an amount of \$42,478.64 for their religious books. We have granted import licences in 1977 in a sum of \$30,711.81 for what is known as agarbatti – and I hope I pronounced it correctly. We have also granted some \$5,000 for religious pictures and photographs. We have granted over \$12,000 for their musical instruments; we have also granted some \$2,600 for an item called lackie and we have granted licences in excess of \$4,000 for idols.

Over and above that, we have been flexible, and having regard to the mode of worship which, I believe, involves a certain measure of prostration, we have allowed mosques to bring in carpets in order that they may worship in comfort. I believe that when we compare the licences granted by my Ministry for these two particular religions in the pursuit of their worship and religion – with which we have no problem; in fact, which we admire – it is certainly much higher than the little bit of wine which I believe the Christian Church from time to time, because of some peculiarity, seeks to import. I merely wish to suggest to the Editor and the publishers of this very good newspaper that in future, when such irresponsible subjects or when such

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2.10 – 2.20 p.m.

irresponsible statements are sent in the form of a letter, that they co-operate with the Government, that we reason together and get the truth, the truth which as any religious leader will say, will always prevail.

Cde. Speaker, I thank you for the indulgence which you have granted me to speak on this subject and I hope that the leaders of these two religions would be assured. In fact, I would like to say that some four months ago when I addressed an audience at Albion Estate, I made a public statement that any priest or any leader who had any problem in obtaining supplies necessary for the promotion and functioning of his religion, should speak to me. No one has so far spoken to me and I can only assume that they are certainly getting all they need. **[Applause]**

PUBLIC BUSINESS

RESUMPTION OF APPROVAL OF ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 1978

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply to resume consideration of the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year, 1978, totalling \$476,515,775.

The Chairman: Pages 205 and 206.

HEAD 79, MINISTRY OF TRADE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

Question proposed that the sum of \$543,547 for Head 79, Ministry of Trade and Consumer Protection, stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Cde. Narbada Persaud.

Cde. N. Persaud: Cde. Speaker, there are a few small questions I would like to direct to the Minister of Trade and in order to get some clarification of some of the matters. Page 205, item (7), Export Promotion Officer. I wish the Minister would be kind enough to inform us of the functions of this officer as he is called Export Promotion Officer. I would like to know whether he goes abroad seeking markets etc., as the sum here does not really indicate that.

Moving off from that, I wish to speak on the whole licence section, items (8), (9), and (11). In view of the tight financial position of the country, the issue of licences has been further restricted. I wish that the Minister would be kind enough again this afternoon to inform the House what is the present position as regards the issuing of licences, whether there has been a complete hold-up of all licences, or whether licences are given or approved only to Government agencies, or whether licences are approved to other firms relating to essential commodities or what can be regarded as essential for manufacture and so on and so forth.

I wish to go further to item (13), Price Control Inspector. I have noted that for last year the sum of \$31,392 was approved but the revised estimate shows only \$7,291. This year, we are seeking to have passed a sum of \$43,082. I wonder if the Minister would be kind enough to let us know how many vacancies are there from the number in the establishment of twelve; further to that, if the Minister can inform us of the difference in the duties of the Police Price Control Squad as they relate to the Price Control Inspector. Can the Minister say whether anything is being done to amend the law in order to ensure a more equitable method of distribution?

Cde. Chairman, with your kind permission, I just want to say this. Items are scarce at the moment and 40 cartons of soap powder, for example, are given to a firm. Can that firm limit selling or, having received that amount whoever comes can be sold 12 boxes or 20 boxes at the controlled price and those persons can go to the street corners and hawk them for \$4? In the case of the particular item soap powder, the controlled price of the medium size is \$1.43, and I want

to know if that is the law, if anyone buys 40 boxes, whether they can be sold in half an hour or not?

The Chairman: Cde. Narbada, the Minister is not a lawyer. You should seek private advice on that.

Cde. N. Persaud: I am asking about a need for more equitable distribution so that the firm can limit its selling. Cde. Chairman, I wish further to speak on item (14) which caters for nine persons and among these I see one Accounts Clerk. I wonder whether the Minister can inform us whether one Accounts Clerk is enough for the Ministry of Trade. I ask this specific question arising from what I said here when I dealt with the Public Accounts Committee's Report for the year 1966.

2.20 p.m.

The accounts, as we know, not only for the Ministry of Trade but for other Ministries, are not up-to-date. It is a case of having inexperienced accounting staff. Here I see there is only one Accounts Clerk III which, to my mind, is a junior officer. I wonder whether that is adequate for the accounting system in the Ministry of Trade thus enabling proper accountability of the finances or public funds in the Ministry of Trade.

I see under the same item (14) that the estimates were revised last year to reach \$30,000. Now we are seeking \$52,000. It seems that there are vacancies. How many vacancies are there and how early does he intend to fill these vacancies? Item (14) calls for an establishment of 9 persons. Last year \$30,000 was spent and now we are asking for \$52,000.

Subhead 2, Transport and Travelling. I have noted here that the vote for transport and travelling has increased by \$6,424, in other words, by 44 percent. I wonder what has really

caused the increase. When we relate it to the other Ministries and departments, I find the jump is very big. At this time of austerity, will the Minister say whether this increase is really justified?

Subhead 5, Telephones. The sum of \$10,000 was approved in 1977 but we see that it had jumped to \$63,900. This year we are asking for only \$15,000. Again, I wonder if the Minister would be kind to explain to us what caused this high jump in 1977 to justify his reducing it to \$15,000 for 1978.

Subhead 11, Exhibitions and Fairs. The amount of \$500 was approved last year, the same amount was revised for last year and again we are asking for \$500 this year. Could the Minister state whether these exhibitions are locally held or is this amount intended also for exhibitions abroad? If it is for exhibitions abroad, then I would wish to find out from the Minister, since we are talking about the shortage of foreign currency, whether we ought not to have our produce locally made advertised and exhibited more frequently abroad in order to attract more markets so that we can earn the necessary foreign exchange to assist in taking us out of the hole we are in at the moment.

Subhead 12, National Insurance. I see the same sum being asked for this year was the revised sum last year, \$6,500. Again, when we compare it with the other Ministries and departments, we see that an additional sum is voted this year and the legend, as with the other departments, states: **“Increased contribution.”** I wonder if the Minister will not face the same problems in this Ministry or is it intended not to increase the numbers within his staff for this year.

Subhead 13, Subsidy – conveyance of Foodstuff to Hinterland. If we go back in the Estimates, starting from 1975, as far back as the records are available, it will be seen that the sum asked for this year is the lowest of all the years. One would have thought that with the increase

in the price of gasoline the cost would have gone up. May I ask the Minister whether he intends to reduce the quantity of foodstuff that is being sent to the interior or whether he intends, having lowered the subsidy to the extent it was last year, that the population in the interior would be called upon to pay extra. At this stage, may I ask the Minister to consider the question in keeping with the socialist principle, that the man living in the North West District or Mabaruma or the Rupununi – not because he is living there – should be called upon to pay more for the goods than the person living in Georgetown. There is no difference in the wages of the man working in Georgetown as compared with the man working in the Rupununi. Therefore, I would ask the Minister to reconsider this question and the whole question of the subsidy for conveying goods and foodstuff to the hinterland. Subsidise the whole amount for transportation thus selling the items to the people in the North West District and other outlying areas at the same price at which they are being sold here in Georgetown. We are talking about bursting up the hinterland and talking of people settling in the hinterland. This is one way we can encourage people, by asking them not to pay more, but at least the same as the people are paying Georgetown.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Item (9), Senior Trade Licensing Officer. I was very happy this afternoon to hear the Minister's statement with respect to his reaction to requests for those items that are used for religious purposes. I want to bring first and foremost to the attention of the Minister that the figures are not substantial in those areas in which licences have already been granted. Take, for instance, musical instruments, just for his information –

The Chairman: I am not going to allow a debate on the Minister's statement.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: I want to draw to the Minister's attention that there is a shortage of musical instruments in the country and because of this shortage, if there are a few instruments coming –

The Chairman: Cde. Persaud, the Minister was categorical in his statement that if there is any need for any of these things people should make representations to him. The fact that only so many came into the country necessarily follows that representations were not made to him for enough and I am not going to allow a debate on his statement. Please proceed with your other question.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Cde. Chairman, I want to say that I am not debating the statement, I am not referring to the statement. I want to draw to the attention of the House that there are certain things that are required in this country like musical instruments and idols. These are points I wanted to make. The Minister ought to know that people have been stealing because we do not have in the country –

The Chairman: Cde. Persaud, I will not allow you to go on. We discussed one point and I am prepared to allow you to raise that point.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Cde. Chairman, I wonder if the Minister is aware that there is a shortage of sindoor or they do not have at all in this country. My information is that the regular dealers who have been purchasing these items have applied and licences have not been granted to them. Cde. Chairman, since you want to restrict me to that one item, I undertake to submit to the Minister a list of items that are badly required, items that do not exist, and items that are very vital in the practice of religion. Lastly, agarbatti today is not used only by Hindus, everybody is using agarbatti and you will find out –

The Chairman: Cde. Minister, you may proceed to answer the other questions.

Cde. King: Cde. Chairman, I wish to refer to the questions raised by Cde. Narbada Persaud. First, on page 205, item (7), Export Promotion Officer. We have recognised for some time the need to have someone directly responsible for export promotion with emphasis on small

industries. The House, no doubt, would be aware that in such fields as sugar, bauxite, and timber we have specialised marketing boards and I refer to the timber export board for timber, GuySuCo has its own marketing and export promotion team, and so has GUYMINE. The export promotion officer has been appointed and for the time being is working between the Small Industries Corporation and the Ministry of Trade trying to meet with small manufacturers to identify some of their problems, to advise them on packaging and needs, particularly in those markets to which we have duty-free access and to encourage promotion of local crops generally. Indeed, that officer has only over the last few weeks returned from a training course sponsored by the E.E.C. for export promotion. He has participated in and monitored, along with the Guyana Manufacturers Association, exhibitions which were financed largely by the Commonwealth Secretariat in the United Kingdom, and, previous to that, in Trinidad.

2.30 p.m.

Cde. Speaker, we at the present time only have one full-time officer but we do have an export promotion committee which is served by loyal and dedicated Guyanese from the Guyana Manufacturers Association, from the Chamber of Commerce, from Guysuco, from Guymine, and indeed some from the People's Progressive Party. They are actively working along the lines to generate exports with particular emphasis on the Small Industries Corporation.

The next question concerned licences and, in fact, what is the present position. I need to reiterate the statement which I made during the debate that there is presently an examination towards changing the mechanisms used for imports and exports in order to reduce the number of importers, not necessarily providing a discontinuation of business to those who earn their livelihood but to be able to monitor these imports by a fewer number and also to take advantages of bulk purchasing which we believe could afford this country more competitive prices.

Cde. Chairman, having regard to our economic problems which we have mentioned and which we have already discussed, and having regard to the restructuring of our import structure and the methods to be employed, the Bank of Guyana expects to complete by the end of this week the import allocations or what is more generally referred to as an importers' budget, when it will be known, having been duly considered by those in authority, what the importers will be allowed to bring in. In the meanwhile, the Ministry and the Bank have had to take some interim measures and we have been issuing licences primarily for essential items. Those essential items embrace as their number one priority, food supplies that we must still bring in, pharmaceutical supplies, which rank almost on equal terms, spare parts, then raw materials for manufacturers, thereafter, there is really very little from which to choose. Essential items concern such items not only of food but soap powder, which the distinguished member referred to, and also things like tooth paste and toilet soap.

We have tried within the constraints of our limited resources to do the best we can. But we hope that very shortly we will be able to state how much will be imported and by whom. I want to state very categorically and very positively that we wish to give priority and to give greater consideration to those who are engaged in manufacturing, those who are bringing in raw materials so that the value added would not only provide employment but also would enhance the foreign reserves by exports.

Cde. Chairman, on the question of newsprint which seems to be a side question asked by my friend, this ranks, I assume as a semi-essential item. I believe that knowledge and communication are essential things and want to say that we have honoured the promise which we made to the other side and when the allocations are made, let us see what happens. I am not aware that there is any problem at the moment in the availability of this commodity.

The other item raised referred to the Price Control Inspector and the reasons for the increase. The whole question of hoarding and black-marketing continues to plague this society

like a cancer plagues the human body. The most recent case that I have had to deal with this week is one where the Guyana National Trading Corporation imported kite paper, which is still a means of family relaxation to some people, both parents and children get some enjoyment out of this exercise. We sold that kite paper to one Regent Street business at a price of 8 cents less a discount which brought the net price to about 6 cents. We didn't think that an enlightened society of businessmen in this country would stoop to black-market even those commodities from which little children have their little pleasure. We discovered this week that very kite paper being retailed at 22 and 23 cents per sheet.

As one who has studied behavioural science, I would expect that those vultures who deal in black-marketing and hoarding would pick on adults and would pick on those commodities which perhaps provide pleasures perhaps nocturnal, but not on children, and in this house I can only once again condemn this terrible act. And so the reason for increasing this Head is that we have found it necessary, regrettably, to increase the number of our price control strength. For 1977, we had 10 vacancies and those were advertised. We found that some of the applicants were unsuitable. We had to re-advertise and a decision has been taken recently to increase the strength by training certain and a wider range of police officers in the duties of price control. The answer to the distinguished member on the other side is that we are hoping very shortly to legislate and give powers to policemen generally to act in matters of price control and hoarding. It will not only be restricted to the limited Price Control Squad.

2.40 p.m.

Cde. Chairman, he raised a problem of the allocation and the way in which some things are distributed. We have done our best. I am not prepared to deny in this House that there are shortages from time to time. There are indeed for a number of reasons, not only a shortage of finance, a shortage of foreign revenues, but there are reasons quite outside of those as I hinted. I believe the Minister of Agriculture also stated. A commodity like eggs became short because of

the inability of the breeders to supply enough eggs from abroad. **[Interruption]** No, no; we have allocated; we have given licences; we have paid our bills for 480 cases per week but many weeks there are only 320, 380 cases arriving and this not only affects Guyana, but it affects Barbados, Trinidad and St. Lucia where they are trying to develop their broiler business.

Let us take the shortage of cement which we are experiencing. This is a case where the shipment which was expected from our friends in Cuba was delayed because of shipping problems. It is not a case that Cuba is inefficient. It is just a case where ships very often do not run on time and the boat from Haiti which we expect any moment now was also delayed. So, from time to time we do experience shortages where cause and scope are both external. But some of the severe difficulties that we are experiencing are due to the mis-use of the buying power. For example, we were forced to say that we will no longer sell to children or to minors because we found that parents of business people were sending a number of little children to buy one of this and one of that at retail prices and then black-market. The greatest area of difficulty has been with the pavement vendors. But let me say that those pavement vendors are only a front. They are in fact only being used by bigger brains and wider counsel and bigger investment. They are sent out there by a number of businessmen. We have knowledge of this and we hope to deal with it in the appropriate way. But we are taking action to try to avoid this. In 1978 alone, we have charged twenty-five of those pavement vendors; eleven of them have been convicted, ten fined, and one jailed. Fourteen cases are pending. We feel sorry that these small people are being the tools and the instruments of those who seek to contravene the law.

But I want to assure the distinguished member that we have appointed a Commodity Control Officer in the Ministry. Whenever items that are in short supply or whenever items that are scarce arrive, we do allocation on a geo-population basis and very often we find that it is working satisfactorily. For example, people in many of the country districts will tell you that they have no problem. I was in Lethem over the week-end. I went to Annai, Karasabai, and in all of these places, I was surprised to find the level of soap powder, toilet soap, laundry soap. All

these items were there because the people in the country areas and the people in the interior are buying only what they need but these city people, with money, they buy far more than they want and very often they are the bigger hoarders. I am sorry that the legislation does not really allow us to check some of the homes to find the five months' and the six months' stock in which they seek to insulate themselves against shortage. And I am not referring to my friend the hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran. He is not in that group. But this is really –

The Chairman: Apparently, Cde. Minister, you do not realise, he owns one of the biggest businesses in Georgetown.

Cde. King: Cde. Chairman, I was referring at the level of his home.

The Chairman: Naturally, if I have it in my business premises or my home, what does it matter?

Cde. King: Cde. Chairman, I stand corrected; I bow to your legal judgement. These are some of the problems and I will ask the Opposition to appreciate that we are doing all we can and we shall continue to do all we can to alleviate some of the hardships and some of the inconveniences that are imposed on those less fortunate citizens who cannot buy at the same level as the others.

