

National Assembly Debates

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2006-2007) OF THE NINTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN Part I of III

14th Sitting

14:00h

Monday 12 February 2007

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (71)

Speaker (1)

The Hon Hari N Ramkarran SC, MP - (AOL)

Speaker of the National Assembly

Members of the Government (42)

People's Progressive Party/Civic (41)

The United Force (1)

The Hon Samuel A A Hinds MP (AOL)

(R# 10 - U Demerara/U Berbice)

Prime Minister and Minister of Public Works and Communications

The Hon Clement J Rohee MP

Minister of Home Affairs

The Hon Shaik K Z Baksh MP (AOL)

Minister of Education

The Hon Dr Henry B Jeffrey MP (Absent)

Minister of Foreign Trade and International Cooperation

The Hon Dr Leslie S Ramsammy MP

(R# 6 - E Berbice/Corentyne)

Minister of Health

NA –BUDGET DEBATE 12 FEBRUARY 2007

The Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett MP

(R# 9 - U Takutu/U Esseq)

Minister of Amerindian Affairs

*The Hon Dr Ashni Singh MP

Minister of Finance

*The Hon S Rudolph Insanally OR, CCH, MP - *(AOL)*

Minister of Foreign Affairs

The Hon Harry Narine Nawbatt MP

Minister of Housing and Water

The Hon Robert M Persaud MP

(R# 6 - E Berbice/Corentyne)

Minister of Agriculture

The Hon Dr Jennifer R A Westford MP - *(Absent)*

(R#7 - Cuyuni/Mazaruni)

Minister of the Public Service

The Hon Kellawan Lall MP

Minister of Local Government and Regional Development

*The Hon Doodnauth Singh SC, MP

Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs

The Hon Dr Frank C S Anthony MP

Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport

The Hon B H Robeson Benn MP

Minister of Transport and Hydraulics

**The Hon Manzoor Nadir MP

Minister of Labour

The Hon Priya D Manickchand MP

(R# 5 - Mahaica/Berbice)

Minister of Human Services and Social Security

The Hon Dr Desrey Fox MP

Minister in the Ministry of Education

The Hon Bheri S Ramsaran MD, MP

Minister in the Ministry of Health

The Hon Jennifer I Webster MP

NA –BUDGET DEBATE 12 FEBRUARY 2007

Minister in the Ministry of Finance

The Hon Manniram Prashad MP - *(Absent)*

Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce

Mr Donald Ramotar MP

The Hon Gail Teixeira MP - *(AOL)*

Mr Harripersaud Nokta MP

Mrs Indranie Chandarpal MP

Ms Bibi S Shadick MP

(R# 3 – Essequibo Is/W Demerara)

Mr Mohamed Irfaan Ali MP

Mr Albert Atkinson JP, MP

(R# 8 - Potaro/Siparuni)

Mr Komal Chand CCH, JP, MP

(R# 3 - Essequibo Is/W Demerara)

Mr Bernard C DeSantos SC, MP

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Mrs Shirley V Edwards JP, MP

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Mr Mohamed F Khan JP, MP

(R# 2 - Pomeroun/Supenaam)

Mr Odinga N Lumumba MP - *(Absent)*

Mr Moses V Nagamootoo JP, MP

Mr Mohabir A Nandlall MP

Mr Neendkumar JP, MP

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

*** Mr Steve P Ninvalle MP

Parliamentary Secretary

Mr Parmanand P Persaud JP, MP

(R# 2 - Pomeroun/Supenaam)

Mrs Philomena Sahoye-Shury CCH, JP, MP

Parliamentary Secretary

***Mrs Pauline R Sukhai MP

Parliamentary Secretary

NA –BUDGET DEBATE 12 FEBRUARY 2007

Mr Dharamkumar Seeraj MP - (AOL)

Mr Norman A Whittaker MP

(R# 1 - Barima/Waini)

***Non-elected Member

*Non-elected Minister **Elected Member from TUF

Members of the Opposition (28)

(i) People's National Congress Reform 1-Guyana (22)

Mr Robert HO Corbin

Leader of the Opposition

Mr Winston S Murray CCH, MP

Mrs Clarissa S Riehl MP

Deputy Speaker, performing duties of Speaker of the Nat. Assembly

Mr E Lance Carberry MP - (AOL)

Chief Whip

Mrs. Deborah J. Backer MP - (AOL)

Mr Anthony Vieira MP - (Absent)

Mr Basil Williams MP

Dr George A Norton MP

Mrs Volda A Lawrence MP

Mr Keith Scott MP

Miss Amna Ally MP

Mr James K McAllister MP

Mr Dave Danny MP

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Mr Aubrey C Norton MP

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Mr Ernest B Elliot MP

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Miss Judith David-Blair MP

(R# 7 - Cuyuni/Mazaruni)

Mr Mervyn Williams MP
(R# 3 - Essequibo Is/W Demerara)
Ms Africo Selman MP
Dr John Austin MP
(R# 6 - East Berbice/Corentyne)
Ms Jennifer Wade MP
(R# 5 - Mahaica/Berbice)
Ms Vanessa Kissoon MP
(R# 10 - U Demerara/U Berbice)
Mr Desmond Fernandes MP
(Region No 1 – Barima/Waini)

(ii) Alliance For Change (5)

Mr Raphael G Trotman MP
Mr Khemraj Ramjattan MP
Mrs Sheila V.A. Holder MP
Ms Chantalle L Smith MP - *(AOL)*
(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)
Mr David Patterson MP

(iii) Guyana Action Party/Rise Organise and Rebuild (1)

Mr Everall N Franklin MP

OFFICERS

Mr Sherlock E Isaacs
Clerk of the National Assembly
Mrs Lilawatie Coonjah
Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly

2ND DAY BUDGET DEBATES

PRAYERS

The Clerk reads the Prayer

PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Acting Speaker: Honourable Members, we will now resume the debate on the Budget for the year 2007. The first speaker today, I believe, is Mr Basil Williams.

Mr Basil Williams: If it pleases you, Mde Speaker ... Upon a proper perusal of the Budget Speech, we find that it has repeated references to the word vision. In particular, Page 1, Paragraph 2, I quote,

This Budget concretises our vision ...

At Page 1, Paragraph 3,

Our vision is for a better Guyana ...

And at Page 23, I quote again,

Our vision for the country by the year 2011...

Such references are made every year, Mde Speaker, in every Budget Speech within recent years, but we, as a people, continue to suffer

NA –BUDGET DEBATE 12 FEBRUARY 2007

from lack, continue to be interrupted in our aspirations for ourselves, our families, and our country.

Mde Speaker is this vision of the PPP/C Government a false vision in which, as Ezekiel, Chapter 12, Verse 22 explains, and I quote:

... the days are prolonged, and every vision faileth
... (?)

Then this Government must realise that it cannot do it alone, but must do so in partnership. It must be inclusive. It must share Government in order to realise any such vision for this beautiful country of ours.

Mde Speaker, if I might respectfully refer you to Page 10 of the Budget Speech, it right away collides with the misnomer in the caption, *Development in Wages*. Mde Speaker, the reality is that a decent standard of living for Government workers is still elusive, and indeed, a living wage is a mirage.

A six percent salaries increase to members of the disciplined forces and teachers, and five percent to the rest of the public service is, I submit, hopelessly inadequate, and falls miserably short of a decent wage.

The past 15 years of the PPP/C Governance are best described thus,

*He has sown much, and brings in little;
he eats, but he has not enough;
he drinks, but he is not filled with drink;
he clothes you, but no one is warm;
and he who earneth wages, earneth wages to put
it into a bag with holes ...*

That quote, for those of you who might be interested, comes from the good book Haggai, Chapter 1, Verse 6.