The other question raised under item (14) Clerical Establishment, was whether or not the one Accounts Clerk was enough to cope with the responsibility in the Ministry. Well, Cde. Chairman, I am grateful for the kind thought which the member has expressed but I think it is generally known that in terms of budgetary allocations we are not a big Ministry in terms of staff and things like that, even though the Ministry is one of great and heavy responsibility. This Accounts Clerk is also assisted by two other clerks who give support to this. The other thing that I wanted to say is that with the reduction of subsidies in certain areas this year, the same degree

of accounting will not be necessary. I would like to say to this House that in the light of certain developments and perhaps the need to monitor the accounts of the Ministry quite outside of the budgetary element, we have asked the Accountant General and the Auditor General to have a look and to advise whether or not the staff is adequate and see if any improvements are needed both in strength and system.

The other question which was raised related to subhead (2) Transport and Travelling and the member questioned the increase. Cde. Chairman, here again, this is linked with the need to increase our vigilance and our surveillance on price control. With the increase in staff, we need another vehicle and that vehicle will also be consuming gasoline. The additional vehicle does not appear under the Capital Estimates because it is being done by a transfer from another department but the expense in running it both from the point of view of drivers, maintenance, repairs and gasoline causes the increase.

Cde. Chairman, the next one was with regard to the telephone. Looking at the amount paid in 1977 and comparing it with the reduced figure in 1978, Cde. Chairman, I recall stating in this House, when we were dealing with the supplementary estimates, that the increased amount in 1977 was largely due to the Ministry's involvement in foreign trade at which time the Minister of Trade had a responsibility for negotiations in Brussels and in the African, Caribbean and Pacific States and so on. As a result of that, a number of overseas telephone calls were necessary. That responsibility has now been shifted and I expect the genuine estimate is that we should be able to do with a reduced figure. In addition to that, in 1977 we did pay some arrears and we also had a movement of some telephone instruments which bills were all included in that bill. Cde. Chairman, I really cannot assure this House that we will not exceed the \$15,000. One never knows what level of monitoring might become necessary as the year goes by. Certainly, we anticipate that the amount provided for should suffice in the light of reduced responsibilities or, should I say, the varied responsibilities of the Ministry.

2.50 p.m.

The next question asked related to subhead 11, Exhibitions and Fairs. The amount we have put down there is, in fact, a token sum which we may find necessary to spend either locally or abroad. The Member is absolutely right, we have had to take into consideration our limited foreign reserves but we have also had to recognise that we cannot improve those foreign reserves unless we let countries know what we have, and unless we promote our sales. Part of the benefits that we receive out of the European Economic Community is an allocation to Guyana for export promotion which provides for the printing of leaflets, which provides for the printing of brochures, and which provides very often for market surveys to be carried out. Indeed, it provides space for in-store promotions and exhibitions. In addition to that, the G.D.R. has offered to this country to provide free space and accommodation at the Leipzig fair twice a year, and we are grateful to two airlines. In fact, the KLM and the British Airways have very graciously transported such exhibits free of cost. So we are drawing on the resources of our international friends in order to participate in exhibitions. But sometimes we do have to meet the passages or some interim expenses while an officer may be in transit.

I want to say something more, and that is, that in 1977 there evolved a new approach on the part of the Guyana Manufacturers' Association, a new attitude in which the Guyana Manufacturers' Association, recognising that we both have the responsibility to promote our products, have been participating and sharing in the cost of some of these exhibitions when they became necessary. I believe that we should not criticise when things go wrong but I think that this attitude and this gesture are worthy of praise and I commend the Manufacturers' Association for having taken that decision.

The other question related to subhead 12, National Insurance Contributions. I am advised by my officers, and I believe correctly, that this increase took place in 1977 and those payments were made, which not only included the increases but some arrears. The sum which is shown in

the 1978 Estimates will provide for the present level of staff and unless the Ministry increases its staff, we do not anticipate a higher sum.

I believe that the distinguished Member raised a question of great fundamental importance and that is in connection with the subsidy for hinterland transport or the conveyance of goods to the hinterland. Subhead 13: This Government from time to time stated very clearly that we believe in and we are dedicated to self-reliance and we are pursuing a course of self-reliance. We believe that self-reliance must be developed and encouraged at district level and at the geographical regional level. We believe that it has been an unfortunate situation that we have had to post into the hinterland things like legumes, things like Quaker Oats and a lot of things which we have been importing to this country such as onions. I was more than delighted on Saturday and Sunday as I went through those districts in the hinterland to find some of the excellent onions that are being grown there. I was delighted to find the amount of eddoes, yams, peanuts in abundance, black-eye in abundance, and I said to our friends, “Why do you have to have rice air-lifted to the hinterland?” I believe they recognised and realised immediately that the transport of flour, rice, legumes, onions, is now irrelevant in many parts of our interior and many of those people recognise the need to do and to pursue the course of self-reliance.

I do not wish to impinge upon what the Minister of Agriculture would say but I had on my team there a Senior and a Principal Agricultural Officer. Part of our programme for agriculture is to put additional inputs into these hinterland areas in order to develop their agricultural resources and make them self-sufficient in food items. One Member on the opposite side is aware of a lot that happens in the interior. One would be aghast and astonished to find that if one went to Matthews Ridge and many other parts of the interior one would find there a building filled with soft-drink bottles which have to be transported by air, but not one single five-finger tree growing, not one single sorrel tree growing. What we need in the hinterland district is more growing of our fruits which can provide the beverages to replace all this wasted money sending soft drinks in, bringing back the empty bottles and so on. Our people have to be

encouraged to do more of this, to become self-reliant, to grow more limes from which lime juice is made. We can send in the sugar to make that lovely lemonade on which so many of us grew. I am nearly sixty years and it did not do me any harm.

We anticipate as a Government that all of these plans will have fulfilment. All of these plans will be realised with the help and support of the Opposition Members and with that support we anticipate that there will be a reduction in the subsidy. We hope that we are not wrong and we hope that if we have to come back for a supplementary provision that the Opposition would understand. But the figure which has been put in the Estimates is on the promise and on the understanding and with the contemplation that all of these plans will be realised, and therefore cause some reduction of funds which can be better used in other areas.

3 p.m.

Cde. Chairman, finally I would merely wish to assure the other comrade, Reepu Daman Persaud, that I stand ready to discuss with him at the earliest possible opportunity, and with any other religious leader, what are their needs for the promotion of their religious convictions, whether it is a symbol, whether it is their idol, we have no quarrel. It is a country in which there is freedom of religion and certainly my Ministry will not be the constraint, will not be the barrier to such freedom of worship. I believe that I have dealt with all of the questions and I hope satisfactorily.

Head 79, Ministry of Trade and Consumer Protection \$543,547 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: The Ministry of Agriculture, pages 74 and 75. Head 27.

HEAD 27 – MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE

Question proposed that the sum of \$2,130,713 for Head 27, Ministry of Agriculture, stand part of the Estimates.

Cde. R. D. Persaud: Cde. Chairman, on page 74, I wish to ask simply the question whether all the posts appearing in the estimates have been filled, if not, if the Minister could point to where these vacancies exist.

Page 75. I wish to speak only on one subhead and that is subhead 7, Subsidy, Guyana Marketing Corporation. Cde. Chairman, the Ministry is seeking to reduce the sum under this subhead from \$1 million to \$500,000 –

The Chairman: \$1.2 million.

Cde. R. D. Persaud: - in spite of the fact that last year that sum was increased by \$200,000. The trend shows, therefore, that the \$1 million provided in the original estimate was inadequate. We always have reservations in so far as expenditure is concerned but we would wish on this side of the House to see the G.M.C. in its real perspective, what is the function of the G.M.C. We do not advocate that the G.M.C. is an institution that can reach that point where it can be self-sufficient totally, where there is no need for it to come to the Parliament or to the Government for finances or for subsidies. The removal of the subsidy means that the farmers are going to be affected whether by way of services or prices or other facilities to which they are accustomed and which they should really get in the process of agricultural production. I state very profoundly that the Opposition does not support a cut in the subsidies.

In that same vein, I want to make the point that the provision of \$500,000 at this stage of the budget will be followed very shortly by the Government coming for supplementary provision. But I am concerned because farmers are already suffering. Last year farmers suffered to get payment in time. I am sure the Minister is not unaware that farmers submit their produce

on one day and they have to wait several weeks before payment is made. I could probably draw the Minister's attention to farmers who sold their produce to the G.M.C. early in November last year and they were not paid until 9th December. If you want further proof we are willing to give you.

Indeed, in one area, East Bank Essequibo, Ruby-Good Hope area, I spoke to the farmers. They submitted their produce to G.M.C. on one day and they sold produce at subsequent dates. They were paid for the produce sold on the subsequent dates, instead of for the one submitted earlier. My only conclusion was that probably the sums required for the first set of produce were higher than those for the second set of produce and that they were paid in keeping with what the financial report was. This is really a financial matter but the fact is if the G.M.C. doesn't have the sum, if the sum is not there, I do not expect the Manager of the G.M.C. or the accountant to be involved in any miraculous operation to provide what doesn't really exist. Hence, I want this afternoon, speaking for the farmers, to make the point that some of the facilities that go with production, with massive agricultural drives, relate to guaranteed prices. The prices must be fixed and even in the process of production if there is a glut that must not affect the price-fixing machinery. Unfortunately, our information is that this has been happening.

I am told that the price for cassava has been reduced, the price for plantains has been reduced, and speaking with specific reference to the East Bank Essequibo, this has affected the operation of the cassava mill in that area at Look Out. My information is very reliable and what I received this morning is to the effect that until today the mill is not operating. It has stopped since the latter part of last year. In fact, he said that the price of bitter cassava has not been dropped, the price of sweet cassava has been dropped. I don't want to get involved in bitter and sweet cassava. I am dealing with the principle and the concept of price fixing and the whole concept of guaranteed prices.

Cde. Chairman, the Minister has given his experience and we give him credit for his experience. I want to ask him to review this matter if the decision has been taken without his knowledge. I have spoken with the farmers and if the G.M.C. wishes, it can go to the area and hold a meeting. Right now, they are reluctant to reap their cassava and they are prepared to leave the cassava to spoil.

We should not have that, so, Cde. Chairman, I am calling on the Government to be realistic about the operation of the G.M.C. and the provision of subsidies for the G.M.C.

3.10 p.m.

The other point I wish to refer to is that the G.M.C. needs many more facilities for it to serve the purpose that it has been designed to serve. The G.M.C. must be able not only to maintain guaranteed prices and be able to pay farmers expeditiously but the G.M.C. must be able, by scientifically operating the department, to effect the necessary control so that there would be a supply of vegetables and fruits outside of season. That is the basic point I want to make this afternoon because the problem I have found in this country is that when any of the produce is out of season, we can feel the effects of it in the markets. I think the operation of the G.M.C. must be such that all the necessary storage facilities are there so that in times of glut you can buy and buy without refusing to take the farmers' produce. My information now is – there was a little notice on the Parika Stelling – and the farmers have been saying that fifteen items have been removed; the G.M.C. is not buying pumpkins, cucumbers, and so on. I do not remember them all.

Now, one of the things we want to assure the farmers of, and the Government I am sure will endorse that policy is the guaranteed market idea. We must be able first and foremost to provide local markets. You must be able if production accelerates to provide external markets because the country needs foreign exchange badly and it is agriculture that can change that

position and can change it positively. But if you frustrate the farmers in any short-sighted decision or any ill-conceived decision, then you are undermining not only production but the country in that it will affect the financial growth of the country and you will not be able to see the way to have foreign exchange formation which is so badly needed. Hence I want this afternoon to draw the Minister's attention to these matters with respect to the G.M.C.

Coming to the city of Georgetown, I attempted to raise this under Economic Development, the Minister said he did not have the information, he could not answer it – what steps are being taken to provide storage facilities in the markets in Georgetown and not only in Georgetown but in other areas as well. I am sure if the Government concentrates, the expenditure will be supported in areas even outside of Georgetown, in buying areas where you have to buy large quantities so you can also provide the facilities there to store. From the Essequibo Coast between Supenaam and Charity, first and foremost, they are unable to satisfy the needs of all the areas. I do not want at all to put in any charge of discrimination but there are many, many areas that are not being serviced. There might be several factors; they cannot find the time, the availability of time for the movement of the vehicle from which they are conducting the purchasing and distributing, let one treat it in that respect. If that is so, then the G.M.C. must think ahead, must look at the inadequacies and be prepared to answer and to change the situation so that the produce that is available in a population say of about 16,000 can be sold. We have in Essequibo the smallest population in the three counties and the G.M.C. ought to service the area. But the areas of outlets are Dartmouth and Anna Regina. If there is any other, the Minister can direct me to it. But there are so many areas and they are thickly populated. Storage facilities can help but I want to add to this. I do not know how this can be treated and it is given in the best of spirits.

There are vendors who buy, not from the G.M.C., and they are the ones who have been servicing those areas that do not get the supplies of vegetables and fruits. How about the G.M.C. holding a meeting with those vendors? I am told that there are about forty who are regular and

are functioning on the Essequibo Coast. I have spoken to some of them and their reaction is, if the G.M.C. could sell to us and give us some sort of document on identification, they can serve outlets at this stage for the G.M.C. by supplying the various areas at reasonable prices. Hence, we will have, not only equal distribution but we will have regularity of prices. I am sure in many developments and particularly marketing and servicing the people, we would not like to have the situation in a country where in one area you may buy something at one price and in another area you have to pay another price, simply because that service does not exist in that other area. I want to point out under this Head that that is the situation generally in the country but I only cited Essequibo as an example because it is a small area, you can overlook it and you can probably operate differently.

Talking about outlets generally, Cde. Chairman, I think it was the Minister of Agriculture who gave the outlets generally to the country and I simply want to ask him if he would not like to have a second look at these outlets. If he does, he will see that many populated areas are not serviced, are not provided with these facilities. Talking about the East Coast, for instance, there are many areas. Probably the Minister will tell us this afternoon what consideration is being given to provide outlets in those areas.

Cde. Chairman, on the question of buying centres, we need more buying centres. The farmers have been making representations and the Minister, I hope, is aware that farmers have made representations some time ago for a buying centre to be established at Hogg Island.

The Chairman: Cde. Persaud, I do not like to stop you generally but we are dealing with subsidy. What subsidy has to do with buying centres?

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Cde. Chairman, it is related in this way, that the G.M.C. has to have the necessary subsidy so it can provide the facilities because in the total operation of

the G.M.C. it does not have the turnover cash so that it can have that capital formation to provide these facilities.

The Chairman: I differ with great respect. Subsidy is subsidy. Subsidy means that you do not have enough funds to pay for the purchase of goods and that is the point you were making all the time. Now you have strayed from that and you have gone to the innumerable number of centres which are set up. How is that related to subsidy?

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Cde. Chairman, you might not agree with me but –

The Chairman: Well, comrade, I am the one who makes the final decision up to now.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: I will concede that right to you but I also speak with some bit of experience and the Minister of Agriculture will not deny that the operation of the G.M.C. must be seen in its global position and not in isolation –

The Chairman: That is why we have a general debate, where all these things are to be dealt with, not here.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: With all due respect to you, Cde. Chairman, the debate does not permit what I am dealing with now. The Standing Order says, it is a time to deal with detail.

The Chairman: I do not want to have a long dialogue and argument. I think I have given you a long enough time to talk about this. If you continue to talk about subsidy, I will certainly allow that.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Cde. Chairman, I was going to refer to a letter in support of my argument. This letter is dated 31st August, 1976 and since in 1976 a promise was made for the establishment of a centre at Hogg Island. It has not been realised. You have stopped me and I will refrain from continuing in that vein but I hope the Minister has been able from contribution so far to really see the point I seek to make for the more efficient and useful functioning of the Guyana Marketing Corporation. The very name of this institution implies marketing and marketing is related to centres. Where are we going to market, in the cold storage?

3.20 p.m.

The Chairman: We are dealing with the subsidy. We are not dealing with the G.M.C. as such.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: This is the only place in the whole of the Estimates where G.M.C. appears. It means if that is your ruling, I cannot say anything more. But that is the only place it appears and it is based on that –

The Chairman: It is a very great thing when we can agree to disagree.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Cde. Chairman, in winding up the thoughts I have expressed, I think the Government is ill-advised. It is making a serious **faux pas** and it is acting inimically to the interest of the consumers generally when it seeks to pursue, in its attempt to have financial constraints, a policy where it removes the subsidy generally from any item. While we are all for constraints and while we are willing to look objectively into the financial position of the country, we cannot close our eyes to the fact that if subsidies are removed then consumers are going to suffer. Under the Guyana Marketing Corporation, I wonder if the Minister would wish to tell us what is the position with respect to the buying of fish and the selling of fish. I hope you rule this relevant. I have raised it before but if the Minister of Economic –

The Chairman: Cde. Persaud, please do not be rude next time.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: I only ask if you will permit me to say that.