NA –BUDGET DEBATE 12 FEBRUARY 2007

Mde Speaker, the much-touted 5 and 6 percent payout to the workers, will have the same effect, I submit, as wages that are put into a bag with holes. They will not lead to a better standard of life for our workers, who will have to continue to eke out an existence, to survive in this country. The question is, does this Government have a wages policy? Any such policy can only be described as divisive.

In 2006, the Government paid an agreed 5 percent across-the-board increase for teachers. In the case of the GPSU, the Guyana Public Service Union, it broke off negotiations, once again, and imposed, once again, a five-percent increase for public servants, other than the members of the disciplined forces. This was, in fact, in breach of the ILO Convention on free collective bargaining, but recognising the possible embarrassment to the GTU, if that Union ended up in the same position the GPSU and its workers - that is, both having 5 percent, one agreed and one not agreed. The Government subsequently awarded the teachers an additional one percent increase, as well as the disciplined services, the latter getting a month's bonus. The nurses and the other public servants got only the paltry 5 percent.

In addition, Mde Speaker, the Government made the 6 percent increase for teachers, police and soldiers, et cetera, payable from 1 January 2007. I suppose it was intended to provide some cushion, or could have provided some cushion against the implementation of VAT, but did not do likewise in the case of nurses and other public servants.

The Peoples National Congress/Reform condemns this attempt by the Government to sow the seeds of division amongst the workers, and calls on the Government to treat all public servants equally, to respect the collective bargaining process, and not to impose arbitrary increases in wages and salaries on them.

NA –BUDGET DEBATE 12 FEBRUARY 2007

The inflation rate of 4.2 percent for 2006 is, at most, illusory, if being based on an old basket of goods in the 1996 household survey. The Government, for the past three years, has been promising a new household survey. In the present Budget Speech, at page 47, it provides that ... *work will continue on the household budget survey, which will enable the determination of a basket of goods and services ...*

Since the prices of goods and services have gone up since 1996, that is, since the last household survey, and these prices have been exacerbated by the introduction of VAT, the inflation rate of 2006 prices would, of necessity, be substantially higher than the 4.2 percent and, of course, therefore higher than the 5 percent and 6 percent increases awarded to the public servants.

Mde Speaker, when, in addition, an income tax rate of 33 1/3 percent is factored in, our workers simply end up with nothing in the bag, but holes. The big question is, then, can this Government afford to pay more to our workers? To answer this question, recourse must be had to three sets of statistics in the Estimates.

In the first instance, in respect of revision of the wages and salaries, and I respectfully refer you, Mde Speaker and Members of the Honourable House, to Page 18 of Volume 1 of the Estimates for 2006, we find that the sum budgeted was \$1,961,169,000. The sum spent was \$1,828,000,475, leaving a balance of \$1.3M unspent.

Secondly, in the case of employment costs, budgeted was \$20,260,000,250, the sum spent was \$19,900,000,686, leaving a balance of \$360M.

Thirdly, in the case of the revenue target for Central Government, revenues budgeted to be garnered - the sum was \$58,581,250,000. The sum actually garnered, Mde Speaker, was \$63,388,885,000, leaving a windfall of \$4.8B. To extrapolate from the last mentioned data, it is manifest that the Government had around \$6B available to

NA –BUDGET DEBATE 12 FEBRUARY 2007

pay our public servants, not less than an across the board 13 percent salary increase. Further questions are why is this Government then starving our workers of a living wage, when clearly they have the means to pay? Why? When there is so much out-migration of skills and why, when the Government knew that it was going to implement VAT in January 2007?

Mde Speaker, the introduction of VAT has left stark price increases, and the impact thereof has been heaviest on the salaried workers, the unemployed, the low waged workers, single-parents, and pensioners.

We in the PNC/R accept that VAT is a good thing in principle. If it works, it will widen the tax net and lower the incidents of the rate, but the hurried implementation was tantamount to putting the cart before the horse. Conventional practice suggests that tax reform could have been undertaken before, or simultaneously, with the implementation of VAT. Such tax reform ought to have included,

- (i) reduction of income and corporate rates of taxes;
- (ii) streamlining of the six taxes leading into a reduced rate for VAT;
- (iii) ensuring a low rate is applied;
- (iv) ensuring an income tax threshold that is reasonable

The increase to \$28,000, in isolation, Mde Speaker, I respectfully submit, is mere tinkering. The threshold should be no less than \$70,000.

- (v) ensuring exemptions are limited to pro-poor goods, for example, sugar, rice, margarine and other basic staples only, except where international conventions prescribed, as in the case of diplomats; and

NA –BUDGET DEBATE 12 FEBRUARY 2007

- (vi) identifying vulnerable groups in our society, and target them for direct assistance, for example our pensioners, our single parent households, and the disabled.

Mde Speaker, VAT, as is presently executed, is a retrogressive tax, taking more from the poor than the rich. VAT, in fact, is punitive as it is currently applied, because it falls inordinately on the ordinary person. VAT was stated by the Government to be value-neutral, and that the six taxes that it replaced, which would have garnered \$16B, VAT, when implemented, would not garner more than \$16B because, as the Government suggested, it was not its intention to secure any windfall, and therefore VAT will not garner more than the \$16B than those six taxes that it replaced had garnered. Yet, Mde Speaker, if I might respectfully refer you and the Honourable Members of this House to Page 6 of Volume 1 of the current Estimates, we find that the Government has estimated VAT to garner \$24,837,000,000. If this is not a projected windfall of over \$8B, then perhaps the Hon Minister of Finance can disabuse my mind. Incidentally, this \$8B can also contribute to the suggested across the board increases for public servants aforementioned. What is palpable is that this Budget is silent on any tax measures for reform. It is in the light of these premises, Mde Speaker, that the Peoples National Congress/Reform, in collaboration with the Guyana Trade Unions Congress, wish to recommend the following measures to be adopted by the Government, in respect of VAT, and in respect of any wages policy.

- (i) That a special all-party parliamentary committee be established, immediately, to make recommendations for the reduction on the rate of the tax for widening the range of zero-rated and exempt goods and services, and a phased implementation of Value Added Tax;

NA –BUDGET DEBATE 12 FEBRUARY 2007

- (ii) That the Government, in collaboration with the Guyana Trade Unions Congress, immediately implement significant levels of salary increases for those categories of workers most adversely affected by the implementation of VAT;
- (iii) That the Government allows the collective bargaining process to work to its logical conclusion to provide a natural guide to wages and salaries levels;
- (iv) That an overriding consideration, in any wages policy, should be that wages and salaries increases should always be above the rate of inflation.

In fact, Mde Speaker, during the tenure of the late President Jagan, that was the practice, that a sum was taken from real growth - the real GDP, and applied to salary increases above the rate of inflation. After his death, this practice was discontinued and, in fact, between 2001 to the present, attempts were made to tie salary increases to the rate of inflation. I do not know what happened last year, but in 2005 ... probably because it was the election year ... It was last year - 2006, the rate of inflation was 8.3 percent and the Government paid 7 percent, which was below the rate of inflation, but that was the first time, since 2001, it paid any sum higher than 5 percent. So one wonders where the Government found that money, in their minds ... because we are showing you that they have been budgeting and they have been collecting monies in excess of billions of dollars to pay the increases, what caused the Government to pay 7 percent? I suppose it is anybody's. One guess would be that it was in contemplation of election year.

It is apposite to note, Mde Speaker that VAT was introduced in Grenada and Belize, and withdrawn to allow for tax reforms, and in

NA –BUDGET DEBATE 12 FEBRUARY 2007

Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago, income tax reform was introduced a year prior to the introduction of VAT.

Might I respectfully move now to this vexing question of job creation and unemployment? Mde Speaker, unemployment stalks our dear land. Every year the ranks of the unemployed are swollen by more graduates from the University of Guyana and other tertiary institutions, from our schools, and from failing businesses. The question therefore is, what is the Government doing about job creation? In the budget speech of 2005, at Page 29, Paragraph 4.20, treating with job creation, the then Minister of Finance said, and I quote,

Employment creation is critical to the Government's efforts to reduce poverty. It thus remains a priority of ours to raise the overall level of employment in the economy.

There, as in this Budget speech, the Hon Minister failed to disclose how many jobs have been created, and what is the projection of job creation for the next five years. Also, these budget speeches are devoid of any references to the Government's employment policy. This policy could be to contract employees outside of the Public Service Commission's purview, to leave staff positions vacant, rather than have the Public Service Ministry train persons for upward mobility.

Nonetheless, Mde Speaker, this nation needs to know what is the unemployment rate. When was the last manpower survey? As I understand it, the last manpower survey was done under the Peoples National Congress Government. Such a survey would reveal what skills are required, and the University of Guyana could tailor its programmes to meet such skills deficits.

Trade Union Unity – Mde Speaker, it is encouraging that splinter unions of the Trade Union Movement - the Guyana Public Service Union, GAWU, and NAACIE have agreed to mediators, in the form of Mr George De Peana, General Secretary of the Caribbean Congress of Labour, and Sir Leroy Trotman, Chairman of the Workers Group of the ILO Governing Body. These gentlemen's remit, as I understand it, is to secure a reunification of the Trade Union Movement. We believe that GAWU and NAACIE are directed by this Government, and the intention is to divide the movement, unless they are unable, and until they are unable to assume control of the Guyana Trade Unions Congress, to perpetuate marginalization and inequitable distribution of the State's resources. The PNC/R believes that these unions must detach themselves from Government's control; and we are saying this on strong grounds, because we know that, in the past, the PNC/R government was accused of controlling the Guyana Trade Unions Congress, and there were strong arguments by this Government, which was in opposition at the time, that even the Minister of Labour could not go into the Congress floor, and could not be part of a union representation that Members of Parliament ought not to do that either, nor Members of the Central Executive. Do you all remember that? So we are saying, *mutatis mutandis* in like manner, there must be no political functionaries troubling and involving themselves in the Trade Union Movement. [Applause]

The PNC/R recommends that, in deference to the memory of our national hero, Hubert Nathaniel Critchlow, all trade unions should return under the umbrella of the Guyana Trade Unions Congress ... [Interruption: 'Basil, like you fighting for leadership in the PNC'] ... as the sole umbrella body representing organised labour ... [Interruption: 'I do not have such ambitions, Neend']

Mde Speaker, I respectfully draw your attention to the Public Service Ministry, where a lot happens ... and I daresay that, again in this year, this Budget Speech is silent on labour *simpliciter* - that is, there is no reference to labour as labour. But that, notwithstanding,

NA –BUDGET DEBATE 12 FEBRUARY 2007

there is an intense war, a silent war going on in the Trade Union Movement arena. In the case of the Public Service Ministry, the PPP/C Government continues its decimation of the Public Service. This is another war. It maintains a parallel Public Service of contract workers and temporary staff, rather than employ those persons within the Public Service.

In the 2005 Budget Debate, I had revealed to this Honourable House, where contracted employees were better paid than employees in the Public Service, and a lesser number of them earned over 60 percent of the budgeted wages and salaries figures for different ministries, whilst the larger number of public service employees earned around 40 percent. The Hon Minister at the time, in response, had said that the contracted employees were created due to the non-constitution of the Public Service Commission, and would be phased out upon the constitution of a Public Service Commission. It transpired that that explanation exploded, when the facts disclosed that the Government was budgeting for increases in wages and salaries of contracted employees every year. For example, if recourses had to do with those estimates for the year 2004, Government paid contracted employees \$1.3B; in 2005 Government paid contracted employees \$1.7B; in 2006 the Government paid contracted employees \$1.9B, and in 2007, it is projected that Government would pay contracted employees \$2.1B.

Mde Speaker, what is pellucidly clear, is that as far as this Government is concerned, contracted employees are here to stay. This means that the Public Service Commission, and the Guyana Public Service Union, are undermined and weakened. The Public Service Commission is undermined because it has no jurisdiction, over the contracted employees, and the power to employ them is transferred to the Public Service Ministry and, of course, the Office of the President. In the result, Mde Speaker, many “party hacks” can therefore enter the Public Service as a result, and therefore the political neutrality of the Public Service becomes impaired.

The GPSU - the Guyana Public Service Union, on the other hand, is undermined, because contracted employees do not automatically become its members, since they are not subject to the agency shop. Further, the creation of semi-autonomous agencies, by pulling out whole departments from the Ministry, thereby reducing the size of the traditional Public Service, further undermines both the Public Service Commission, and the Guyana Public Service Union. These agencies that have been created include the Public Hospital Georgetown Corporation, the Guyana Revenue Authority, the Deeds Registry, and the Lands and Surveys Department. All of these semi-autonomous agencies are run by boards, which are appointed on the sole authority of a minister. Further, they are not subjected to any parliamentary oversight. Further, the GPSU, as a result, has been made to reapply for bargaining rights for the workers when they pull out and create these agencies out of those ministries.

Mde Speaker, there is no security of tenure for contracted workers, and the Government can therefore ride roughshod over them, as well as the temporary workers. Therefore, one wonders why the large sum for training public servants, under the Public Management Modernisation Programme, obtains when the Public Service is being dismantled. Also, the Government's failure to reconstitute the Public Service Appellate Tribunal is scandalous, since Public Servants are robbed of a speedier means of resolving disputes. So, when public servants feel that they were wrongfully dismissed, or terminated, they now have to go to the courts, and you know the malaise in the courts, and the sloth in the courts; so the question is, why has the Government not seen it fit to reconstitute the Public Service Appellate Tribunal, even though it continues to vote monies for it? In the current estimates, we find that they have also voted, again, for the Public Service Appellate Tribunal, but no persons are there sitting. Someone said that, from the estimates, you can see that people are using the telephones, et cetera; so why budget all this money and you have not constituted the court?

NA –BUDGET DEBATE 12 FEBRUARY 2007

Mde Speaker, the PNC/R recommends, therefore, that there be an immediate,

- (i) Phasing-out of contracted employees, and where the salaries scales permit, assimilate them in the traditional public service.

The Acting Speaker: Your time is up, Honourable Member.

Mr James K McAllister: Mde Speaker, I wish to move that the Honourable Member be given 15 minutes to continue.

The Acting Speaker: The question is that the Honourable Member be given 15 minutes to continue. No objections?

Proceed, Honourable Member.

Mr Basil Williams: Yes please, Mde Speaker, the PNC/R recommends that there be an immediate:

- (i) Phasing out of contracted employees, and where the salaries scales permit, assimilate them in the traditional public service;
- (ii) Confirming of temporary employees who have completed their probationary periods;
- (iii) Restoration of the primacy of the Public Service Commission; and
- (iv) The reconstitution, forthwith, of the Public Service Appellate Tribunal.

If I might respectfully, with your leave Mde Speaker, move to this burning question of Local Government, and respectfully refer you, Mde Speaker, and Members of this Honourable House, to page 41 of the Budget Speech of the Hon Minister of Finance, under the caption *A New Partnership with Local Government*, we find,

subsumed within this Paragraph lofty statements and lofty ideals. For example, *considerable progress has been made towards*, and I quote:

... considerable progress has been made towards establishing a new partnership with local government bodies. This partnership will be characterised by greater flexibility and, importantly, autonomy in the conduct of the affairs of these bodies. Over the next five years Government will spend approximately \$14B on activities to refine and cement this relationship, as well as upgrade and modernise the infrastructure and institutions of these bodies. We will also embrace activities in human resource development, and systems for improving, monitoring and evaluation, accountability, transparency, and people participation.