The Chairman: Well, that is being rude

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: I am very sorry, the intention was never there. I want to ask the Minister if it is true that the G.M.C. has stopped purchasing fish from the boats that normally go to the G.M.C. wharf to sell to the G.M.C. My information, and the information is pretty reliable, is that they are directing them to Houston to sell their fish there. As a result, the fishermen are complaining that if they are to move to the other point, it is a question of distance and higher cost. I wonder if the Minister would concede that fish is being sold now at higher prices because the G.M.C. itself is not buying. I wonder if the Minister will concede – there is at least one name of a person which I myself can give you, who buys fish from the fishermen directly at the wharf. His is the single outlet for several areas including at least one Government institution. It means that if this continues, you are allowing a single man – and the opportunity is there for other people – to get involved in this type of exercise which is detrimental to the consumer and generally to the whole concept of providing the fishermen with a market. So this point hinges on the question of markets. They buy fish and sell to the G.M.C. I understand there is some proposal for them to go to another point and sell the fish there. I want to ask the Minister if a meeting was held with the fishermen and, if so, when? My information is that they were not consulted. The result is that you have at the moment a situation where people cannot get regular fish supplies. I wonder if the Minister would not also concede – I am told that the storage facility for fish is now being used for vegetables. I am subject to correction.

The Chairman: I rule that irrelevant. Yes, Cde. Nokta.

Cde. Nokta: Subhead 7, subsidy Guyana Marketing Corporation. I notice here that the subsidy in relation to last year was cut by \$700,000. I would like to ask the Minister, in keeping with this big pronouncement of increased production and productivity, how does the Ministry of Agriculture intend to promote production especially now when the subsidy is cut. As we know, last year, farmers' produce all over the country was bought by the G.M.C. on credit. I would like the Minister to tell us if he is aware that last week all the farmers' produce sold to G.M.C. was bought on credit at Kumaka market, North West District. If this is so and the subsidy is cut, how does the G.M.C. intend to buy farmers' produce in the future?

Cde. Basir: Cde. Chairman, on the day of the Budget Speech I told the Prime Minister that there should be no procrastination on the question of production. It is in this context I would wish to make a few observations on page 75 subhead 7. I first want to make an observation on the question of G.M.C. I am not going to repeat what my colleagues have said. I am not questioning the integrity or ability of the Minister of Agriculture, but I am worried about his source of information concerning certain statements made. However, on the question of the G.M.C. subsidy, from my understanding, I doubt whether such a Corporation or institution can function without being subsidised and therefore I feel the subsidy should have been increased to make that institution, or whatever you may call it, something viable.

On the question of distribution, I realise that we have a number of problems on the question of distribution. From my experience in the Pomeroon area, there is always a large amount of produce spoiling which cannot be properly stored. In this case, I realise the problem is one of storage and distribution. From my experience when I was in East Germany –

The Chairman: Cde. Basir, the kind of latitude I will allow Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud, I will not allow a backbencher.

Cde. Basir: Cde. Chairman, I am speaking for the farmers who have to deal with production.

The Chairman: Try and look for the right subhead.

Cde. Basir: There is no other subhead for this particular matter. If I cannot inform this House and advise the House as I think it best, then I would like to say it is discrimination. So let me not tell you about the complex –

The Chairman: Cde. Basir, you talk about anything dealing with the subsidy and I will listen to you. I am not interested in listening to anything about storage; this has nothing to do with storage.

Cde. Basir: Cde. Chairman, indirectly this will have something to do with the subsidy and I am not prepared to argue. With your permission, I would like to deal with cassava. This also has to do indirectly with subsidy. Please bear with me for a few minutes because I am a farmer and I have to do something with agriculture. The price of cassava is five cents per pound. If you are going to run a cassava mill, five cents per pound cannot pay the farmers to produce bitter cassava to run that mill. What I am saying here is what the farmers are saying. I am from a farming area. I can give you very briefly some statistics of cassava production in order to edify this House. An acre of cassava will cost \$600 to produce. If you are going to take thirty bundles of cassava sticks at \$2.50 per bundle that will produce, let us say, 10,000 sticks which will give you 10,000 pounds of cassava. Ten thousand pounds of cassava at five cents a pound will give you \$500. If you are going to spend \$600 to prepare bitter cassava and to have \$500 in return excluding the cost of reaping, transportation, then where are you? I would like to advise the hon. Minister, a gentleman for whom I have very much regard, to examine this issue perhaps to reduce the price for sweet cassava but bitter cassava should have a price of ten cents a pound.

3.30 p.m.

The Chairman: Cde. Minister, you will recall there was a very general question on the first page asked by Cde. Persaud about the filling of vacancies.

The Minister of Agriculture (Cde. Kennard): Thank you very much, Cde. Chairman. With respect to the question asked by Cde. Persaud, there are vacancies in the Ministry, for example, there are vacancies in the professional grades for an agricultural engineer, a soil chemist, two agricultural chemists and an entomologist. As against these vacancies the Government has, on scholarships, well over 50 Guyanese studying for professional graduate and post-graduate qualifications and it is expected that during this year there will be available to fill these posts an adequacy of numbers of candidates.

The next item on which Cde. Persaud has dealt, and also Cde. Nokta and Cde. Basir, relates to the Guyana Marketing Corporation and quite rightly Cde. Chairman, you attempted to focus attention on the substantive item, that is, the subsidy to the G.M.C. and not a number of matters that perhaps relate to the G.M.C.'s operations but which do not relate to the subsidy **per se**. It is customary in these estimates to provide under the Ministry of Agriculture the subsidy which is to be voted for the G.M.C. I wish to point out, however, that the G.M.C. is among the corporations under the Guyana State Corporation's umbrella, and a number of these points that were raised relate really to the general operations of the G.M.C. and not specifically to the subsidy which the Ministry of Agriculture provided for the G.M.C. to absorb the losses arising from the payment of guaranteed prices to farmers. That is all that the subsidy is about, the loss that accrues to the G.M.C. as a result of its carrying out the Government's policy of subsidising farm produce.

The subsidy, as I pointed out on previous occasions is not intended to subsidise inefficiency if there is in the G.M.C., and I am not so suggesting. It is not intended to subsidise any aspect of the operations of the G.M.C. other than the aspects which relate to any loss which

might accrue to the organisation as a result of the Government's policy to subsidise farm produce.

What do we mean by subsidising farm produce? Rather than exposing the farmer to the comings and goings of the market, rather than exposing him to the law of **laissez-faire** and to supply and demand, unsettled and uncontrolled, the Government has intervened and established that the G.M.C. must pay to the farmer not less than the cost of production of a large number of items of produce. Where the G.M.C. buys at the stated guaranteed price, that is the price that guarantees the farmer against loss, that is, guarantees that would reflect and return to him at least the cost of production. Where the G.M.C. pays that price but has to sell to the consumer below that price, then a loss is incurred and the subsidy absorbs that loss and replenishes the funds of the G.M.C.

Now we do operate a guaranteed minimum price which gives to the reasonably efficient farmer an adequate return, a return that compensates him for his cost of production. The G.M.C. does buy above the guaranteed price in times of shortages, secondly, in times where the market is a good market locally and the consumer can afford to pay a higher price than the guaranteed price. The G.M.C. buys above the guaranteed price, where the G.M.C. gets an export market for produce and is able to obtain high prices on the export market. Well, it reflects that back to the farmer by paying him a much higher price than the minimum guaranteed price, but in no case the G.M.C. pays below that minimum guaranteed price, which is the sale price representing the farmers' cost of production. It is a social service to the farmers because the State and the people, of Guyana do not intend to see the farmers lose money on farming operations.

The sum provided here \$500,000. As you know, Cde. Chairman, from time to time, having stated on the Estimates a certain sum for the G.M.C. subsidy we have had to return sometimes to the House to ask for a supplementary provision. In agriculture, it is difficult to forecast what will happen in production. For example, most rice farmers and other farmers did

not envisage that the present time would have been so dry. In another year, Pomeroon farmers might not have predicted the floods which will destroy their crops, similarly the farmers up in the Mahaica Creek or the Mahaicony Creek. Since farmers cannot predict what the weather will be for their crops or what the weeds might do, or what the pests might do, the same uncertainties afflict the minds of policy makers and statisticians, economists and managers. They work to the best of their knowledge to predict what a subsidy level is likely to be on certain assumptions, but if those assumptions are proven to be wrong, well, then, the subsidy might be reduced or it might be increased, depending on the factual situation which may ensue.

There is this big ingredient in this matter of subsidy when it is put on the Estimates. From time to time we have had to return to supplement the subsidy and the House has kindly agreed and consented and voted the supplement. We are hoping, this year that we will not have to return to the House to supplement the \$1/2 million which we have asked for in these Estimates, because in response to the Government's programme to improve and increase the efficiency of all the Corporations, and since the wish and the hope have been expressed by our comrades on the other side that our public Corporations should be efficiently run and managed, we have seen it fit that as a target for management, to set a level of subsidy which management should strive to attain. We have not been generous; we have not indulged in squandermania to so set a fantastic subsidy that perhaps management and workers might become soft and not perform to their highest level of efficiency.

In terms of managerial service, we have set a conservative level of subsidy so that management and workers can strive towards achieving that level and therefore save the taxpayers money and save this House the necessity to vote a higher level of subsidy. A number of activities are planned this year in the G.M.C. in relation to the manner in which it conducts its affairs in order to improve and increase its efficiency. Already, this process has been started during 1977, the year that has just passed. For example, Cde. Persaud has been questioning us about sales outlets. A decision was made in 1977 to remove the function of retail marketing to

the specialised Corporations in Government which deal with retailing, such as Guyana National Trading Corporation. You will see throughout the country a number of outlets formerly held by the G.M.C. which now fall under the aegis of either Guyana Stores, a specialised trading agency, or Guyana National Trading Corporation. The Minister of Trade who is the Vice President of Guystac has refreshed my memory that these outlets are at places such as Albion, Manchester, Rose Hall, Canje, No. 2 on the Corentyne, Blairmont, Buxton, Golden Grove, Melanie Damishana, Sophia, Festival City, Bartica –

3.40 p.m.

The Chairman: Cde. Minister, all that was said by the Minister of Trade during the Budget Debate. All of that was said.

Cde. Kennard: Thank you, Cde. Chairman. Anyway the Speaker's intervention answers the question.

The Chairman: The Speaker's indulgence permitted all of that to go on, wasting the time of the House.

Cde. Kennard: In so far as specifically the input which goes into the subsidy is concerned, the member averred, and I think correctly because it is relevant to the subsidy, to the level of guaranteed prices that are paid for certain produce on the guaranteed price list, in particular to plantains and cassava. Now, the G.M.C. is not buying cassava below the minimum guaranteed price. The minimum guaranteed price for plantains is 10 ½ cents per pound. The G.M.C. now buys plantains at 20 cents per pound, almost twice the minimum guaranteed price. Truly, there was a time when plantains were scarce and the G.M.C. buying price rose but it has never, as I said before, fallen below the minimum guaranteed price. Similarly, sweet cassava.

The G.M.C.'s minimum guaranteed price is 6 cents per pound and it now buys from the farmer at 10 cents per pound.

Now, the Ministry of Agriculture and farmers' representatives have got together to evaluate what is the cost of production and these figures reflect the consensus among them on the cost of production. For example, in the case of plantains, in a well-planted plantain farm, the cost of production is 7.5 cents per pound in the case of cassava, with a well-planted cassava cultivation, the cost of production is 5 cents per pound. So the minimum guaranteed prices are above the actual cost of production and the actual buying prices by the G.M.C. to farmers are above the minimum guaranteed prices. These are the points that are relevant to the subsidy that is being asked for, the sum of \$500,000 for the Guyana Marketing Corporation.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Cde. Chairman, I am sure the Minister will credit us with some intelligence. I am dealing specifically with the last answer. He probably is unaware – and I want to state exactly that, what the G.M.C. is doing at the moment – that the G.M.C. is grading cassava and plantain and they have been grading them with such rigidity that not 2 percent of the farmers – and that is being very liberal – receive the prices which he gave. Therefore, I challenge him this afternoon in this House to say that I am wrong and I call upon him to go and face the farmers on this question because I am willing to call the farmers before him to let him tell them that.

Cde. Kennard: With your permission, Cde. Chairman, may I reply? At least 95 percent of the plantains purchased from the farmers is grade "A", 95 percent. And Cde. Chairman, we have got to balance the scales of justice. We have an obligation and duty to the consumers of Guyana who expect in return for the subsidies paid from their taxes etc., a fair deal from the farmer, and we must, therefore, grade produce. We cannot permit nondescript, dirty, diseased, infected, damaged, produce to reach the consumer. The consumer has a right to expect clean sound marketable produce, free from all sorts of damage and extraneous matter. G.M.C. has a

duty and right to grade plantains and it is in pursuit of the subsidy we are exercising that right. I repeat that at least so far, to the credit of our farmers, 95 percent of the produce bought from them is classified as Grade “A”.

There was some mention of fish. Though not directly relevant to the subsidy but to clear the point that was raised, I must say that the Government of Guyana continues to buy fish from the fishermen and we are re-organising the G.M.C. in this respect. The Government has now determined that the specialised fish agency which is charged with the duty of purchasing shrimp and fish is the Guyana Food Processors Ltd. The G.M.C. has now withdrawn from the marketing of fish in terms of rationalising the Government’s marketing operation.

Head 27, Ministry of Agriculture, \$2,130,713, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Pages 76 to 81.

HEAD 28, MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE – AGRICULTURE

Question proposed that the sum of \$7,785,574 for Head 28, Ministry of Agriculture, Agriculture, stand part of the Estimates.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Cde. Chairman, briefly, under item (53), farmers are not satisfied with the services that they should receive from these 76 agricultural Field Assistants. They are away from the farmers; there is no doubt about it, and I want simply to tell the Minister that he needs to carry out an investigation. Even on the question of these Field Assistants going into the area to ascertain exact agricultural production, I know of one case where a man was asked to give statistics to one of them and the man said: “Look, you will be paid \$25 a month for the service.” He said that cannot pay him for the type of service you require; and the man said,

“Look don’t bother to go and find out exactly what is produced; do something at home and give me the statistics.” I think what we need is better service, inexperienced as it may be, if we are hoping to make available to the farmers the facilities to help them in scientific development of their land for greater yields and all of that. Probably when the Minister answers the question with respect to staffing, we will see whether the services can be provided, if all the people that are required are really there. We do not complain about the staffing at the Ministry of Agriculture because we have always said and I re-emphasise, it is the productive sector in the country. Page 78 is very alarming because there is need for so many different types of services in so many different fields, nursery and every single thing that is required in agricultural production. We find that on this page, 135 offices have been abolished.

The Chairman: You are speaking generally on the abolition of offices now?

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Yes, if I can do so. I am trying to save time. This being so, there can be no doubt that we cannot get efficiency and we cannot get proper services in the areas where these people are supposed to serve, bearing in mind that the estimate shows that they were there for a number of years. In one case 56 has been reduced to 35, 63 has been reduced to 41, 68 has been reduced to 39 and that is the pattern we see on this page of the Estimates.

3.50 p.m.

Page 80, subhead 5, Operation & Maintenance of Land & Water Transport: In 1977, the amount spent was \$9,090. In 1978, that has been increased to \$250,000. I am sure this item deserves a very strong explanation. I have already taken into account that probably land has been added but I see the sum is so substantial that it deserves an answer. The legend states, “Formerly ‘Water Transport’”.

Subhead 9, Purchase, Production and Distribution of Seeds and Plants: I am sure the Ministry is not unaware that farmers cannot get seeds and there have been constant complaints, particularly in rural areas. I would like to refer only to Black Bush Polder. I spent the last weekend there and farmers said they could not get any seeds for anything. They have been going constantly and they are told to come back next week. Thus the farmers are frustrated. There is a shortage, generally, of seeds in this country, whether it is cabbage, tomatoes, Boulanger. Those are some of the items specifically mentioned to me by the farmers. Undoubtedly if they are not provided with the seeds then you cannot have accelerated production. In fact, what you will have is no production. Having made that point, I do not agree with that reduction from \$104,965 to \$75,000 because we see the need for this type of vote and the Ministry could have argued, in my view, for an increase in last year's provision. I cannot see how the Ministry could justify a decrease in that provision bearing in mind the complaint is heard in every part of the country.

Subhead 11, Development of Bee-keeping: We have not really made serious strides in this area. If you go and ask somebody to get you some good honey you can get the best honey, but if you were to go to the markets where honey is sold you get a strong sugar-coated honey. In fact, the potential in this area is tremendous. Some years ago we had a very lengthy dialogue with the Minister on the whole question of the development of bee-keeping but I think the time has come for greater attention so that we can produce adequate supplies of good honey and, in fact, there could be conversion of that honey. There are certain things that people know in this country. If you get a cold you go either for Benadryl, or Aurimel, or Phensadryl or whatever it is. There can be no doubt, seeing that some of these things have some strong honey content, or at least they should have, that we can produce honey not only for normal domestic use and personal use, but to the point where you would not need to import these things into this country. Any doctor, I am just speaking on advice, knows that honey is better for coughs and colds than any of the other drugs.