Mde Speaker, it is my respectful submission that the contents of this paragraph, at page 41, paragraph 4, speaks to the newly-created constitutional provisions in Chapter 7 of our Constitution. Those provisions speak to the reform of the Local Government system. They speak to a qualitative change, from what happens now, to what ought to happen in the future. Overall, this paragraph, at page 41, speaks to the basic tenets, or pillars of, the new local democracy, as was envisioned by the framers of our Constitution - that is, empowerment of the people in the communities in which they live, greater autonomy to them, to make decisions to bind themselves in the communities in which they live and, as the last line says, for *greater people participation in the local democratic system.*

The danger which inheres in this is that it can go the same way as the household budget survey. It could go the same way as the

expressions of vision, and it could go the same way of many other aspects in our country, and our society, wherein only lip service is paid to, but nothing happens. This is what we call a declaration of intent; but the time is met, I respectfully submit, the time is meet when we should have been a far way in implementing those constitutional reforms. But, where are we now? It appears that the only focus is the focus of getting elections off the ground - Local Government Elections.

So we hear that we cannot have Local Government Elections until the issue of the new electoral system is settled. We are not hearing anything about implementing those provisions which speaks to greater autonomy to local Government organs. We are not hearing anything about implementing those provisions which speak to garnering of resources by local government organs. We do not hear anything which speaks to those provisions which provide for objective criteria for fiscal transfers from Central Government to local democratic organs. We are hearing nothing about this. So it is important ... and I have said this in an earlier address to this Parliament that the implementation of these proposed constitutional reforms in local government go hand in glove with any new elections that are contemplated for the local government organs.

I said, on the last occasion ... and I do not wish to have to recourse to the Bible again to buttress my submission, and so, for example, what we need to do is to transfer a lot of those authoritarian-type powers of the Minister of Local Government to the new Local Government Commission. We need to do that because, notwithstanding that there is a new Local Government Minister, we know that, once he is there, they believe that, if they do not use it, they will lose it. Transfer those powers to the Local Government Commission. What are some of those powers that ought to be transferred? Those powers, for example, where the Minister, where there is the dissolution of a council, can single-handedly replace a duly-elected council by persons whom he hand-picks, without any reference to the type of ratio of political parties holding, after the

elections, to those councils. So, for example, if the PNC had the majority in a council that has been dissolved, the Minister has the power, when dissolving that council, to replace the council with people of their choice, without any reference to the fact that PNC has the majority on such a council. That power must of necessity, I respectively submit, Mde Speaker, be reposed in the newly proposed Local Government Commission.

Moreover, this question of accountability ... we need to get these things implemented urgently. Right now, one bad apple spoils the whole cart. One bad councillor can affect the whole council; because the law, as it is, permits only for the dissolution of the council and not for the removal of a councillor. The new provisions are making provisions for accountability, where you could bring to account any individual councillor, whether having to go to the extreme measure of dissolving the entire council. So, you all would agree that these are all laudable ... You must agree because you were participants in the Constitutional Reform Commissions that dealt with these revolutionary provisions.

As we are at it, Mde Speaker, on this question of Local Government Elections, we are hearing all kinds of utterances about it; but clearly, now is the time, as those exalted international agencies have suggested, that we get this list right. Now is the time that we get the electoral list for this country of ours right, so that they will have, and there could be, no complaints at the end of the race about a flawed list. We must ensure that we get, whether by house-to-house verification, or house-to-house registration, as suggested by the OAS and the Commonwealth, respectively, a satisfactory list. We must also settle this question of residency, which determines who goes into a list. These things are stressing problems, which continue to bother us in this process for free and fair elections, and the time is right for us to start looking at this. The question is, what is GECOM doing about all of this?

GECOM, by now, ought to have been out in the field getting this list perfected. What is happening is that there could be a clear and present danger that we can have a situation, even though it could be in breach of the Constitution, clearly recognised by the OAS that an attempt could be made to hold the next Local Government Elections in breach of the Constitution. That is, to hold it under the old system that exists, which cannot happen, or ought not to happen, because the new constitutional provisions make provision for individuals to be able to contest, as individuals, in the new electoral system. That is our law. So we ought not to have any elections unless it is under a new system. We know, Members of the Honourable House, that the Government's side has been dragging its foot on this question of effectively getting the electoral system going.

I understand, and I have been instructed, that we are agreed that a 50-50 ratio of PR seats to First-Past-the-Post, and we hope that we are not awaiting the restoration of the good health ... I mean we wish speedy health to the Honourable Member Collymore, but we hope that that will not hold up a speedier resolution of this whole question of the electoral system for the next Local Government Elections, and that it does not go hand in glove for the house-to-house registration for the next electoral list.

Mde Speaker, it is in those circumstances that I wish to close, Members of the Honourable House on the other side to recognise the good sense in everyone being satisfied with the rules governing any new elections in this beautiful country of ours. So I respectfully intimate to you, Mde Speaker and this Honourable House, that I am in full support of all the contributions made by Members on this side of the House, and, wherever I had the opportunity, I have reiterated those positions, and we urge that the flaws that we have revealed in these proposals contained in these Estimates for 2007, that they be properly addressed by the Government, and by Honourable Members on the other side of this House. Thank you very much, Mde Speaker. *[Applause]*

The Acting Speaker: Hon Minister Robert Persaud.

Hon Robert M Persaud: Mde Speaker, it is indeed an honour for me to rise and speak in support of the actions and policies of the administration, as well as fiscal and monetary policies for 2007; and I also wish to join with the other Members of Parliament in congratulating the Minister for an excellent presentation.

Mde Speaker, so far, a review of the criticisms levelled at the 2007 Budget have revealed a very glaring fact, and that is that there has not been any substantive expose of a weakness of policy, programme, or project. Instead, we have heard the ritualistic ranting about the Budget lacking vision, and we have now seen a new element, that is, the introduction now of lobbying efforts in this debate for personal and other efforts, and also we have seen the resurrection of old and tired electioneering. Those attacks now finding themselves instead of constructive criticism, and certainly providing the Guyanese population with a different view, or of something that is lacking in the Budget. Late Friday evening, we were all entertained to the life and times of Mr and Mrs King, and Mother Blair - fictional characters. Certainly, Mde Speaker, I wish to commend the Opposition for its valiant efforts, so far, to find weaknesses in the 2007 Budget, but before I proceed to address and give account of developments within the agricultural sector, and also as one of the geographical representatives for Region 6. I wish to refute a few points made by the Honourable Member, Basil Williams, because I think it will be an injustice, to fact, and certainly an injustice to the debate for these inaccuracies to go through without correction. First of all, it is blatantly untrue, to say that the Budget is projecting a windfall revenue of \$8B as a result of the introduction of VAT. In fact, I will direct the Member's attention to table 6, which shows a projection of \$24.8B for VAT, as against last year's collection of \$23.3B in Consumption Tax along with \$800M on Purchase Tax. So, the reality is that there will be a very marginal increase as a result of VAT.

The other point is that the Member seeks to create the vision putting public servants against teachers and so forth, and he asked the question, *why is it we have had the type of award for teachers*. But the teachers and the Teachers Union acted responsibly, and acted in their interest, and acted in the welfare of our students, and people whom they serve, and they agreed to a multi-year agreement, and that is why we have that difference.