The Chairman: I don't think you have been properly advised. If you speak to some of your doctor friends they will tell you a local substitute that is far superior to all of those things.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: I know I do not indulge there, if I am anticipating you. I may be wrong but I think I am with you. I thought that honey apart from all of this, the food content of it is so great it is a food in itself and the industry needs greater development. I have not heard the Minister so far. I hope he has a list this afternoon to tell us of all the development here.

Subhead 24, Grant to Guyana School of Agriculture Corporation: I wonder if the Minister is aware that the fees for attendance at the Guyana School of Agriculture have been doubled. They have been increased by nearly 100 percent. This is my information. Speaking for this Opposition, to be very frank, we would like to see an institution like the Guyana School of Agriculture serving this country and people with the aptitude and people with the love and the type of tendencies and qualities that are required to service the agricultural sector, whether they have the financial resources or not. We would like to see them given the opportunity of entry into the Guyana School of Agriculture so that they can be trained, bearing in mind all the inadequacies that exist in the teaching at this school. We know that theory really cannot satisfy what is needed in the agricultural drive in this country. There is some degree of practical exposure for those students and I say, to put an impediment by increasing the fee by 100 per cent is most unjustified.

I recall last year when we debated in this House that we were not only talking about development and expansion and the provision of more facilities in the Guyana School of Agriculture to ensure that the right subjects are taught and the right people are teaching them, last year I alluded to the fact that people were teaching in fields in which they were not best suited. Years ago, I called for the establishment of the Faculty of Agriculture at the University of Guyana, that this would be a feeder to that, but contrary to the assurances the Minister gave

last year that this faculty would be established, that this department would be here, twenty students from the Guyana School of Agriculture went into the Faculty of Agriculture at the University of Guyana. But what is worse, only twelve survived. Eight have gone.

All the teachers you have got in that Faculty is one Mr. Downer. There were several professors who were involved. There was a committee which was chaired, I think, by Professor Longden. There was involvement of a Professor Niles. There was controversy as to whether Longden should draw up the syllabus of the University of Guyana for the students who were going to be involved in the training in agriculture. Of course it was felt that he, coming from New Zealand did not have the type of expertise and the type of experience that are suitable and conducive to our country which is basically tropical. Thus, we have had all these quarrels and controversies and the situation is virtually unsettled and alarming because only a few minutes ago the Cde. Minister gave us the statistics with respect to how many people are studying abroad. How many are going to qualify to fill the vacancies that exist? We have always had vacancies.

4 p.m.

I recall earlier I was talking of training local people, at the University of Guyana. We have our advanced agriculturists going to Trinidad doing their courses and what have you. Nothing is wrong but they can come back and they can provide services tutoring at the University of Guyana. I know many of them, they are competent, they are capable, they have got both the academic and the practical experience and they are the best people suited to teach at the University of Guyana.

Cde. Chairman, it is sad to say that even the twelve students at the moment are not exposed to the subjects that will lead to the type of agricultural change that is required for this country. I do not want to go into all the details because the Guyana School of Agriculture, if you get a diploma from there, that would be satisfying the requirements for admission to the

University of Guyana. There is a controversy on that, whether that should be so. The standard has to be set there. There was argument of tremendous merit that if you admit people at the Guyana School of Agriculture without the necessary qualifications, or the basics, if I put it that way, then you are likely to send up poor students to the Faculty of Agriculture. Thus, I think the announcement was a brain wave, wherever it came from, and people had to go into hurried activity to ensure that it doesn't look bad, and that when September comes, the faculty is established. The Minister, I am sure, will concede this if he searches his conscience this afternoon.

Professor Downer sits at Mon Repos. His Secretary is also there, and there is no other teacher – if you want to call it today, a faculty of agriculture. The twelve students are sent and they are taught by other people who were always there. You name the teachers that are serving in the Faculty of Agriculture. If I am wrong, and I do not think so, I stand corrected. They talk about redeployment. This is a clear area where redeployment can operate differently. Not retrenchment, but you deploy people who can find the time to do additional work so that in the evenings they could be giving services to the University of Guyana, and possibly during the day if their scheme of activities can be so arranged and operated.

When I was in England, I went to one of the Universities and they told me in 1901 they started with twenty-one departments to develop agriculture. I spoke to the Professor there. In fact, I spoke to a number of them. The people were exposed to both theoretical training as well as practical training. When I was there, they said they had reduced the number to about five departments and I will try to list them from memory, crop improvement, plant breeding, crop protection, production, agronomy. Then there is the social science aspect which deals with things like marketing and extension. We know of the state of the extension services in this country. I will deal with that later under the proper subhead.

14.3.78

National Assembly

4 – 4.10 p.m.

The Minister of Education talks about education being free from kindergarten to University and here it is in a sensitive field of education and discipline like that of agriculture, the fee for admission is doubled. I call upon the Minister to re-examine the operations of the Guyana School of Agriculture and move towards establishing truly and in fact, the department of agriculture in the University of Guyana. You cannot function with Professor Downer and his secretary. You need more people. There is nobody else at the moment.

Assembly resumed.

The Speaker: The Sitting of the House is suspended for 30 minutes.

Sitting suspended at 4.05 p.m.

4.31 p.m.

On resumption –

**RESUMPTION OF APPROVAL OF ESTIMATES
OF EXPENDITURE FOR 1978**

Assembly in Committee of Supply.

The Chairman: Cde. Belgrave.

Cde. Belgrave: Page 80, subhead 17, Fisheries Investigations and Research. I see that this provision in the Estimates seems not to be increasing substantially and the reason I am concerned is that I think more research has got to be done and maybe investigations also, in order to provide our citizens with fresh fish. We have got a problem in this country. Over the years

within the traditional fishing areas we have been having a depletion of fresh fish. Maybe some measure of conservation is necessary. Maybe the Minister might be able to tell me whether from the investigation and research they will be able to find the answer.

Cde. Chairman, if you look at the various markets where fish catches are exposed for sale, you will find that the traditional fresh fish that normally is sold to the citizens is depleting, it is getting smaller, not only in the size of the catch but also the size of the fishes. I can remember –

The Chairman: You know that our Soviet comrades are helping us on this?

Cde. Belgrave: You said that, Cde. Chairman. I prefer to hear it from the Minister. It would be excellent. He is the expert and he may be able to give good enough answers. I know that in some countries they have found this difficulty arising and from research and investigation, they instituted measures of conservation. There are many measures being used for conservation. For instance, in some areas they implement laws where certain areas are cordoned off and fishing is not allowed in that particular area for a period of time. If the young fishes are extracted from the sea bed, it is obvious that there will be further depletion of that area. We have got our traditional grounds in the Berbice, in the Essequibo, in the Demerara –

The Chairman: Cde. Belgrave, you were here when the Cde. Prime Minister was speaking?

Cde. Belgrave: I was present.

The Chairman: Apparently you didn't hear what he was saying.

Cde. Belgrave: Maybe not. This is why I am asking the Minister of Agriculture to answer. I cannot ask the Prime Minister to answer, this is not his Head.

4.35 p.m.

Maybe there can be other measures. In some countries they legislate laws so that the holes on the nets are of such a size that the small fishes can swim out, the net catching only the big ones. Something has got to be done. I consider the fish our citizens use today embalmed fish. My wife gave me a fish lunch today. Despite the fact that when the fish came out of the freezer it was hard, when it came out of the pan it was tainted, rotten. That is because of the type of fishing that we are doing in Guyana. Instead of refrigeration, we are using ice. In many cases, when the fish comes from the ice in one area, the fish is defrosted, maybe it is in the sun, in handing over to the fisheries, then it is placed on ice again, then to the vendor, it is placed on ice again. Eventually, by the time the fish reaches the citizen, it is embalmed fish; there is absolutely no doubt about it. So, the protein value of our traditional fresh fish, that is a necessity, the protein value to our citizens, undoubtedly is being decreased. Maybe the Minister can answer me if he believes –

The Chairman: Probably, Cde. Belgrave, you might have to buy the fish instead of sending your wife to buy the fish.

Cde. Belgrave: You may be so right, Cde. Chairman. I compliment some of the housewives, nevertheless, on their purchases but the meat of the answer is that I raised this question in another forum and I got a positive answer, that I was so right. I would like the Minister to let this House know what is being done in this respect, what they hope to do in the future, if there is any conservation exercise which is necessary within certain areas, certain periods so that we might be able to improve the growth of fish within our traditional areas. I am not talking about our 200 miles zone; that fish comes in two, three, four, five or six days after catch. I am talking about the daily selling in the markets of fish that is caught within the traditional areas. Maybe, the Minister can answer me on this question.

The Chairman: You like big fish!

Cde. Belgrave: You may be aware of that.

Cde. Dindoyal: Page 77, items (60) and (61), Soil Physicist and Soil Surveyor: This sector is very important if we are to accelerate production. I would kindly ask the Minister to say whether the Government is still interested in pushing this programme, because the funds under this Head are inadequate. The tests are important because there are very many different types of soils and if these tests are carried out, farmers can be advised accordingly, to use the fertiliser which is necessary for the different types of soil so that they can obtain maximum production. I would like the Minister to say what he has in mind to improve this programme.

Cde. Dalchand: Cde. Chairman, page 77, item (39), Veterinary Officer.: Here we have the officers, we have very efficient officers but these officers are handicapped; they do not have drugs; they do not have the necessary equipment, and, moreover, they are not being given adequate travelling allowances. I myself, being a livestock farmer can tell you; we have been having the devil's job getting the services of the Veterinary Officers. They are there; they have the ability but the drugs and equipment are not available. I would like to ask the Minister to make provision so that these able officers would be given the necessary drugs and equipment to carry out their duties.

Livestock Assistants, items (44) and (45): Here again, this is not a reality any more in the rural areas. These officers cannot be seen in the rural areas any more. I do not know what is taking place. Page 80, subhead 2, Transport and Travelling: As I said just now, I am hoping that the Minister is making adequate provision under this Head whereby these able officers could be given reasonable transportation to do their work. Artificial Insemination Services, subhead 16, this again is no more a living reality in the rural areas. We can see from the sum given, \$4,000 for an artificial insemination service in the country, that it is hopeless. I do not know what will be done to improve this service because many farmers, especially in the rural and coastal areas need this service. The rural and coastal areas are still the suppliers of fresh milk to the city.

Page 81, subhead 32, National Cane Farming Committee: This body is an important body which advises the Minister on all matters with respect to peasant cane farming. I regret to say here in this House this afternoon that this body has now become disabled. It is no longer serving its purpose. All the cane farmers throughout the country are suffering for advice which they should obtain through this particular body but when they go there, they are told that GUYSUACO is now advising the National Cane Farming Committee, and the National Cane Farming Committee is no more serving its purpose. I want to ask the Minister to revamp this National Cane Farming Committee to put reasonable representatives on this body whereby it can attend to cane farming problems and save the cane farmers from the havoc which is being created on them, over-charging and all sorts of things by the Guyana Sugar Corporation. Farmers need this particular body to represent them and I am appealing to the Minister this afternoon to make sure that this body functions in the way it was intended.

The Chairman: Cde. Ally.

Cde. Ally: Cde. Chairman, page 80, subhead 9, Purchase, Production and Distribution of Seeds and Plants. I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware of the fact that since the last flood in 1976, the farmers on the Bank of the Corentyne River have placed orders at the No. 63 Agricultural Station for citrus plants and from since then on to this day, they cannot obtain that order. In fact, the Agricultural Field Assistant was advising the farmers that unless they prepared the lands, he would not book the order. This is something which perhaps he has not got the necessary experience in. If the farmers prepare the land before he books the order and the Agricultural field Officer has to go there and visit the land and then certify that the order should be booked, before the plant matures to the size when the farmer will have to take the plant, the land automatically will come under forest again. I advised him and I think the Minister should look into this because we cannot talk about production without creating the conditions. These farmers, from 1976 until this day cannot get the necessary supply. I would like to ask the Minister to see that the farmers get the necessary supply, see that the Station, at least for this

year, produces the amount of plant material that is necessary. On the other hand, if the Officer, after booking the order and before giving the people the plants, wants to make sure that the people make use of the plant material, then he should see that they prepare the land before he gives them the amount that they want. He should not ask them to prepare the lands before.

The Chairman: You said that about three times. You will keep on saying it?

Cde. Ally: I would like to ask the Minister to look into it. Where seeds are concerned, I would like to draw the attention of the Minister to the fact that black-eye peas are distributed at this station for agricultural purposes. The officers responsible perhaps do not know who are legitimate farmers and so they give their seeds to illegitimate farmers who cook the black-eye peas instead of planting them. And this was so, especially in the case of the people at Union. These people were eating out the black-eye peas and the people who needed the planting material to plant could not get it.

4.45 p.m.

Cde. Basir: Cde. Chairman, I want to raise a point on page 78, item (81) Nurseryman 1. I would not like to ask why or what, it might be rather diminutive. I would like to ask the hon. Minister what is the position at the Charity nursery. The removal of that nursery was very suicidal. I would like to place on record that the nursery should be resuscitated as early as possible.

Page 81, subhead 37, Contribution to Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute: I would like to know if this Institute has been conducting work in Guyana and whether any effort is being made to understudy the position of the coconut industry. Actually, the coconut industry which we have here is not progressing very well. From the statistics given in 1976, we had a drop of \$5 million in the production of coconuts. It is a very important industry.

I think it is the third largest industry we have in Guyana. I remember about a year ago, in Jamaica, the Jamaican Government offered the Coconut Production Board an amount of \$5 million to look into the question of promoting coconuts. I wonder if the Minister could possibly place in his agenda the question of offering such facilities towards the improvement of the coconut industry. Besides being the third largest industry, coconut is a substitute. There is intercropping in the production of plantains and bananas, as it is. I would be very glad if the hon. Minister could look into this aspect.

Cde. Kennard: Cde. Chairman, I was a bit disappointed that my good friend Cde. Narbada did not speak, because every other Member of the Opposition spoke. Cde. Narbada was very kind to me this afternoon. In answering, I will take it page by page as far as possible, in the interest of brevity. Cde. Persaud asked whether there were any vacancies and he referred to page 77. Earlier, I gave a reply with respect to vacancies and I was indeed referring to vacancies on page 77 while the question at the time was relevant to page 74. The point is that there are no vacancies for administrative, executive, clerical and accounting personnel in relation to page 74. But the vacancies I gave a while ago are pertinent to page 77, the professional posts, unfortunately. These vacancies apply to Agricultural Engineer, two Agricultural Chemists, a Soil Physicist, two Veterinary Officers, six Livestock Officers, an Entomologist, a Curator, and twenty Livestock Assistants. As I indicated, we have people in training for these positions and most of them are expected to be filled by year end when, for example, Livestock Assistants graduate from the Regional School for Animal Health Assistants at Mon Repos. We have graduates from the Guyana School of Agriculture and graduates who will be returning from overseas. Then, these posts will be filled.

I can say, with respect to Soil Physicist and Soil Surveyor which were referred to in that category, it is an important function to be able to test our soils, diagnose what they lack or what they have and to make proper recommendations to the farmer. The Ministry undertakes soil testing and prescribes what should be done to correct poisonous soils, and what should be done

to improve soils which are lacking in nutrients. This test is available to farmers throughout the country. As far as we are aware, the testing is done at the Central Laboratory at Mon Repos but every Agricultural field Assistant is competent to take soil samples and to send samples for testing to Mon Repos and to get back the results. This service, as far as I am aware, is available and we are meeting all the requests from farmers. If there is any specific case where a farmer does not get this service, I would be glad to know the name of the farmer after this session and we would ensure that that service is given to the individual.

The Veterinary Officers are stretched far and wide. With a country of this size and with the importance of agriculture, the Vet is as important as a doctor of medicine. They both deal with animal health – man is an animal – and the livestock population is quite large. Perhaps not as large as the human population, but, nevertheless, it is substantially large.

What we do need are many more positions for Veterinary Officers. But the problem is that we have not got all the funds that we would require to create these posts and to ensure that appointees are well paid. This is one reason why we have this scheme for the training of Animal Health Assistants so that they would perform the minor chores which the Vet has to do – take care of common ailments of livestock. The centre has been established on a regional basis at Mon Repos and already there are graduated Guyanese Animal Health Assistants. As the graduates increase in numbers, the situation for giving veterinary attention to livestock farmers will be greatly improved.

At the same time, Government has negotiated a programme for training veterinary doctors in collaboration with the Canadian Government. That is in Canada, and we have also negotiated a programme to train veterinary doctors in the United States of America through the assistance of the U.S. Agency for International Development. We have, for example, at Tuskegee in Alabama, some eight students in training to become veterinary doctors, and two in Africa being trained as veterinary doctors.

The question has been asked about Agricultural Field Assistants and what are they doing. Like some of the comrades in the technical stream, they do cover a very large area and have to deal with, perhaps, more farmers than they can cope with. We admit that there is an inadequacy in numbers of the Agricultural Field Assistants in the country to cover all the areas and all the farmers. It is a question of how many we can afford. We are poor, we have budgetary limitations, and we can only afford a certain number. We have money to pay for only a certain number. So what the Ministry has been doing is to organise the training of the farmers themselves and, as we have heard earlier during the debate, we are setting up these six rural training centres where farmers and farmers' children will be trained on the spot to do agricultural work. In addition, there is the training we have dealt with before in the secondary schools, but additionally, we are trying to organise farmers into production groups so that by so doing the Field Assistant can deal with a large group of farmers, lecture to them, demonstrate to them as a group and give them advice as a group. The group leaders can then take back this knowledge to the farmers by visiting their farms. So far, we have established 36 agricultural groups in Guyana particularly in the remote areas. The Demerara River area, Berbice River area, Pomeroon River area, where the Field Assistants can go to a large group and the group could take back the message and the techniques to the farming communities. We train the group leaders as well in order to spread the gospel.

4.55 p.m.

On page 78, the question was asked: Why are there so many posts that have been removed from the Estimates? In this regard sometimes comrades from the Opposition contradict themselves. While in one breath they ask for the curtailment of expenditure, reducing the bureaucracy, squandermania and correcting it, at the same time when one attempts to rationalise and to redeploy people into the productive sector in direct production, we are told that the reductions are being questioned. I wish to assure the hon. Members that these reductions will be in terms of

proper labour placement and the persons so placed are being directly and productively engaged in agricultural activities in the fields of cane, rice, and many crops which are now in such abundant supply. There is also the question with respect to the next page –

The Chairman: I think Cde. Dindyal asked about the closing down of the Charity nursery. Cde. Basir, it was.

Cde. Kennard: Cde. Basir referred to the Charity nursery. He queried the item, Nurseryman. What we have done in keeping with our constant policy of creating greater efficiency in the Ministry of Agriculture is to rationalise the production of nursery products in Essequibo. Previously we had two nurseries, one at Suddie and the other at Charity. We found the Charity nursery was often flooded by water from the Pomeroon River and in any case, it was fairly remote for direct supervision by the agricultural officer. Because of repeated flooding and for that reason of supervision, we decided to close that small nursery – and it was a very small nursery – and to enlarge by more than the area closed at Charity, the Suddie Nursery. The Suddie nursery has been enlarged to accommodate the production and to expand the production which formerly took place at Charity, and today there is more planting material available on the Essequibo Coast than before, when there were these two separate entities. That is the rationalisation that is taking place.

A question has been asked about land and water transport, what is wrong with that, and the reason for the apparent increase. What we have done here is that we have merged two Heads, that is on page 80, which reflects what was previously provided under water transport; \$9,090 under Revised Estimates in 1977; \$10,000 under Approved Estimates; and \$12,358 Actual for 1976. And if you look at the bottom of the following page, you will see an item called “Maintenance of Vehicles” where we spent \$310,931 in 1976 and \$144,000 in 1977. Now that has been merged with Water Transport this year, again rationalising the position. Actually, if

one added \$144,000 and \$10,000, one would have got \$154,000. Instead we have added almost \$150,000.

There is more money this year to service our land and water transport facilities to bring better service to the farmers throughout the country and this is more apposite to the question in the earlier item, that is subhead 2, Transport and Travelling, when the comrade asked whether this amount was ample to meet the travelling needs of the Field Assistants. I am very grateful for that solicitude for the well-being and efficiency of our field staff.

I wish to say, as I have said before, the increase under Land and Water Transport will greatly accommodate the officers who have to travel and when added to the provision under Transport and Travelling, we consider that this should be adequate this year with the officers themselves exercising due care and attention, for example, to pool transport wherever it is possible and so regulate visits that they are not time wasting but actually productive. With that contribution by the officers themselves these two sums in the aggregate should suffice for those activities of the Ministry's field staff.

Subhead 9, Purchase, Production and Distribution of Seeds and Plants: With respect to the comment made that the river farmers have placed an order and didn't get the material, I will look into this matter and get details to ensure that they get their order because we have an abundance of seeds and planting material for all farmers throughout Guyana. Something might have happened there. Now that it has been brought to attention at this level, it will be tackled and solved. But we are expanding on the availability of seeds and planting material for farmers throughout the country. Members must not only think of what has been provided on this vote to meet these needs. In addition, we have the Guyana Sugar Corporation which is now shortly to become GAIL, Guyana Agricultural Industries Ltd. which is engaging in production and which will be producing crops, the seeds of which will be available to farmers. Already, we are using seeds produced by GuySuCo to distribute to farmers, seeds such as black-eye peas.

And those comrades who buy black-eye peas and don't plant them but put them in the pot, I wish to warn that the Ministry treats these seeds before they go out to farmers with bactericides, to prevent bacterial diseases, and with fungicide, to prevent fungus. The peas should not be eaten because they are poisonous in that form. So the farmers will really be risking a great deal in terms of their health and well being in consuming the seeds instead of planting them. I would assume that had farmers eaten the seeds that had poison on them, we would have had a number of cases of death. So far, no deaths have been reported from Union and elsewhere. I think the hon. Member was misinformed, Cde. Chairman.

In addition to this vote, which would supply seed and planting materials, as I said, GUYSUCO will be planting. The Rice Board just reaped a crop from the Black Bush Polder and all these Corporations are involved in agricultural diversification. The Rice Board not only grows rice, it supplies seeds to farmers. It now plants black-eye peas and also, cassava of high yielding varieties. We have planted some 15 acres at Somerset and Berks and those varieties will be distributed for the benefit of our Pomeroon farmers. This question of the price of cassava will be tackled by the farmers getting higher production and earning higher income, far higher than a price increase will ever give them.

5.05 p.m.

The bee-keeping industry is not a major industry and I don't think it is our intention ever to make bee-keeping a major agricultural industry in Guyana. I know of no country in the world where bee-keeping is a major industry. It is a subsidiary industry. It is an appendage of one's agriculture, and bees are kept mainly sometimes to help in cross pollination of the crop you are planting and your primary concern is therefore your crops. You encourage useful insects including bees to be there to help in cross-pollination which would result in the crop giving higher yield and this is how we regard bee-keeping in Guyana: subsidiary to, supplementary to,

an appendage to our major industries, crops like coconuts and citrus and the like and enough honey will be produced in relation to the extent of those crops. But we are going a bit beyond; we are trying to exploit some of the forest flowers which produce nectar from which honey is made and we are encouraging people as far as the North West, the Mazaruni Potaro, the Rupununi areas to keep bees to produce honey to provide themselves with a source of sugar and for exporting the surpluses to Georgetown.

The next item which was referred to was subhead 16 which deals with the question of artificial insemination. All I wish to do is to assure Cde. Dalchand that the Ministry will continue with its artificial insemination service and will continue to expand and to intensify the artificial insemination service in all areas in Guyana.

With respect to subhead 17, Fisheries Investigations and Research, about which Cde. Belgrave spoke so much – and we understood why he spoke about fish at such great length, because he is an expert on fish, notably cat fish, and salt fish. He has spoken about cold fish and hard fish! I have tackled a number of fishes in my time, as you well know, sir, but it has never been my misfortune to tackle a hard fish, not even a cold fish! But be that as it may, I wish to assure Cde. Belgrave that we are engaging in very intensive research. You, Cde. Chairman, intervened correctly to remind the member of the collaboration with the USSR on the exploitation and the research being conducted in our new fishery zone.

We have a co-operative research programme going with the USSR; we have a co-operative research programme going with the Government of Cuba and there are other research programmes – though not as intensive – going with the Ministry of Overseas Development of the U.K. and the Canadian Government on the use of the by-catch from shrimp trawlers. We are also co-operating with the U.S. Fish and Wild Life Service on the biology, the life history of the shrimp which we find out there so that we will know how to regulate shrimping to conserve the

resources so that we do not over-shrimp or shrimp at the times of the year when we ought not to be shrimping.

There is provision in the Maritime Boundaries Act which we enacted last year to ensure conservation. For example, that Act will regulate the number of boats that fish and shrimp in the fishery zone; it will regulate the amount of fish that they can catch, the times of the year that they can catch the fish and shrimp, and the type of gear that they use, including size of nets, etc. Already, the action taken by the Guyana Government to prevent the plundering of its resources out in the fishery zone by unauthorised trawlers by arresting those trawlers has had a very beneficial effect on the ecology because it appears that these foreign-based trawlers, quite unauthorised, which had been operating in that zone, had virtually been scraping away and carrying away all the marine life; young fish, old fish, young prawns and shrimp and old prawns and shrimp alike. Now that the shrimping is being regulated by so far preventing these unauthorised trawlers from operating, we have discovered that the catch per trawler has increased and we find that the prawns are developing already to a larger size. By these means and methods, the resources will be protected and conserved and regulated.

Our own Ministry with its very slender resources, last year conducted a survey of the rivers and inshore, the mud flats, because the trawlers do not go there, with a view to conserving the resources. This related to the size and type of nets which should be used because sometimes nets are used which scrape everything up and reduce the fish population. The results are now being analysed with a view to legislating for regulating the size and type of seines to be used in the estuaries and inshore. So much for fisheries investigation.

Now subhead 24, Grant to the Guyana School of Agriculture Corporation, let me state definitely and categorically and firmly that Guyanese students pay no fees to the Guyana School of Agriculture. Their tuition is free of charge and is paid by the State and is included in this subvention. Information that the fees had been doubled was erroneous. The School attracts

students not only from Guyana but from the entire Region and as far as Africa – we have two African students – and those fees are paid by their Government under grants. In one case, the Canadian International Development Agency paid the fees for a number of students and since the cost of operation of the School has increased, we have increased those fees applicable to foreign students but have not imposed any fees whatever on the local students. At the School, students do participate in exercises, they do eat from the cafeteria and in some of these activities, there have been modest increases, but certainly not on tuition fees.

With respect to the School of Agriculture, I wish to say that the School is contributing very greatly to its maintenance. Last year it generated some \$709,000 mainly from production of livestock, including pork, milk, poultry and the like. They grow crops of rice and vegetables and other food crops. Increasingly we are asking the School to try to meet its cost and it is striving so to do but nevertheless, inflation is quite against the School and this imposes some burden. The School, at the moment is meeting something like 60 percent of its operating cost and I think great credit should be paid to the School's administration for that achievement. **[Applause]**

Though not relevant, I thought the Chairman might have stopped Cde. Persaud a moment ago but you, Cde. Chairman, are a man with a big heart, great charity and tolerance and you allowed him to speak on the Faculty of Agriculture at U.G. That is not the Guyana School of Agriculture but I will just answer him briefly. He is saying that we started with only twenty students. Many agricultural faculties in the world have started with even less. Right here, the U.W.I., with all its resources and funding from the Ford Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, British Government, when they started its faculty, it started with twenty students of which only ten graduated.

14.3.78

National Assembly

5.15 – 5.25 p.m.

5.15 p.m.

So that we are not ashamed that we first started with a number that reflects our resources in Guyana, modest though they are. Eight disappeared from U.W.I. and we know many students enter the portals of a university and sometimes half disappear on the way even before they attend the first year. They become afraid of the curriculum. In this case, perhaps, since we hope to achieve a very high standard of valued B.Sc. in Agriculture, the standard of work set is very high and it might have frightened those early entrants.

In the first year, the students are being trained in the Natural Sciences and we have all the teaching staff, all the professors, all the lecturers already available at the University of Guyana to give those courses. In year two, they will then be getting the Agricultural Sciences and the staff will be provided to give that training.

With respect to the National Cane Farming Committee, Cde. Dalchand says they need additional or improved representation. The Committee is representative; we have selected members from throughout Guyana. Members are due to be re-appointed this year again and if at present his area is not represented – we know the Corentyne is, East Bank Demerara is – we will try to give West Demerara a chance to get on the Committee when the membership is being re-constituted this year.

In so far as cane farming is concerned, the cane farmer is receiving services from Guysuco. We do not want to have a multiplicity of organisations to service the farmers. Just as the Rice Board services rice farmers, we are saying that Guysuco should service sugar-cane farmers. In pursuit of this, we have established a cane farming department in GuySuCo which will work exclusively with cane farmers, giving them advice, technical guidance and all possible help and assistance. That department will be increasingly strengthened so that the Cane Farming Committee itself will be the forum where farmers may discuss their problems. On the sub-

committee, there are GuySuCo representatives, to ensure that GuySuCo take action in giving them the type of service that they decide is best for them.

With respect to subhead 37, Contribution to the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute, this Institute serves the entire Caribbean and is based in Trinidad and Tobago. We have been getting some service from this Institute. Personally, I would admit that we should and ought to get somewhat more than we are presently getting from the Institute, but the Institute nevertheless is doing research in Trinidad on a number of crops that are applicable to Guyana. We draw from them the seeds of new varieties. Recently, we got the seed of dwarf fast-maturing pigeon peas; we got seeds of other things like corn, sweet potatoes and the like. Here in Guyana the Institute has been engaged in the intermediate savannahs of Ebini and on the CARICOM Corn/Soya bean project at the Eldorado Savannahs and is investigating soil fertility problems. As we know well, soils in that area are not as fertile as the coastal soils, so the Institute has been enquiring into and doing research on improving the fertility of those soils.

The Institute is also engaged in the coconut industry. We have been doing work on the coconut industry, mainly in terms of reducing damage to the coconut palm by insects. Members would know of the campaigns we have going around the country to control the borer that attacks the heart of the coconut palm. We inject into the coconut palm the necessary insecticide and this controls it. You might have seen our officers going about injecting coconut palms. This has been working very well and making a contribution to increasing our coconut productions. Cde. Chairman, I think these are all the items to which reference was made.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: There is one question arising. The question I wish to ask is with respect to black-eye peas. Is the Minister aware that the selling price of black-eye peas is \$1.20 per pint?

The Chairman: That is not relevant, you did not raise that question.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Cde. Ally raised the question of development of black-eye.

The Chairman: And the answer was specifically directed to Cde. Ally who said the people were eating the black-eye instead of planting it. There was no question of price.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: What I wanted him to know was that peas are being sold at \$1.20 per pint and the Minister has gone down on record from time to time in respect of banned split peas. What I want to ask the Minister is that he should not at the present time, and I should say no time, give consideration to the banning –

The Chairman: Cde. Persaud, under which Head are you speaking? The Minister has not said anything about that. I will now put the Head.

Head 28, Ministry of Agriculture – Agriculture - \$7,785,574 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Pages 82 to 85.

HEAD 29 – MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE

Lands and Surveys

Question proposed that the sum of \$2,785,817 for Head 29, Ministry of Agriculture – Lands and Surveys, stand part of the Estimates.

5.25 p.m.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Unlike the other Heads, I do not want to ask the traditional questions about the existence of vacancies, though I am conscious of the need to have the necessary survey personnel, because the question of survey and suitability cannot be over-emphasised. I want to ask the Minister if he doesn't think this type of structure is obsolete, obsolete in the sense that if we are thinking, and we hope that the Government is thinking, along the lines of serious land development in this country, we need more than the traditional land staff that deals with land surveying and preparing of maps. What I was thinking is that if the country is to move dynamically into agricultural development, you need that concept to be reflected in the structure within the Estimates. I am not saying there is no need, probably there is. There is need for total integration of all these groups of agricultural personnel, in the way the government has correctly moved now to integrate Hydraulics with the Ministry of Agriculture. The point I am making is not only integration and having it under the Ministry of Agriculture but these officers, in my view, over the years have tended to operate in isolation from the agricultural development of this country and hence services to the various land schemes. There are a number of them listed on page 85, Garden of Eden, Onverwagt –

The Chairman: We are dealing now with page 85 and don't worry with the other pages?

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: I want to deal with it because the Minister is here. Cde. Chairman, what consideration is the Ministry of Agriculture giving to this whole concept which I raised during the debate on land reform? I will refer to the specific – if you will permit me to speak, and I am sure you will agree with me when I cite them – things like Resumption of State Lands, Working Party expenses. But when you look at the expenses there is not shown –

The Chairman: That is subhead 22.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: - any intention to carry out this process of resumption in spite of the fact that the Minister is in possession of a report from a Committee. There are countless areas in this country where people have been renting state land at infinitesimal sums running into years and those people, if I may use the term, have been sub-letting or renting to others at sums that constitute a scandal that could threaten the concept of socialism.