The other element too, Mde Speaker, is the issue of wages increase for public servants, and the Honourable Member would seek to create the impression that our public servants have been neglected, and he would confirm this fact, that since the advent of the PPP/Civic administration wages have increased by over 650 percent and also, there have been real increases - there have been real living increases. We would all agree, even Members in this House here that we all can make a case for more compensation, but to state that our workers have not received what the country can afford - what our treasury can afford, is totally far from the fact. Also, I find that it is a bit amusing that the Honourable Member is now introducing issues regarding the implementation of the Value Added Tax. He might be aware or he might not be aware that there was a Special Select Committee comprising Opposition Members and Government Members who sat and discussed the issue of the Value Added Tax, that Select Committee was noted and I am quite sure that there was a mechanism for different political parties, then, to play a part in that regard. Also, the Honourable Member might know, too, that much study, and much preparation, and much work, has gone into the implementation of VAT. Work started over 5 years ago on this; but the Government did not just introduce the Value Added Tax and just sat back. It continued and had a very aggressive monitoring programme in place, and that is why we saw that, before the introduction on 1 January, there was an amendment to have a list of zero-rated items, and then, two weeks ago, we had 40 more items which were zero-rated, and there were also a number of measures which the administration had contemplated and initiated to ensure the smooth and effective implementation of the Value Added Tax.

The initial hiccups and problems we have seen have not only manifested itself in Guyana, but other countries where the Value Added Tax has been introduced.

So, Mde Speaker, I just thought that we need to clarify that, and again we see another element too, in the red herring being introduced and trying to stoke some sort of dissent within the public sector, talking about the issue of contract employees. We all know that there are certain skills and certain specialities that would be required within the public sector that are not available, and one has to use those administrative mechanisms. The PNC administration did that, and used that.

So the facts are there for all of us to see, and these actions are based on best, and certainly long-standing, practices.

Mde Speaker, I find my intervention today to be of immense personal value, certainly because of my own upbringing, the Ministry of Agriculture is of great significance to me. It embodies many of the dreams of our hardworking farmers and the people who feed all of us. Coming from a farming family myself, I have, and will continue to do my part, to ensure that the challenges of our farmers are overcome. I will do my part in ensuring that the farmers, foresters, and fishers in our country have a better deal. There are Members of this House who know otherwise, Mr Corbin. Find out - right over there.

Mde Speaker, 2006 was another challenging year for the Ministry of Agriculture. Notwithstanding, all agricultural activities - the various sub-sectors within, made a significant contribution to the 4.7 percent real growth, and we know that agriculture contributes to about 33 percent of GDP, and that does not take into account the distilleries; which is also an agro industry, but we do not consider that part in our computation of agriculture's GDP contribution.

I wish to turn, briefly, to the sectoral performance for 2006, and to look at the rice industry. The rice sector grew by 12 percent over the 2005 figure. Our production was in excess of 307,000 tonnes. The recovery from the 2005-2006 floods started, and that saw the country earning close to US\$55M; and the Honourable Member, Mr Murray, talked about a production figure in 2006 compared to 2005, but he will be well aware that the slump in 2005 resulted from the floods that decimated close to 70 percent of our GDP.

Also, last year, a fundamental achievement was an attempt to address the age-old vice - of our farmers not being paid in a very timely way and, as such, all of us, I am sure, we are all happy that this National Assembly approved the Rice Factories (Amendment) Bill, which seeks to ensure that our farmers get a fair deal; but also to protect the industry, to protect our millers, and to protect our exporters. Last year, the rice industry also commenced receiving benefits from the introduction of the commencement of the European Rice Competitive Programme, which is worth \$11.5Million Euros.

Regarding sugar, this sector too has rebounded from the ... or has commenced the process of recovering from the 2005-2006 floods, which affected several estates, and as a result about 260,000 tonnes of sugar were produced, and this represented 13,000 tonnes above the 2005 production. GUYSUICO was able to meet all its market commitments, particularly the EU and US bulk sugar commitments, and last year two new products were introduced - the Demerara Brown and the Demerara White. Packaged sugar - bagged Demerara Gold, and sachet products also increased because of our aggressive marketing programme. The administration had the foresight, several years ago, and commenced the process of strategising and working on a plan to prepare for the impending EU price cut. We did not wait until the EU announced its price cut to commence action, and the Guyana Sugar Action plan, which was crafted as a result of that process, was sent to the European Union

and was accepted. In fact, it was deemed one of the best sugar action plans in response to the price cuts.

Our investment of US\$169M in the Skeldon Modernisation Project was, and is, a tangible demonstration of our early planning and preparation to mitigate the eventual price cuts. Our plan for the sugar industry has, and will continue to be based on the realities of the market, future markets, and trading relationships. Last year we last year started to diversify the use of sugar cane. We are not only focusing on raw brown sugar, but also on other products; and the eventual goal is to bring down the cost of production to US\$0.11 per pound, and again, I wish to refer to the presentation by the Honourable Member, Mr Murray, who expressed some concern about the US\$0.11 target that we have, but I wish to share this information. US\$0.11 per pound as a production cost was a target which was based on all of our markets, and I wish to disclose the different prices that we get. In the European market we get \$0.18, the US market is \$0.16, CARICOM bag \$0.13, packaged raw \$0.25 and refined \$0.19: So the number \$0.11 was not just pulled out of some hat, but was based on future markets and trading realities and projections.

Opportunities for a co-generation plant using bagasse, a distillery, a refinery to produce white sugar, and ethanol plants are real, and are part of our strategy to make the industry viable. Work has started in all those areas.

I now turn to the forestry sector, Mde Speaker, where the export sale was US\$58.7M, compared to US\$48.6M in 2005, which accounts for an increase of 20 percent. There was an inquiry as to where this increase came from, and the view was suggested, or expressed, that it was all based on log exports: But I wish to provide a breakdown to this Honourable House. Log exports accounted for \$21M or above, sawn wood US\$20.7M, round wood US\$2.1M, split wood US\$1.2M, plywood US\$8.9M, other value added furniture US\$4.1M, fuel wood just about US\$0.1M, giving us the total of

US\$58.7M. I must admit that there has been an increase in log exports in 2006, over the 2005 figure. The Forestry Trading Centre Inc continues to provide training in reduced impact logging, and will benefit from an additional US\$400,000 grant from the ITTO. Audit of the log tracking system, and the establishment of a legal verification system was conducted to ensure that we have a comprehensive audit of the log tracking system in Guyana.

We also saw work accelerating in the area, and more emphasis being placed on value added production. An incentive by the Government saw more interest in downstream activities. Many Members in this House would have seen some recent revelations, or coverage, of these developments in the media.

Mde Speaker, I now turn to Fishery, and would look to the aquaculture sub-sector. This sub-sector continues to grow. Also the Ministry of Agriculture has been providing the necessary support to promote this growth, and to sustain this growth. We have also seen training conducted in the basic aquaculture and the rearing of fish and rice cultivation and this approach has been used in many Asian countries, and we think it would provide additional income for rice farmers, utilising the same lands and, at the same time, reducing the cost of production. Also, a National Aquaculture Association of Guyana was established, and this association has been receiving tremendous support from the Ministry, and also from the Private Sector, those who are involved in aquaculture. Within the Fisheries Department, the major achievement was the completion of the Fisheries Management Plan, and also the approval of the Arapaima Management Plan. These strategies would better position Guyana for that new revolution that would allow greater contribution, by the Fisheries sub-sector, to national income.

An assessment of the sea-bob resources was concluded and, in 2006, we were re-certified by the US Government to continue to export shrimps to that country. Also, late 2006, the Fisheries Advisory Committee was resuscitated.

NA –BUDGET DEBATE 12 FEBRUARY 2007

Mde Speaker, drainage and irrigation, a major achievement was the transformation of the National Drainage and Irrigation Board into the semi-autonomous National Drainage and Irrigation Authority. Some of the major highlights of work done in 2006 were the 90 miles of rehabilitated canals in various regions, miles of construction and rehabilitations of embankment in the Capooey conservancy in Region 2, East Demerara water conservancy in Enmore and Mahaica, Perh, Baiboo, and certain villages in Regions 5 and 6. We were able to procure and install two mobile pumps at No.19, and No.42 Village, Corentyne, and the rehabilitation and the reactivation of the Trafalgar pumps in Region 5. We would recall that these pumps were decommissioned in the mid-1980s, and they were recently reactivated as part of our response following the 2005 – 2006 floods.