It is clear in this country that there are people who have holdings of State lands and are becoming rich from the resources of the State, and, at the same time, exploiting people in every sense of the word not only on the question of rentals but other supporting actions that put the farmers virtually in a state of sufferance. In fact, though they may be tenants in some way they operate more like tenants at sufferance and the time has come. I cited one area during the Budget debate – at Laluni. I want the Minister to tell us positively what they are doing at Laluni, where the Demerara Tobacco Company has an area of 2,000 acres, renting it to farmers, the farmers are involved in tilling the soil, they are paying a rent and they are being treated anyhow, and they are under a multitude of restrictions of operation in the production of tobacco. There are a number of other people; the department must have their names. I am not talking about people who own transports. I am making my contribution to this debate on State Lands. I would like to see this Ministry that is supposed to be the Ministry of Lands, excluding the survey, carry out a survey to ascertain how many acres of land are held in the manner in which I pointed out, also carry out an inquiry to see how many farmers are actually involved in production, and what, in fact, they are producing. When this survey is carried out, there can be no doubt, I am sure, we will have a surprising revelation in this House and in this country when that report is compiled and presented.

Ending my contribution on that concept I wish to call this afternoon for the restructuring of this department within the Ministry of Agriculture. Surveying is interrelated to the whole agricultural development. The servicing of the various land schemes has been neglected from

time to time. I wonder at the failure of some of the schemes whether Mara, Onverwagt and others that are still functioning but should have been contributing more to production in this country. They would have functioned even better if they were tied up directly with the operations section of the Ministry of Agriculture. In my view there is this separation.

What are the functions of land officers, whether they function in Black Bush or they function in any other part of this country, collect rent, the general over-looking and supervisory control, if you call it that, making out lists of those who do not pay, what are their arrears and submit them to the Ministry for action to be taken in the civil courts. I have reached that point of my thinking on the question of agriculture. Even where there are arrears of rent and other charges within all the land schemes, the problem ought to be approached differently from the general collection of Government revenue. I see an item there production of revenue. I hope that item is not to harass the farmers, I hope not. The point I make is that this department must be restructured; there must be closer collaboration and integration in reality with the process of agricultural development. The Minister would probably like to tell us what surveys have been carried out recently, what new areas have been identified, whether the Government has any intention, if those areas have been so identified, to allocate land, and probably to indicate to the House the suitability of the soil so that we can know what type of new produce will be coming out. We cannot ignore the need for diversification and all these factors go to influence the pursuance of a programme and policy of diversification.

No so long ago, one comrade who spoke before me, hinted at the coconut industry. I hinted last year at diversification that can take place. What I would wish to say is if the intention is there, there is no physical evidence of diversification in any part of this country and they can see through all the areas where the coconut industry is existing.

I hope then that we see in 1978 this definite call for the land reform law which I called for earlier. We need land reform; this has to come, but at the moment the limited point I take is that those who are holding State Lands and abusing, if you want to call it, a privilege, should be stopped because too many farmers are suffering at the moment. I am sure that the Minister himself has knowledge of farmers complaining particularly in this field.

5.35 p.m.

Now, Cde. Chairman, It also on page 85 to refer to subhead 23, Investigation of Application for Lands: I would like to see this removed from the Estimates in the future. **[Interruption]** We had a Land Selection Committee; I think that was the name. We have not heard anything about it. I do not know if it is still functioning but what I say is that the pattern for the leasing of land should change. I have brought into this Parliament before letters to show where people have applied for lands and after two years, all they had in their possession was their acknowledgements and probably reminder letters. What they need is something more speedy, something more dynamic. Those people have applied for land to go into agricultural production but the time lapse was so great that those people have virtually migrated from this country in great frustration. What you need is people who have agricultural skills and aptitudes. You should give them land, encourage them; offer them the necessary incentives and if the Government does that, the government will not have to go to the ridiculous to take people who are not made up that way or who do not have the necessary aptitude for this type of activity to ask them to go and plant and reap and be involved in agriculture. You have people who want to be involved and this Government does not permit them to be involved.

I challenge the Minister this afternoon to say that he is willing to consider very broadly on a fair basis, on a totally impartial basis – I am not saying that he is impartial because he is not directly involved on the land committee, but I make the point generally that people who are interested in land should be allowed to apply and those applications should be dealt with

expeditiously. All the necessary assistance should be given to them because we have to take into account all the necessary ancillary services that must go towards real dynamic production within the agricultural sector, in the form of loans, extension services and what have you. The country suffers greatly from the lack of these services which are so vital. Some of the extension stations do not have anything and in fact, we need more such stations. We need stations with facilities so that people could go near to the area where they are. So, I make that point with respect to subhead 23.

Subhead 19, Wauna Land Development Scheme. I dealt with subhead 23 before because of the relation to the point I was making; I thought it was relevant to the point of land development. Wauna is a good project. I think we are talking here about “abé” oil but the Minister knows that this project should have been off the ground and when I say “off the ground”, I mean that it should have been in full-scale operation since 1976. Unfortunately, in 1978, less than a thousand acres are under cultivation. My information is that 2,500 acres should have been added each year. If you take 1976 and 1977, you will see what the position should have been but in 1978, it is close to a thousand acres.

We know that that is the position. In fact, the scheme will offer many new jobs. Now I am talking differently; I am not talking about people who are employed; I am talking about people who can be sent, who can migrate from thickly populated areas, be it from Georgetown or any other part of the country and go there and find employment, not only in the actual agricultural development, but surely the Government has to bring in machinery; the Government has to establish a factory because it has expenses. It costs a lot of money. It is vital. If you relate what it will cost there and what the output is likely to be with what your oil bill is and what the price is to the consumer, the argument is very sound, that if you invest there, you stay there, there will be output. In fact, it is totally productive and it can work. Those comrades in the House who live in the country a little bit know what “abé” is and we know that our parents made it with their hands; it is nothing new. So the Scientist does not have something so tremendous to

his credit. I would like to commend the scientific brain of those people who were not trained and who were able to use and make “abé” and be productive and useful. They were able to conserve and to live within their economy because of their own skills and because of their determination to use the facilities that existed. While we probably commend the present-day scientist, we cannot ignore those people, they are not ancient people, they have lived in our times and they have led the way in so many fields. That is why I say we are far behind at Wauna. The Minister must concede that we are far behind.

Demerara River: I saw this scheme; I have the information; I know what is taking place. What I would like the Minister to do is to direct greater attention and probably in this House, I want him to tell us positively what is the stage of the palm oil development, when the Government intends to set up the factory. We know the time factor that is involved in the maturity of the palm tree. There is a time factor; so many years have to pass. I know that fact, so, do not let us bother about that. The Minister also will concede what is happening in some of those areas. He probably knows that there are people outside of the organised project who are also producing, who are also planting “abé”. We have irregular planting, hence if this continues, you will not be able to carry out the proper assessment as to the time of maturity. If the scheme is taken into account and you really get the experienced agricultural officer on the field then he will be able to advise those involved to plant in a regularised way so that maturity will come at the same time so the whole process of conversion of the “abé” into oil can take place in an orderly manner. I wish to ask the Minister to give attention to that.

On subhead 18, Soesdyke/Linden Land Development Project –

The Chairman: You are going backwards this time.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Yes, as I said, that is so because I related the land with the items as they appeared on the Estimates. I hope you forgive me for this. The Minister

should tell us where this project is, what is being done. Is this vote in any way related to the Moblissa Project? If so, we have heard the news item on the radio of the number of gallons of milk that that have been sold to Linden. It is clear that milk cannot come to this side because we do not have enough production of milk. We know the state of the Milk Pasteurisation Plant. It does not help. We know that in processing cheese – probably the Minister will correct this if it is wrong – the rumour is we are using imported cheese and we are mixing it and you sort of have processed cheese on the market and not the processed cheese that we think about.

At Moblissa, at the Soesdyke Project, they stopped bottling the milk and they have gone back to a primitive practice. All these things are happening and we would like to see serious development of our dairy industry. The potential is great. Some farmers in nearby areas have already sold out their cattle. They have diverted it to other sources of income. I do not know if the Government will allow the situation to droop. Of course, as I said, the bill given by the Minister for the importation of milk would not have been that high. We are not doing well, so I call for some information as to what is taking place at the Soesdyke/Linden Land Development. Is Moblissa included in that? I do not see anything specific about that.

5.45 p.m.

Subhead 17, Cane Grove – La Bonne Mere Land Development Schemes; I want to ask the Minister if he is aware that a number of farmers have suffered from time to time and specifically in 1968 as a result of the flood. Some went to court and damages were awarded to them and we know that representation has been made by a number of them who also suffered. Here I ask the Minister to give sympathetic consideration to the claims of those farmers and to bear in mind that Cane Grove is a scheme. We have spoken in this House already about Hope Estate. Cane Grove is the same or worse. You look at the scheme. We need a Government scheme. Look at the houses and water supply and the drainage and all of that. It is one of the areas that depress people, the conditions and environment, and I think there are a number of

contributing factors to the state at Cane Grove. The principal factor for not finishing that area is the lack of water control. I am no Engineer, I do not know if that will solve the problem. When nature decides to be unkind, I do not know whether the facilities that have been put there will offer the protection that farmers there so badly need. Those are all the points I wish to make.

Cde. Dalchand: Page 85, subheads 10 to 18. Here I feel Government is slashing its contribution towards these schemes. It can only mean two things, one, that work has become neglected and, two, that the occupiers of these estates and land settlement schemes will be called upon to pay higher maintenance charges. The point I want to make here is that many of the major works in these estates and land settlement schemes have deteriorated so much that they will need a new crop of capital expenditure to be allocated. I see it as a bad investment to neglect these works and to start new land development. I want to urge the Minister to re-examine the expenditure in these areas, to consider bringing these works up-to-date and probably maintaining them so as to allow the people in these areas to produce the expected productivity they are calling for in the area. Many of these works are being neglected. All of these works were constructed long ago and they are not being properly maintained. I want to ask the Minister to re-examine the situation and to have these works properly examined.

On the question of subhead 18, Soesdyke/Linden Land Development Project, I hope that this will take into account development of land throughout that area which will include offering more social services to the people engaged in tobacco planting.

Cde. Ally: Cde. Chairman, page 85, subhead 13, Black Bush Polder Land Development Scheme. I would like to ask the hon. Minister to say at least how some of these big landlords and millers got into the Black Bush Polder and are planting between six and fifteen plots of land. I have some names here but would not like to call all of them. I will just call two areas. One of the persons is living at No. 74 Village, and the cultivation plots are at Yakusari South, plots No. 48, No. 54, No. 115, No. 139 and No. 140. This is a big landlord and miller. The other lives at No. 49 Village, and the plots at Yakusari South are cultivation plots 59, 102, 130, 131, 144, and

173. This is bribery and corruption. At least the Minister knows something about it. When I say he knows something about, I mean he knows about these people on the lands there. I only hope he will investigate and see how these people got in there. I want the Minister to understand that there are settlers' children living in Black Bush Polder and there are families of four, five and six who have applied for lands since 1966 and 1967. On to this day they cannot get a plot. But people who did not apply for lands and some of them who have just applied got the lands. Many people from outside, and not within the Polder, got land whereas the rules of the Polder say the person who owns a plot of land at Black Bush Polder must be living within the Polder.

Will the Minister further say why drainage and irrigation trenches were not cleaned for this present spring crop? Is it because the Government is not interested in the present crop? Also, I would like the Minister to say why rice farmers at Black Bush Polder were told to make water tracks in the irrigation trenches if they wanted to save the crops. This gives the impression that the Government is not interested in saving the crop, therefore, they do not clean the trenches. Lands at Black Bush Polder which are under drainage and irrigation are dry. Many plots of land are still dry. They are sun-baked until they become white and cracked. Right now rice is brown instead of green in the Black Bush Polder. I wish the Minister would tell us what is really responsible for this. Is the Minister also aware of the fact that street drains and kokers are covered with tall grass and bushes –

The Chairman: you just asked the same question, why the drains and trenches are not cleaned You are going to ask the same thing again?

Cde. Ally: This is something different. I mean the drains and the streets within the residential area. This is in the homestead now. These drains, streets and kokers have tall grasses which have taken over the drains and in some places earth have fallen into the drains and those drains are all silted up. I only hope the Minister will carry out an investigation because right now the farmers are living in fear that when the rains come the entire crop in the homestead will

automatically go under water, not only the provision crop but even stocks will suffer. I hope the Minister will look into this before the rains come and get everything rectified.

Will the Minister say how soon the farmers who suffered losses by wilful flooding last year – because it was not an act of God, it was an act of man. Because of negligence, the people's crop was flooded and they lost, they suffered –

5.55 p.m.

The Chairman: Cde. Ally which item is that?

Cde. Ally: Black Bush Polder.

The Chairman: This is a development Scheme it has got nothing to do with flooding.

Cde. Ally: Cde. Chairman, what I am saying is that these very settlers, people living in Black Bush Polder, their lands were wilfully flooded out last year --

The Chairman: Who wilfully flooded them out, God? The irrigation department wilfully flooded them? Opened the water and flooded them out?

Cde. Ally: Cde. Chairman, the people who were responsible for drainage and irrigation pumped water into those fields and the streets were under water, knee down. The people's crops were flooded. The Regional Minister is aware of this. The people --

The Chairman: You know something, for the short time you may have here now, you will have to speak correct English, and not to say all sorts of things that you like. What "wilfully" means? It means that somebody deliberately did it. Somebody deliberately did that?

Cde. Ally: Cde. Chairman, they neglected the work because the Superintendent does not live in the Black Bush Polder. They themselves admit that nobody knew what was going on. Houses are built at Black Bush Polder for them to stay in Black Bush Polder but they are not living there. And so the farmers became restless, they --

The Chairman: If I pass and hit you, that means I wilfully hit you.

Cde. Ally: Cde. Chairman, as a result of the flood, many farmers suffered some by up to \$2,736.

The Chairman: You don't know how I suffer listening to you all.

Cde. Ally: Cde. Chairman, I am sorry, I can't help it. I have the interest of the people at heart and some people do not care because they haven't got anything to do. They don't care whether the people are suffering or not. **[Interruption]**

The Chairman: You will know how very soon for how much longer will I suffer? Whoever made the remark, I want to tell him that I will not resign and give him that pleasure. I will make him toe the line of the rules.

Cde. Ally: Cde. Chairman, I wish the Minister to tell us how soon these people will receive compensation for the loss they suffered during that period of flooding. Will the Minister say why no effort was made to repair the roads and streets within the homestead area? Owing to the conditions of these roads and streets, people are suffering losses and even school children suffer. In bad weather, it becomes impossible for them to use the roads and as a result of that, children absent themselves from school.

The main tranches, those are the big canals, and the small canals running across, we call them water courses, have boards spanning them. One board is about 12 inches in width and it carries no rail. During the wet season the boards become very slippery and are not only dangerous to school children but even the adults fall and hit themselves on these boards. I wish the Minister would look into this and if it is not possible to build broader bridges, at least to put rails on these boards.

The Chairman: Cde. Ally, if you don't have any relevant question, I will move on.

Cde. Ally: I would like to ask the Minister how much the tomato factory at Black Bush Polder is costing Government per year for maintenance and security. I would like to draw the Minister's attention to the fact that all three mills at Black Bush Polder have been taken over by the G.R.B. and as a result of G.R.B. not milling rice for farmers in the Black Bush Polder, farmers are faced with great hardships. They will have to sell their paddy to G.R.B. or they will have to transport their paddy long distances so as to get to other mills. This incurs additional expenses because farmers in most cases will have to board and lodge outside. On the other hand, as a result of this farmers now are unable to provide rice for local consumption so they will have to buy rice from the G.R.B. for local consumption.

The Chairman: Where must they buy it from, you? You want to encourage them to break the law?

Cde. Ally: Cde. Chairman, these people used to mill their own rice when the mills were milling rice for the farmers. This is the point I am trying to make.

The Chairman: That is what is happening. They are providing the rice for local consumption and not selling it to the Board.

Cde. Ally: This is domestic consumption I am talking about. And farmers cannot resell rice to the Board. They cannot do that. Because the rice they are buying from the Board is far cheaper than the rice they sell to the Board. They are not subsidising rice. It was \$3,185,017 in subsidy. There was no subsidy on rice.

The Chairman: Comrade, let's go on.

Cde. Ally: I am just saying what the farmers are faced with. This is super rice. From one pint of rice this is what they get, super rice. This is what we call unclassified rice. Mixed with number two grade. This is white rice.

The Chairman: Any other member wishes to speak? Yes, Cde. Dindayal.

Cde. Dindayal: I would like to ask the Minister to look into the possibility of transportation for State Land Rangers. For instance, the State Land Rangers at Essequibo were unable to pay visits especially in the riverain areas for many months now. This has created undue hardships to these farmers. For instance, if a farmer had to pay just a pittance of \$2 in rates, he will have to suffer undue hardship in transportation and loss of time so as to come right down to Suddie to pay that money.

Under subhead 2, Transport and Travelling, there is a significant increase in transportation, land and water. I don't know if the Minister intends to use some of this fund to service this area. I would like the Minister to say.