Mde Speaker, today, in addition to our sluices and our dependency on the tidal drainage, we also have a complement of 30 mobile pumps, which are deployed along the Coast, and even in the city of Georgetown, to assist in drainage. We continue to support the Water Users Association, spending \$100M for the operation and the maintenance of secondary drains in the Crabwood Creek, 52, 74, Black Bush Polder, Cane Grove, Victoria, Canal Polders, Vreed-En-Hoop, La Jealousie and Den Amstel areas, to mention a few. We continued, in 2006, to engage CDCs and farmers groups in Regions 3, 4 and 10. That is consistent with our policy of involving stakeholders in the the management of our D&I systems. We have also been able to rehabilitate more than 350 miles of canals and drains, using some 19 excavators, which were purchased by the Government, and because of this purchase, we were able to save the taxpayers of this country because if we were to go to contractors, we would have had to pay close to \$200M to cover these works. The MMA scheme in Region 5, we saw the acquisition of \$798M worth of equipment, and we have already commenced the process of rehabilitating the entire scheme, and through the Ministry of Agriculture - Agriculture Support Services Project, a US\$75.1M project. We have also started, in terms of developing institutional

capacity and preparing for massive interventions in the 9 declared D&I areas.

Mde Speaker, on the non-traditional agricultural area, this sector continues to grow, and we have noticed that there was an increase in production, and also an increase in exports. As a result, close to US\$7M in exports were received - accounting for ... or if you do the computation, G\$1.4B; and the non-traditional agricultural sector also benefited from a number of interventions in initiatives, such as D&I works in those communities worth \$280M. A number of small projects targeting those farming areas, especially in Regions 2 and 3, \$240M, training of farmers, the printing of a Farmers Guide magazine, also training for women farmers groups, and we have also been able to provide, or to make available, a credit component where, last year, \$104M was dispersed to poor rural farmers, and micro-entrepreneurs through loans to foster their development.

Other initiatives targeting emerging non-traditional sector areas, of where we want to encourage the revival - such as, Linden, the Hinterland Regions, and certain coastland areas, saw other interventions, and also greater production, and consequently greater exports.

Livestock: Mde Speaker, thousands of our livestock farmers benefited from veterinary supplies and services in 2006. We also had the return of five vets from Cuba, and that doubles the complement of vets that we have available to service our livestock farmers. The Animal Health Unit has also embarked on a National Vaccination Programme for poultry farmers, and a poultry diagnostic lab was launched by the President in 2006 to assist in our drive to meet export requirements. In response to the worldwide concern about the avian influenza, stakeholder seminars were held, and a draft avian influenza manual has been prepared, and is being distributed to our farmers.

Focus also continued on genetic improvements in the national herd - cattle and small ruminants, improving the nutrition of the national herd, technology transfer, education and extension services, institutional strengthening to the cattle sector - that is, working with our Cattle Farmers Association, and improving product quality, and targeting local and export markets.

Mde Speaker, as the Minister of Finance noted, this sector grew, and we also saw that, in 2006, we were able to continue to meet our domestic consumption needs and, after a long hiatus, we commenced the re-exportation of beef to two CARICOM markets. There have now been expression of interest in chicken, and certainly other territories are also looking to source beef from Guyana.

Crops – Mde Speaker, the plant and quarantine unit of the Ministry continues to provide services such as inspection of agricultural commodities and other items prior to export, and also was able to intensify our work against the spread of pests and diseases, and to ensure that our crops, in the main, were free from these pests, so as not to affect our exports, and our production. On research, this area continues to be one that received significant attention and resources. NARI, our lead agriculture research institution, was involved in sensitising, and finalising, a long-term research and development strategy 2006 – 2015, and this strategy situates our R&Ds need for the agricultural sector, based on our current realities, and certainly future planning, and future strategies that we have in mind.

Research and development activities focus on crops, soils, plant genetic resources, pest management, post harvesting, agro-processing, and livestock production. A major project that was undertaken by NARI was the Regional FAO Project entitled Promoting CARICOM Food Security, which seeks to ensure that there is year round vegetable and food production for improved food security, and income generation. In the area of training, Mde Speaker, the Government, in 2006 supported the Guyana School of Agriculture to train our young farmers, officers, agro-business

NA –BUDGET DEBATE 12 FEBRUARY 2007

entrepreneurs and animal health workers. For practical teaching a feedlot was constructed on the livestock farm. The school also received much-needed teaching equipment, including computers and other state-of-the-art equipment. In the rice area, too, earlier I referred to some of the initiatives that we have been taking under the EU Rice Competitive Project and we saw that many of those contracts and preparations for the Dawa Pump, for the audit facilities, and also for the construction of a seed-processing plants. Those reached a point of completion in that period.

Mde Speaker, I now wish to turn to 2007, and the projections: For the rice area, the rice credit facility has been launched and is being managed by the Guyana Bank for Trade and Industry and Commerce, and this is worth US\$1.6B. We also hope to complete the repairs to sluices at Golden Fleece and Westbury in Region 2, which would benefit rice-growing areas, identify new high yielding varieties, and also complete the construction of a 20,000 tonne seed-paddy facility in Region 6. We project that rice production will be 371,259 metric tonnes, earning exports worth US\$57M. In sugar, the focus for 2007 will be increased production, and also the reduction of cost, manufacture of higher quality products, and the manufacture of value added products.

Proposed activities to support investment for the competitiveness in 2007 include \$11.7B to be spent in capital works in the sugar industry, with the bulk on the Skeldon Sugar Factory, and other factories, to enhance productivity, to upgrade our factories and investing more resources in all 8 estates, and I wish to repeat - in all 8 estates. The PPP/Civic administration has no plan to shut any of the Demerara estates, and we are committed to a strategy that involves 8 estates. *[Applause]* If you listened to what I said about \$11.7B you would have gotten that information.

Mde Speaker, our focus would be to ensure that the timetable is kept for the Skeldon project, which is slated for completion in 2008. As I referred to earlier, with the co-generation plant.

The Acting Speaker: Your time is up, Hon Minister.

Hon Dr Leslie S Ramsammy: Mde Speaker, I move that the Honourable Member be given 15 minutes to continue his address.

The Acting Speaker: The question is that the Hon Minister be given 15 minutes to continue his presentation.

Hon Robert M Persaud: Thank you very much, Mde Speaker. The industry will be looking at reducing and eliminating certain cost centres, putting much more work in product brand and product development, and continues to put much more emphasis in investments in the welfare of the industry's most important asset, our workers. The Honourable Member, Mrs Holder, suggested that GUYSSUCO laid off workers and that it is contracting private individuals, and it is unable to attract young professionals. I wish to disabuse her of that belief. GUYSSUCO is not laying off workers, and GUYSSUCO is constantly reviewing its working practices, such as new working methods are evaluated and introduced as a result of the introduction of modern technology.

Mde Speaker, also we have a human resources strategy, which a lot of work will be placed on rolling out; and to ensure our production, and that there are greater incentives to our managers, both in the middle and senior management, whereby remuneration is based on an incentive programme, rather than just being automatic.

In 2007, very soon, we will be reactivating the National Cane Farmers Committee and, sometime in this year, I will be bringing to the National Assembly an amendment to the National Cane Farmers Act. It is estimated that production in 2007 will be 285,000 tonnes, and this will be adequate to satisfy our immediate market commitments.