The Chairman: Cde. Minister.

Cde. Kennard: Cde. Chairman, Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud dealt with the question of land reform and land administration and the structure of this department of the Ministry in

general. As he said, he didn't deal with the specific pages, pages 82, 84, and a part of 85, then he dealt with Personal Emoluments. He said that the structure was not suited for the problem of land in Guyana. I would contest that observation, Cde. Chairman. As you know this department is structured into a section that is administrative. We have got to administer. One deals with surveys and the other with development. Now in the context of the actual position as it relates to the structure of the Ministry, when an applicant makes application for land, it has to be investigated. One must determine whether the applicant has the means to develop the land or whether he deserves to be allocated the land. Is he unemployed? The size of his family. Has he agricultural experience? And the like.

6.05 p.m.

The purpose to which he would put that land. Is it going to be used for exploitation? I shall refer to claims about exploitation in a moment. Or is it going to be used for specific and direct cultivation? Because the Government's policy is to give land to those who will directly till the soil and cultivate the crop. The Government's policy is not to issue land to people for hoarding, for personal aggrandisement, and for speculation. The Government issues land in order to contribute to production which means that the applicant must till the soil, must produce the crop and produce the income for himself and the State. So one must investigate the applicant. Having investigated the applicant – and we have got a number of applications, the Land Department must clearly identify where that land is, then clearly demarcate its boundaries because we know too well the number of cases which reach the Court in terms of private properties where boundaries are disputed. You just cannot issue land and distribute land without proper surveys, which means you have to have a Survey Department. People will go out into the field to define boundaries and to see that the land is indeed State land and it is not private land or land that is already leased to someone else, before that land is distributed. So our Surveys

Department, apart from the machinery for investigation, is an important division of the Ministry. You have to survey land before it is distributed.

With respect to land distribution, I want to make it very clear that the Ministry ensures that there is no favouritism or nepotism in land distribution by setting up land selection committees. No land is issued to anyone unless the application goes through the selection committee and the selection committee makes a recommendation based on its analysis of all applications and the like. And then that land is issued. So, the setting up of a proper department for investigations and one for survey is very important.

In the case of Government Land Settlements, having identified land, the Government must develop land where the Government itself wishes to create these formal land settlements in areas of need and areas of production capabilities and we have got these land development schemes – they have been enumerated in Essequibo, at Black Bush, Cane Grove, Linden/Soesdyke Highway, Wauna and the like and the function of the Land Development Department is to develop that land, to clear bush, to put in roads, to put in the drainage and irrigation facilities, to dig the drains, in some cases to ensure the installation of the necessary social infrastructure like water supplies, electricity supplies, ensure that there are schools for settlers' children, Police Stations to deal with elements that are anti-social and anti-people. These are the functions of the Land Development Department and thereafter to ensure that the settler is well-serviced, that he gets the tools to do the job, the water if he is a rice farmer, the drainage etc. He has another important function and I will refer to some specifics later when replying to Cde. Roshan Ally. He has the function of ensuring the collection of the nominal rent which the government charges for occupation of lands on these land development projects. So we must have the machinery to do these things. We must, therefore, have a Land Development Department. I will deal in some detail with some of the remarks.

The question of the general land policy: We have heard that there are many people who get land on lease from the Government and then in turn would rent that land at a high rental to farmers. This applies largely to private property, that is, transported land, it happens on estates where there are both transported land and leased land. Sometimes it is difficult to differentiate what is transported and what is leased land on a particular estate and then we speak of punitive action in various forms by the landlord against the tenant. I wish to state very clearly that the Government is moving and legislation will shortly be before this House to ensure that land which is leased by the State is used for productive purposes and not for exploitation. And wherever there are clear instances of exploitation and where there are instances of land being used for purposes for which the land is not leased, the State will not hesitate to resume that land and redistribute that land to deserving applicants. State land will be resumed and redistributed and some of those landlords who are behaving in the manner described by Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud will be dealt with condignly and strongly under the proposed legislation.

Secondly, we would wish to see tenant farmers moving to owning and tilling their own soil and not remaining in a permanent state of bondage, as it were, to landlords. The Government is prepared to assist tenants of estates to acquire lands from land-owners, and is prepared further to use the law to ensure that the price at which that land is bought by the tenant from the landlord would be reasonable and within the means of the tenant concerned, using the legislative machinery which is well-known and which is at our disposal. We want the farmers to have full possession of their lands and to till that land. We do not want to have or to encourage the continuance of landlordism.

Remark was passed about the position specifically of the farmers at Laluni. The Ministry has taken note and will investigate what hardships, if any, are being borne by farmers at Laluni. I know that the farmers at Laluni are contracted to produce tobacco under a system of management, under a system whereby they obtain credit from the company, they obtain a guaranteed market from the company for their tobacco and there are certain conditions attached

to the benefits that they enjoy from the company. But where we do find any case where punitive action is prevailing in relation to any of the tenants at that particular property, I wish to assure the House that the necessary action will be taken against the company concerned.

6.15 p.m.

With respect to distribution of lands, in general, as I pointed out last year, the first act of land reform that the Government pursued was to take over all the land in Guyana which was formerly owned and planted by expatriate companies. I refer to the sugar industry. Nationalisation brought those lands into the public realm and under public control. Some of that land is being farmed by the State and some of the land is being distributed to farmers for cultivation. We are moving further in terms of land reform to ensure that we distribute State land from the national bank of State land to farmers who are in need and farmers who deserve land, including landless farmers. But this policy of distributing land to the landless has been abused by our own Guyanese. They have sought these lands greedily and aggressively and many have left the land unfarmed and untilled and in bush and we have to take steps to resume those lands for re-distribution. The method of re-distribution prescribed by the law is a bit tedious and I would like to announce that the legislation that will be brought before this House will have provisions to expedite the whole procedure for resuming State land and ensuring their prompt re-distribution. At present, the legal process takes something like a year to resume and re-distribute State lands. We want this to be done in the space of a month or two and the necessary legislation is now being drafted with this in view.

Finally, with respect to privately-owned lands, I wish to state also that where there are privately-owned lands which are provided with State infrastructure in their environs, but which are allowed to remain untilled and are allowed to grow bush, this will be looked at as well with a view to their acquisition by the State for re-distribution to the farming community. So our land reform process has a number of these dimensions. It has not been possible, for administrative

and financial reasons, to have attempted everything at the same time. We have moved step by step and these steps are now being accelerated in order to bring land to the tiller and the genuine farmer of Guyana.

In recent times the question that has been asked is what is our Survey Department doing? I must say they are over-worked with surveys throughout the length and breadth of Guyana. Quite recently they have had to survey the entire Tapakuma project. They are in the process of surveying the gigantic M.M.A. project and shortly they will be surveying the Black Bush Polder extension project. Last year, they went along the banks of the Essequibo River in the area of Rockstone to Anarika and surveyed some 20,000 acres of land. Our surveyors are being stretched very thinly and are working arduously and in conditions of great hardship. I think we should pay some tribute to those hardworking people who are trying to bring land to our Guyanese.

On page 85 a number of issues were raised and perhaps I can deal with them as they were raised. On subheads 2 and 6, assurances were sought that our land officers and rangers would have the necessary travelling facilities to go and inspect land and to issue permits to occupy land. I wish to give the assurance that this is clearly the case. The provisions here will enable these comrades to travel to do their jobs. But they must organise their jobs, as I said in the case of Field Assistants and Agricultural Officers. They must organise their jobs to avoid repetitive trips. They must be conscious of the State's money, to organise visits with other officers going together instead of each one going in his own motor car or his own launch at great cost to the State. They have got a duty also in terms of keeping within the financial resources of the nation. They cannot spend in Cadillac style and they must bear this in mind. Comrades over there must encourage them to practise the same sort of economy which the Minister has practised at all times.

Subhead 10, Essequibo Estates: I will deal with subheads 10, 17, 18, 19, 22 --

The Chairman: I think Cde. Dalchand asked about subheads 10 to 18 as one block.

Cde. Kennard: And other comrades dealt with subheads 19, 22, etc. I will deal with the last first because Cde. Roshan Ally also contributed to this question of Black Bush Polder, subhead 13. We must remember that the rents charged on these land development schemes represent a subsidy by the State to lucky settlers and farmers of those areas. In Black Bush, for example – and I think this applies to other schemes – the rent is \$17.50 per acre. This does not even cover the cost of maintaining the cost of drainage and irrigation. It does not include or cover the cost of anything else. What about the cost of maintaining the roads in the area, the cost involved in the other social services that we put into the area such as lights, water supplies, school facilities, agricultural facilities, etc? Farmers do not contribute as much as an iota to those services but yet they shout for services which perhaps they can get only in the United States or perhaps in the Soviet Union. They are asking for sophisticated services. They are making demands for things they can do for themselves: You, the Government, clean the parapets. You clean out our drains. Should we go into the yards and clean out the yards? Should we go into the houses and clean out the houses too? We should not encourage our settlers into this type of behaviour. They have a duty to contribute to the development of the State. They are already being subsidised.

We speak of self-reliance and self-help and so on. What self-help are they practising in any one of the schemes to maintain any of these schemes? What self-reliance are they practising in any one of these schemes? We cannot accede to the request that they make which would create an indolent and a parasitic community in Guyana. I am afraid I will have to re-check most of the submissions that have been made in this regard. It is for this reason that the Government is saying to the people that they must now move from State fraternalism-godfatherism to running their own affairs so that they can see what it means, where the shoe pinches. They can appreciate that they must maintain and not destroy the drainage and irrigation structures. They destroy our bridges, they destroy our revetments, and they destroy our boxes. Cde. Roshan Ally

knows that better than I do. When settler “A” destroys these structures, he is affecting settler “B” and settler “C”. We want them to manage their own affairs. Let them know what it is to run a community. The people in Georgetown and the municipalities are doing that. The people of our villages and local authorities are running their own affairs. They must be run by local authorities and then they will pay economic rates and not subsidised rates as at present.

In addition to this, despite the virtual peppercorn rent which these farmers are being charged in these land development projects, in Black Bush Polder alone, the farmers owe as arrears of rent some \$1,700,000. Isn't this a shame and disgrace? **[Interruption]**

The Chairman: Cde. Ally, the next time I hear you talk, I will ask you to leave this House. The Minister has been sitting quietly listening to everybody without any interruption.

6.25 p.m.

Cde. Kennard: When they are charged peppercorn rent, they don't even pay that rent. One scheme alone owes \$1.7 million. How can they now in the same breath ask that we must do everything for them? And they went on making wild claims about wilful damage being done by officers who are paid to serve them, and in fact who do serve them in terms of providing them with adequate drainage and irrigation.

We are calling on the settlers to get up and get, to be self-reliant and to practise self-help as other communities in the country, such as the people of Melanie Damishana, for example, and Vryheids Lust, they practise self-help and self-reliance activities. This includes the people of all the Estates: Cane Grove, the Essequibo Estates, Black Bush, Linden/Soesdyke. We are calling on all of them to do the same.

I was asked for details on what is taking place along the Linden/Soesdyke highway. They are producing crops, pineapples, chickens, pigs, ground provisions and vegetables. They have got the State farm at Moblissa, they are developing co-operative farms for farmers around Moblissa to produce milk. We have a very balanced and diversified agriculture taking place along the Linden/Soesdyke highway. These remarks, I think from the observations made under page 85 --

The Chairman: I think, Cde. Minister, an important observation was made by Cde. Roshan Ally in respect of landlords who hold several plots of land which is completely against the concept of what he believes in and accepts.

Cde. Kennard: The Government and the Ministry will not tolerate any abuse of the privileges that have been granted to these people on this land development project. When the Government took over Black Bush Polder in 1964 it found entrenched there a number of farmers and according to the register a number of these farmers still remain on the register. It would appear that some of the persons on the register have made illicit and illegal transfers of their rights to their plots to their friends or relatives or others. **[Interruption]**

The Chairman: Cde. Persaud, will you allow the Minister to answer!

Cde. Kennard: While on the register, you have got legitimate holders to some lands, the actual person who is farming the land might be someone else. So there is no transfer involved. The holder of the land has delegated the function of doing the farming to somebody else. We have set up a Committee under the Chairmanship of the regional Minister to look at this type of situation and where it can be proved that the tiller of the farms is not in fact the registered lessee, that land will be reclaimed and transferred.

Head 29: Ministry of Agriculture - Land and Surveys - \$2,785,817 – agreed to ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Comrades, a lot of latitude has been given on this Head, the asking of a lot of questions. We have 5 Heads more and Members will not be permitted to speak as long as they have on other occasions bearing in mind that the Minister has to reply.

Pages 86 to 88.

HEAD 30 – MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE – HYDRAULICS

Question proposed that the sum of \$3,675,738 for Head 30, Ministry of Agriculture – Hydraulics, stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Cde. Persaud.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: I have two short questions. The first one is, if the Minister could tell us whether the positions between items (1) to (4) are filled. There is nobody acting and this is an important department. I also want to ask him whether he is satisfied with the position of item (4), Specialist Engineer. In view of the need to have effective water control throughout the country, I think that we need more and I do not think that 4 Specialist Engineers can serve fully well the requirement of water control in our country.

Page 88, subhead 18, Maintenance of Drainage and Irrigation in other than declared areas: Could the Minister identify the areas that will benefit from this vote of \$100,000? Subhead 22, Special Grants to Drainage and Irrigation Areas to reduce assessments. I wonder if the Minister could explain. There is a provision here to assist to reduce drainage rates, but following the Official Gazette within recent times, we see that despite this vote nearly all the

areas of our country, all the local Authority areas have increased rates. I strongly support this provision, but what I cannot do is to reconcile it with the fact that though the provision is there, the rates have gone up substantially in almost all the areas. Probably the Minister can throw some light on that question.

The Chairman: If you are going to continue asking questions as you have been doing just now, I will not allow you to go on. Cde. Ally.

Cde. Ally: Just a short question. I would like to ask the Minister if he is aware of the fact --

The Chairman: which Head, which page? I am not a magician.

Cde. Ally: Page 88, subhead 15, Pumping Stations. I would like to ask the Minister whether he is aware of the fact that the Block III area, which covers No. 52 to No. 74 villages are suffering for some time now for irrigation water. We have an area of 14,500 acres of land, which is supposed to be under irrigation, but for the last autumn crop, last year out of that amount nearly 50 percent of the land suffered owing to the shortage of irrigation water. When you approach officials within the area, even the Regional Manager there, they all claim the pumps are not under their control, the pumps are directly controlled from Georgetown. They cannot say anything about increasing the revs or doing anything so as to help in the situation. The pumps are very old and the breakages are very frequent. I would like to ask the hon. Minister to look into this and see whether these pumps are that old and owing to their frequent breakages whether they should be replaced, and, if so, that they be replaced as early as possible because farmers are suffering for years now.

6.35 p.m.

Cde. Basir: Cde. Speaker, I would like to raise a point on page 88, subhead 20, Rivers, Creeks, Stellings etc. I am somewhat amazed if not confused about some duplicity which has appeared in this book because several things have appeared on the Ministry of economic Development and I see them appearing here. However, maybe this is due to my short experience in Parliament which places some constraint on my ability. I first wish to make this point that this subhead deals with Rivers, Creeks and Stellings etc. I believe it affords the laxity to deal with a point which might not be relevant to this. I only hope it is so. But seeing it has to deal with creeks, I wish to compliment the Minister of Agriculture for having cleared a creek in the Pomeroun area which has never been cleared since its origination.

I would also like to ask the Minister to examine the possibility of perhaps clearing a canal or re-siting that canal from Waramuri to Moruca Akuni in the Moruca area. That canal has to do with a population of about 5,000 people of whom about 1,000 are farmers and if that canal can be perhaps straightened up, the distance of twelve miles can be reduced to six miles. That would not cost \$40,000 but that would be of terrific economic importance to farmers in that area. I am certain Cde. Stoby and the hon. Minister, Cde. Duncan, will give full support in this issue and I would like to ask the hon. Minister to place this on his record.

Cde. Chairman: Cde. Dindayal.

Cde. Dindayal: Cde. Chairman, page 88, subhead 18, Maintenance of Drainage and Irrigation in other than declared Areas. I have noticed here there is a reduction in this vote which I am not in agreement with because in these areas farmers are suffering tremendous hardships due to lack of adequate drainage and irrigation facilities, especially the area from Maria's Lodge right down to Good Hope. These farmers can get adequate supply of water from the river if the drainage and irrigation trenches are properly maintained. Crop after crop, farmers are suffering

and I would like to ask the Minister to look into it to see at a later stage if an additional vote can be sought to service this area.

The Chairman: Cde. Minister.

Cde. Kennard: Cde. Chairman, the first item was subhead 15, Pumping Station, with particular reference to --

The Chairman: Not really, I think Cde. Persaud asked a general question about filling of four vacancies, items (1) to (4) on page 86.

Cde. Kennard: My apologies sir. There are two vacancies for Assistant Chief Hydraulics Officers and two for Specialist Engineers and these are expected to be filled shortly since recommendations have gone to the Public Service Commission.

The Chairman: I think he also went on to ask whether you think four Specialist Engineers are enough for the work they have to do.

Cde. Kennard: We consider the number adequate for the work that they have to do, in this context, and I will explain. In some of the new big schemes, provision is being made for Specialist posts there. For example, in MMA, we have transferred one Assistant Chief Hydraulics Officer, Cde. Dharry, to head that section of MMA and he will have supporting specialist staff. So for these big schemes we will have specialist staff so that the staff remaining in the Ministry *per se* will handle relatively smaller areas compared with the big schemes. So it is adequate.

Page 88, subhead 15.

Cde. Kennard: Thank you, Cde. Chairman, subhead 15, Pumping Stations. The pumping facilities at Manarabisi will be improved under the Black Bush Polder Extension Project. We recognise that the pumps there are inadequate to meet the enlarged needs of the whole of the area that they now attempt to service and with the approval of that scheme those pumps would be the first to be replaced. We shall be installing very powerful pumps with higher capacities.

Subhead 18, Maintenance of Drainage and Irrigation in other than declared areas. What other areas are to benefit? This provision meets the needs of small areas with relatively small requests for their facilities to be maintained – some old canal to be re-dug, or some old trench to be cleaned, or some old koker to be repaired. The areas stated here are outside the Drainage and Irrigation areas which are manned, controlled, operated and serviced by the Drainage Board. This sum covers really the whole of the Coast and helps to supplement in many cases funds provided to Local Authorities for the maintenance of their Irrigation and Drainage facilities which are outside the drainage and irrigation areas.

Subhead 20, Rivers, Creeks, Stellings etc; The proposal is that we should dig or clear a canal in the Moruca area. I would request Cde. Basir to give us some more details about that because I am sure the House would not want to be bored with all the details. I would ask him to give me all the particulars of the matter so that we can investigate it and see the need and whether there are funds available to meet the cost of the works that he is proposing. The other item that was dealt with is subhead 22, representing special grants to Drainage and Irrigation areas to reduce Assessments. The provision here really represents a subsidy that the Government gives to keep drainage and irrigation rates at a lower level, and though the rates have been increased somewhat this year, yet the point I wish to make is that they do not represent the true cost of the rates, so the Government still has to continue a subsidy in relation to what it can afford. And what it can afford this year is nearly \$1 million, representing a free gift to the farmers of Guyana. On the general remark about the Better Hope/Maria's Lodge area, I wish to

say that that entire area will benefit from the Tapakuma Extension Project by the internal works that are planned there.

Head 30, Ministry of Agriculture – Hydraulics - \$3,675,738 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Pages 89 and 90.

DIVISION XIII – MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE

Question proposed that the sum of \$22,692,000 for Division XIII, Ministry of Agriculture stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Cde. Persaud.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Cde. Chairman, subhead 3, Agricultural Mechanisation Station. There is no legend and probably the Minister would wish to tell us what is intended under this vote. Subhead 7, Agricultural Development, “To provide for continued investigation and research into crop development”: We are not against this item. It was not there last year and I remember I criticised the Minister for not providing in 1977. I see the vote is there and probably he will tell us how this sum will be spent, and in what area crop development will take place.

Subhead 12, Soesdyke/Linden. The legend states: **“To provide for the continuation of projects.”** What project is the Minister talking about? I am sure this needs some amplification so that we will know exactly where the \$650,000 will be spent. For many of the Heads that have met, there is no provision and I know your ruling on that, Cde. Chairman.

6.45 p.m.

Subheads 37, 38 and 39: Subhead 37, Mahaica/Mahaicony/Abary Project: For the information of the House, that happens to be my constituency. I supervise for the party, I visit there, I am in close touch with the people in the area, so I speak with pretty good information. What bothers me is that we spoke for so many years about the M.M.A. Again last year the importance of the expeditious move into the work of M.M.A. was stressed. Unfortunately, however – and I hope the Minister will say this is the position – since last year the work has been stopped. I have gone there and I know it is true. Work has not been started until now. We know of the good of the scheme, we know what benefits will come when the scheme goes into operation. Will the Minister please positively tell this House when work will be commenced on that scheme? I think already, somewhere in the **Official Gazette**, there is an advertisement for consultants. I think if I recall very well, they have until about the ending of March for people to apply. It means applications will have to come in, suitability will have to be considered, decisions will have to be taken and all these things will contribute to further impeding one of the great areas of development in this country. Will the Minister kindly enlighten this House when that second process, to which I referred, will start, how early consultants are going to be on the job?

I take it, since he has identified one suitable engineer for the scheme, that others are going to be expatriates, bearing in mind we have debated the Bill and we know what the Bill is. Maybe they are coming in a consultative position. Last year during the debate on the Bill, the Minister said that Guyanese Engineers will be given an opportunity to play their full part. Well, I see one there. Whether one single engineer can be predominant in a scheme as big as M.M.A. is a different matter. The Minister himself compared Trinidad with the availability of land and acreages in that area and he spoke about how greater and bigger M.M.A. was. Would the Minister please tell us when the M.M.A. will get going? What is the projection? I want to get the Minister on record this time and I will write down his answer for subsequent consideration. Even if I am not here --

The Chairman: It will be in **Hansard**, so you will not have to write it down.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: We don't get that. **Hansard** has not come out for a long time.

The Chairman: Anyway, we have only a couple of minutes more, so let us try and move on.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: I am trying to be as brief as I can. I want to ask those questions on M.M.A. We wish to have positive information on this scheme. Is there any intention to add to the single engineer who is there? Would you have other engineers? Will there be greater incentives? Will those serving in the M.M.A. project which is set up by law have any imbalance in wages or any other facility? I think that would be a consideration because in whatever field engineers are serving, particularly dealing with drainage and irrigation, I recognise and I acknowledge that there is equal importance. I would like the Minister to keep that in mind. I make that point purely from the consideration that we must not have further brain drain. We already have vacancies and we must keep those persons we have and we must encourage them.

I move to the next item, I have exhausted the main point on that. Subhead 38, Purchase and Installation of Pumps. Cde. Ram Karran referred to somebody as a pump man, but he is not here. This is nothing new. Cde. Chairman, I think you were sitting there when this whole idea of pumps came up. We were told at that time that pumps are going to be imported, they are going to be installed expeditiously and there will be immediate water control. Unfortunately, that promise has not been kept and I want to refer the Minister to page 214 of the draft Development Programme where the places where these pumps were to be installed were identified. The maximum is only one or two areas. I think one is Golden Grove that has got a pump, and then Cane Grove. But they had Haslington, Belfield, Tapacuma, Abary – I think

Abary now would be taken care of at the end of the M.M.A. Scheme – Sheet Anchor, Fyrish, Bloomfield, Hogstye, Black Bush Polder and so on. What has happened here? These pumps are here and they have been here for some time, several years. We know, we have heard it in this debate. They have been ordered, they are coming, they are here. Where are they? They are not installed. I am fearful for these pumps. Are these pumps being serviced? We will have a situation where they will go bad and they will not function properly. So the Government, apart from servicing the farmers by providing facilities for drainage and irrigation, have to provide services to keep those pumps in good order. I want in the interest of the economy, in the interest of the pumps, in the interest of the farmer, to draw the Minister's attention to that.

The Chairman: Leave subhead 39 to Roshan Ally.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: I will deal with it to save time. I think the Minister will recall certain follow-up areas like the Port Mourant follow-up area. What has happened with those people? Are they being considered? What has become of the big announcement for the No. 43 pump, Gibraltar? I hope Weldaad and Onverwagt are going to be taken into consideration with the M.M.A. But I must record for Hansard this afternoon the fact that the Government has really been lagging. It is more than a lapse, it is more than a neglect, and this neglect has undoubtedly provided tremendous --

The Chairman: Cde. Persaud, the Minister has to reply as we have quite a number of Heads.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: All right, Cde. Chairman, I will leave it. This one refers to providing for surveys. I know that surveys have been started.

The Chairman: Which item?

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Subhead 39.

The Chairman: So you are not giving Roshan Ally a chance?

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: This is not dealing with the existing Black Bush Scheme. This is dealing with the front lands. Hence, we are concerned. In fact, we have advocated more than surveys. We have advocated positive action – the allocation of land and making available to the farmers the facilities to produce in that area. Is the survey completed? If it is completed, when does the Minister envisage that physical work will commence on the front lands of Black Bush Polder? How early are people going to be put on the land? When will we see the scheme being translated into reality for greater and greater development? I wonder if the Minister is giving consideration at the same time to the inadequacies of the existing two pumps at that area in Black Bush. We need a third pump in that area. The farmers have been advocating this. I spoke to farmers only on Saturday and they are still advocating another pump for the area. Cde. Chairman, I think I will restrict myself to those questions.

6.55 p.m.

On Sea and River Defence, I see the vote shows a low key. It is a reduction from --

The Chairman: Reduction? It is an increase to my mind. It is \$3 million.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: I wonder if the Minister would wish to identify in what areas sea defence work is going to be carried out. I want to concede that it has always been the argument on this side of the House, the point I wish to make --

The Chairman: Essequibo Coast, the legend says.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: -- that drainage and irrigation should take priority to sea defence. I am not saying that you must not keep an eye on it, you must not develop, you must not extend, but drainage and irrigation undoubtedly must take precedence over defences.

The Chairman: Cde. Minister.

Cde. Kennard: Page 89, subheads 37, 38 and 39.

The Chairman: I think subheads 3, 7 and the rest.

Cde. Kennard: Subhead 3, Agricultural Mechanisation Station, \$100,000. This is to provide equipment. This Station, which is really a training centre at Mon Repos, is largely financed by the British Government, and we are training operators of tractors, combines and so on. We shall be putting in additional equipment and training facilities.

Subhead 7, Agricultural Development, \$400,000, this will be spent largely in the interior for the provision of facilities for the development of agriculture. Subhead 12, Soesdyke/Linden, \$650,000, this is to provide settlers along that highway with 40 miles of internal roads.

Subhead 37, Mahaica/Mahaicony/Abary Project, this project will get on the way before year end. We have to appoint the Engineering consultants who will design drainage and irrigation structures. Then we have to publish international tenders to appoint contractors. In the whole scheme of things I think the contractors and consultants are likely to have a very strong foreign side. The arrangements are being made for maximum Guyanese participation in both the contract works and in the consultancy work. I think there will be vacancies perhaps for more engineers than this country could supply.

Subhead 38, Purchase and Installation of Pumps, this project is for work to be done this year at Courtland-Gibraltar and the commencement of work at Onverwagt where pumps will be installed. With respect to pumps that have been bought and not installed, this pumping project has now been incorporated into these three big drainage and irrigation projects. The number of pumps that were bought under this project will be incorporated particularly in the MMA project and Black Bush, to be used there and to function at high capacity.

In the case of Black Bush, we are in the process of negotiating a loan. This has been approved in principle and will be funded by the World Bank, the International Fund for Agricultural development, OPEC special fund. A.T.D. might have a small input as well. We expect negotiations to be finalised within the next three months. As in the case of Tapakuma and MMA, we expect to undertake the necessary services before excavation and installation of pumps begin. We don't expect physical excavation to begin before or until 1980. When the work begins, among the first works to be done will be the total replacement of the pumping station at Black Bush where new equipment will be put in.

Page 90, item 44, Sea and River Defence (Essequibo), well, that speaks for itself and the area to be affected stretches from . . . right up to Dartmouth. We expect to draw funds from British loans to assist with the works to be done there.

Subhead 45, Sea River Defence (Other) relates to work that we plan at Leguan, works that are planned at Stewartville, Toevlugt, Phoenix Park, Spring Hall, etc., and on the Corentyne, works between No. 82 and No. 83 villages and No. 62 and No. 64 villages.

Division XIII, Ministry of Agriculture - \$22,692,000 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

DIVISION XIV, MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE IDA PROJECTS

LIVESTOCK DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Question proposed that the sum of \$1,000,000 for Division XIV, Ministry of Agriculture – IDA Projects, Livestock Development Project, stand part of the Estimates.

Division XIV, Ministry of Agriculture – IDA Projects, Livestock Development Project - \$1,000,000 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Page 93.

DIVISION XVI, MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE**IBRD PROJECTS****TAPAKUMA IRRIGATION PROJECT**

Question proposed that the sum of \$21,720,000 for Division XVI, Ministry of Agriculture – IBRD Projects, Tapakuma Irrigation Project, stand part of the Estimates.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: The questions are along the same line as that of the MMA and I think it ought to be made clear that contrary to what is believed, this project has not been physically amended.

The Chairman: Let the comrade speak because when the other side is speaking I will not want any interruption.

7.05 p.m.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: The first contract is in operation, if you want to call it the first phase of operation. Will the Minister tell us when the second phase of development will commence so that we can really see positive evidence of action at the Tapakuma Project? Even if some work has been commenced, it is not noticeable. We have noticed a number of buildings erected and probably the Minister will tell us why these buildings are preceding other works that are more relevant. I would like to ask the Minister to tell us in summary his projection for the completion of the Tapakuma Project.

The Chairman: Cde. Minister, there is no specific question on any head. It is a general question.

Cde. Kennard: Cde. Chairman, physical work has been commenced at Tapakuma and the work is proceeding very rapidly. A lot of earth has been excavated already. I believe it is a couple miles; it is quite extensive. I cannot give the exact lineal footage of the work. Work was started in November last year and obviously the contractor has to put up buildings for their own shelter before they can operate, so the first phase was to erect headquarters. From that, they have started to function with great speed. The work is expected to be completed in 1980 for Phase I.

During 1980, Phase I which is towards the Pomeroon River area will be completed. The designs which are the designs for work towards the Supenaam River, are being done now by the consulting engineers and will be ready by April. Work on that area, which is Phase II, towards the Supenaam River, will be started during the Third quarter of this year. Phase II will be completed in 1981, so then we will have the entire Coast from the Pomeroon to the Supenaam River brought under the command of drainage and irrigation in this Tapakuma Extension Project.

Division XVI, Ministry of Agriculture – IBRD Projects, Tapakuma Irrigation Project - \$21,720,000 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Pages 93A, Division XVIA, Ministry of Agriculture.

**DIVISION XVIA, MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE –
TAPAKUMA IRRIGATION PROJECT**

Question proposed that the sum of \$6,580,000 for Division XVIA, Ministry of Agriculture – Tapakuma Irrigation Project – stand part of the Estimates.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: I interpret Contract 2 to mean -- The Minister has answered. Fine. It will take in Annandale area etc. But I want to ask a question under subhead 4. I notice the Consultants' Services take up 25 percent of the total vote, which is quite substantial. I wonder how the Minister can explain that. It really needs further inquiry and I want to know if so much of the money is spent on consultants' services, if the vote will go along the same lines of services without reaching the physical operation of the Project and hence the possibility exists that when we reach a point to really do the work, we might not have money. I want to ask another question that just occurred to my mind. In all these projects, if my memory serves me right, the Government has to put in its portion of money. The Minister could, for information, let the House know, if the money is forthcoming, from where, and how early.

The Chairman: Cde. Minister.

Cde. Kennard: Cde. Chairman, I dealt really just now with the total Tapakuma Project. Contract I refers to Phase I, towards the Pomeroun, and Contract 2, towards the Supenaam. Consultant services are necessary and in this regard, we are bound by the rules of the game, the rules of procedure established by the lenders, the World Bank and other agencies, where we have to employ international consultants and pay their costs. These are the costs and they are competitive costs.

Under Contract 2, the reason why the consultants' services seem to form so large a part of the total vote is simply because the consultants' services are going ahead of the actual civil works. Civil works, as I indicated, will begin towards the end of this year, while the consultants' services are for the whole year. Next year, we will have a totally different picture where the civil works would be quite large, running into several millions of dollars, while the consultant services might remain at about the same level. So the percentage of consultant services to total costs next year will be much less than appears this year. The Government of Guyana is meeting its commitment to provide the local costs, and in relation to this, we have been able to negotiate with the Canadian International Development Agency, (CIDA) and with the Ministry of Overseas Development, England, loans which will provide to the Government of Guyana the money to enable it to pay some of the local costs as well. So, the local costs will be met (a) by the Guyana Government out of the resources of the country, and, (b) from these external loans namely from CIDA and ODM.

Division XVII, Ministry of Agriculture – Tapakuma Irrigation Project - \$6,580,000 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Comrades, that brings us to the end of today's business, but tomorrow, Wednesday, we will be dealing with Attorney General and Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Information, Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House and Ministry of Home Affairs.

Assembly resumed.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, “That this Assembly do now adjourn until Wednesday, 15th March, 1978 at 2 p.m.” [The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House]