NA –BUDGET DEBATE 12 FEBRUARY 2007

Regarding forestry, Mde Speaker, a log export policy, in collaboration with the Forest Producers Association and the GMA, will be concluded shortly; and I wish to extend an invitation to all Members of this House who have an interest in this area, in terms of log exportation and value added, we have a public consultation on Saturday 17 February, 8:30 at Regency Suites on Hadfield Street and I wish to invite them so that they can make a contribution to this public consultation. As a result of this public consultation, Cabinet will be reviewing the outcome, to determine the Government's policy on log exportation, which would also look at the issues of raw material for value added activities, and fair price for producers. Also, in 2007, Mde Speaker, we will finalise the SSP conversion process, and we will also develop a national procedure to establish permanent sampling plots, to complete the computerisation of databases so that the staff can have real time access to a wide range of information to assist in decision-making, continue the provision of training activities and extension services, especially through the Forestry Training Centre Inc, and continue our aggressive market promotion programme through the Forest Product Marketing Council, a new initiative within the GFC. We will be working with all stakeholders to emphasise greater productivity, efficiency, quality and reliability, as well as on prices. We will continue to work in ensuring that we find uses for the lesser-known species we have in our forests.

In 2007, in the area of drainage and irrigation, we have planned the construction of new sluices at Triumph, Plaisance, Better Hope, Maria's Lodge, Parika Back Dam, Met-en-Meer-Zorg; rehabilitation of sluices and structures at the East Demerara Water Conservancy, Craig, New Hope and Green Valley; constructed river and earthen embankments at Wash Clothes, Kwakwani, Laddersville and Palmyra. Rehabilitation of channels and structures at Cane Grove, Mahaica, Grove/Haslington, Buxton, Mon Repos, Plaisance, Mocca, Timehri, Black Bush Polder frontlands, Nos. 52, 74, Nos. 67 sideline, Crabwood Creek, and I could go on. We will also commence the widening of the East Demerara conservancy dam,

using equipment - two excavators have already been paid for. Just recently I have had calls to explain our purchase of two pontoons, which those excavators will be placed on to work in the East Demerara conservancy. Also, we will continue our countrywide maintenance of secondary systems in our D&I areas, working with RDCs, NDCs, Water Users Association, CDCs and farmers groups. Also, with the MMA, we plan to continue to maintain the primary and secondary D&I systems in the scheme, and also to realign the freehold agricultural lands in that area, and all of this will be seen in the wider context of a program to totally rehabilitate the MMA area, and to make more lands available for both crops and livestock activities.

For the non-traditional sectors in 2007, Mde Speaker, the new GMC will be reoriented to provide better marketing and trade facilitation services. The Guyana shop will be launched in several weeks time, replacing the supermarket, and this shop would only be there to promote fresh, non-traditional products, and processed products, of Guyanese origins. Also, within that facility, we will have a one-stop desk for export documentation of non-traditional agricultural produce, and to advise on relevant market information to stakeholders.

The New GMC will benefit from a \$40M programme to enhance its institutional capacity so that it can extend its reach, serving farmers as far as Region 9, and certainly be much more active in the Coastal and Hinterland Regions.

We will commence work on three new packhouses, and two small packhouses at No.43 Village. We are converting the fishport complex into a packhouse, and also utilising the space at the Charity Marketing Centre for a packhouse, because already our farmers and our exporters are exporting from Charity to the Caribbean, and we want to provide the necessary facilities.

NA –BUDGET DEBATE 12 FEBRUARY 2007

A state-of-the-art packhouse will also be developed at Parika, along with a wharf, and these packhouses are being constructed, and being established to prevent our farmers from having to transport their perishable items to the Sophia packhouse, so that they can go through the necessary post-harvesting preparation for export.

We will also be enhancing the capability of the Sophia packaging facility. As a result of the growth in export we found that this facility has become inadequate and, very soon, we will be investing in more infrastructure.

Mde Speaker, we will be updating our market studies in local and overseas markets to empower our Guyanese farmers to satisfy the demand, and will be making available to them, in their farming communities, market intelligence, live up-to-date market intelligence, using information technology.

For livestock, Mde Speaker, we will be seeking to enhance quarantine services for import and export of all livestock, and livestock products, continue to maintain surveillance for early detection, monitoring and control of pests and diseases, such as foot-and-mouth disease, the bird flu, and recently, we have provided, or we intend to allocate much more resources, in consultation with the Ministry of Finance in the area of Avian Flu, especially in light of its detection in the United Kingdom.

We will be introducing ambulatory services to livestock and even air ambulatory services in Region 9, working with the RAM programme. We will continue to monitor abattoirs and slaughterhouses. We will also be investing in genetic improvements to the national herd, including importation of breeding stock – AI, and for the first time we will be bringing in Guyana embryos, and we will also be working with two private sector developers in the creation of animal breeding farms - one at Liberty Island in Region 3, and the second one in Region 5.

NA –BUDGET DEBATE 12 FEBRUARY 2007

Mde Speaker, we also will be spending resources in the development of pastures - both for cattle and small ruminants and currently we are engaged in work to extend the Manarasc pasture, and opening up of a new pasture at Cookrit Savannah in Region 6.

Mde Speaker, a significant objective that we will be pursuing in 2007 will be the creation of a semi-autonomous Guyana Livestock Development Board, which is so necessary to lead our emerging livestock industry, especially cattle. Already we see the growing need for beef and poultry export, and certainly this sector requires greater institutional support.

Through NARI, in the research area, we will conclude the soil survey for Regions 2 and 3. We are working on introducing new crop types and production systems in a number of farming areas. The drip irrigation systems will be extended to Linden, St Cuthbert's Mission, West Coast Berbice, Black Bush Polder, St Ignatius and Annai. Bio technology will be given greater prominence, and GMO detection will be developed, and we have already a draft GMO policy which, in the coming weeks, we will be putting to the public for a consultation, so as to advise the government policy on. More emphasis will be placed on the production of commodities, such as, cashew, herbs, spices, and other exotic crops. We will also be expanding green house technology, expansion research activities to meet specific farming needs based on feedback. Also we will be establishing a genetic plant facility and purchasing of laboratory equipment and integration of our labs with IAST to do research on animal and plant health.

Our plans for fisheries, Mde Speaker, in 2007 include, for agriculture, the construction of a semi intensive tilapia hatchery, the creation of a more public aquaculture propagation facility to support the work of the National Aquaculture Association of Guyana, and also we will be seeking resources - both private and public, to develop an industrial size fingerling production facility, and explore

the possibility of utilising our conservancy dams for aquacultural activities.

In response to the point raised by the Honourable Member from Region 1, we will be having a FAO expert, within the next week, on aquaculture; and certainly we will be looking at other areas, particularly in the Hinterland regions, to see where and how we can establish aquaculture, based on the needs of our farmers.

For the fisheries department, as I said, we have resuscitated the FAC, and already we have relocated the fisheries department closer to the head office of the Ministry of agriculture, the implementation of the fisheries management plan, and we will be mobilising resources for its funding. We will also be improving the inland fisheries department, and the launching ... as I said, the plan has been approved, and on 6 April we will be launching the Arapaima Management Plan.

We will be working closely with our Fishermen Organisation, such as co-operatives and other groupings, so as to bring better support and better management of those institutions. Agricultural diversification too is a major plan, a major approach of the Ministry - and emphasis for 2007. We hope to commence the implementation of the agricultural diversification strategy, to encourage more agri-business activities to exploit the rich diversification potential in this sector and to conclude the negotiations of a US\$10M diversification project with the IDB.

Mde Speaker, you would recognise that extension services is very critical for growth, and even for the plans that we have outlined in 2007, and this year we will be launching an Extension Services Unit within the Ministry, and the focus of this unit will be to ensure that the agricultural and vet services are readily available to meet the agricultural production needs of our country, so that we can make full benefits. \$140M will be spent in the area of extension services this year.

We will also be introducing the use of information technology in our extension work, and in all 10 regions we will be establishing farmers resource centres, whereby our farmers can go online and benefit from up-to-date information, also for market research, and all the information that they would need to meet their needs.

Another key feature of this unit would be the appointment of extension agents, using farmers and using students. These agents would be similar to community health workers and will be assigned to specific farming areas.

The Acting Speaker: Time, Hon Minister.

Hon Clement J Rohee: Mde Speaker, I would like to move that the Honourable Member be given 15 minutes to continue.

The Acting Speaker: The question is that the Honourable Member be given 15 minutes to continue.

Hon Robert M Persaud: Thank you very much, Mde Speaker. When we talk about development, and we talk about progress and our plans, certain people become uncomfortable, but notwithstanding, our work will continue.

Mde Speaker, I wish to turn to another area - the HydroMet Services, because it is very important. This year we hope to complete the installation of the Doppler Radar System for the improvement of an early warning system. I wish to report that the contract has been signed, and construction of the tower for the radar will begin before the end of February. The radar is currently being built in Germany and, as I said, our plan is to have it installed by year-end.

We have started work to expand our data collection capability in communications which will ensure better forecasting and improved predictability to adequately forewarn farmers and the general public,

and officials, of adverse weather conditions, and thus able to plan ahead.

Mde Speaker, I wish to turn to another area, because the issue of climate change falls within the HydroMet Department of the Ministry, and I think that you can recall that we are at a forum where our own Dr Neville Trots was making a presentation on climate change, and there was an extensive elucidation on its impact for the country as the whole, and certainly on agriculture. We are aware of our vulnerability to climate change. In fact, the Cabinet has discussed both the stern and the UN Intergovernmental Panel Report on climate change, looking at its possible impact on our country. But we have not only waited on these two reports to act. We have been acting for a number of years.

The Government, in collaboration with the UN, has completed vulnerability studies to better understand the impacts of climate change in Guyana, which facilitated some adaptation measures, and I have come to your question, Mr McAllister. Some of the studies concluded include the Guyana Vulnerability Assessment to sea level rise, Guyana's initial national communication to the framework convention on climate change, the socio-economic impact of sea level rise on Leguan. Yes, Leguan, remember when the PPP/Civic came into office in 1992, the PNC had a plan to abandon the island of Leguan because of the sea defence structure, Georgetown and Onverwagt.

Also, a Guyana Coastal Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and Implementation Plan was completed, and the Guyana Climate Change Action Plan was also finalised. Mde Speaker, the approach of the PPP/Civic administration is for all stakeholders to work together to establish a national system to actively, monitor and to adapt climate change impacts.

A national climate Change Committee was formed, comprising stakeholders from the various agencies. I wish to note, and report

that Guyana is not a major emitter of greenhouse gas, but it is a nesting of greenhouse gases, due to its abundant resources, of today's land use practices, low level of industrial emissions, and sustainable resource utilisation through regulations. It has always been the position of the administration to strengthen our adaptation options, and this is something we consider a national priority.

Mde Speaker, shortly, we will be establishing a National Climate Change Unit within the HydorMet Service of the Ministry, and this will set the basis on which we hope for the eventual creation of a national climate change centre in Guyana. In response to the question - what have we done so far? Mde Speaker, Guyana has already taken various measures to adapt to the impacts of climate change. The adaptation measures and strategies include:

1. increasing the network of climate monitoring stations, and the data collected are being used in decision-making. For example, the designing of drainage canals to facilitate the high intensity of rainfall being experienced.
2. new sea defences are being designed and constructed to accommodate the projection of sea defence level rise. The rip rap designs allow for the raising of defences to prevent overtopping.
3. to conduct further studies on climate changes impacts. Already work has started ... and you can contact Dr Trotz on this in the Caribbean Climate Change Centre, which is based in Belize - a climate change vulnerability country assessment in agriculture has commenced.

NA –BUDGET DEBATE 12 FEBRUARY 2007

4. the management plans in the fisheries, forestry, and mining sector also accommodate and respond to climate change impact.
5. infrastructure rehabilitation will ...All our infrastructural works are being done, taking it into recognition the possibilities for impact on the climate change.
6. we have already developed and promoted the use of renewable energy – wind, hydropower, solar, and cogeneration, and even the reduction of our emissions, and as the Honourable Member was asking about Wauna, we are also moving, very aggressively, to develop an agro-energy sector. In the Sunday newspaper you would have seen the latest interest in the ethanol area. I referred to it earlier in my submission on GUYSUCO, and in Wauna, the Privatisation Board has just recently agreed for its sale to a company, and the Wauna plant will be used for the production of bio-diesel. Already, at IAST, bio-diesel is being produced, at a pilot stage now for vehicles.

So, Mde Speaker, you have seen the tangible efforts being made, in response ... I know that one caught you by surprise Mr McAllister.

I wish to refer to GUYSUCO because, when we talk about climate change, we are talking about 25 and 50 years, and many of us in this House tend to look at 5-year projections, and some of the technical

NA –BUDGET DEBATE 12 FEBRUARY 2007

people at the UN they complain that governments do not take into account the impact of climate change because we are talking about something that will happen in 25 or 50 years, but the PPP/Civic administration, we have been thinking, acting on issues of climate change for over a decade ago.

Mde Speaker, let us take, for example, the GUYSUCO Skeldon Project, because this project, and this investment, was made with climate change impact in mind. The factory that we designed at Skeldon has the highest world standards for CO2 emissions to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide being produced. You can check that out. We are also working with the World Bank in terms of the carbon credit which will be generated because of the cogeneration element of this project. Also, mechanised harvesting will ultimately allow for green harvesting of cane, thus reducing the need to burn cane prior to harvesting, and again reducing the amount of carbon dioxide being released.

Mde Speaker, all of our major investments - both private and public, we take into recognition, we take into account, the need for us to plan, adapt, and prepare for the impact of climate change because, in Guyana, we are very vulnerable, and if we read the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Report we can see how vulnerable we are.

I wish, briefly now, to turn and to address the issues - two sectors within Region 6, as the geographical representative of that Region, and I wish to give you some sounding on infrastructure for Region 6, and let us talk about New Amsterdam. New Amsterdam, a township that is controlled by the PNC/R, has been neglected - it has been abandoned by the town council, and this Government has injected close to \$1B - and many of those projects were realised in 2006. We have revived the neglect of your administration, which had caused that town to become desolate. *[Applause]*

NA –BUDGET DEBATE 12 FEBRUARY 2007

Also, the towns of Rose Hall and Corriverton have seen massive infrastructure work. As we speak, the entire Corentyne highway is being rebuilt and rehabilitated. Wait for the Hon Minister of Public Works, he will tell you about Linden.

Mde Speaker, some of the investments that we have planned for the region in the area of roads - \$40M will be spent in roads on the Nos. 52, 74, Angoy's Avenue, Leeds, No.51, Manchester, Liverpool, Limlair ... I do not see my Honourable friend, Dr Austin here today, but we will probably get in contact with Mother Blair and the King family and let them know - Fyrish, Gibraltar, East and West Canje, Crabwood Creek, Port Morant, East Bank Berbice and Moleson Creek.

Mde Speaker, for drainage and irrigation, work will continue in terms of the maintenance in the Black Bush Polder, 52, 74, Crabwood Creek and East Bank Berbice. These areas are where the bulk of agricultural activities take place. Residents across Region 6 will also see massive rehabilitation of a number of schemes and also ... *[Interruption: I am the geographical representative, Mde]* For the first time in 2007, many farmers in the Region will continue to receive gravity flow of irrigation water, and in this area - for Region 6, \$80M will be spent.

Those of us who are from, and who visit Berbice often, will see the transformation, and the modernisation, that are taking place, and I am sorry that my Honourable friend Dr Austin is here, but I do not have to make up any fictional characters but I can ask ... *[Interruption: He is not here ... He is not here, sorry]* He can probably contact one Mr George Corlette of Lancater Village - and he is real, David Rose of Angoy's Avenue, New Amsterdam - and he is real, Sidney Kennard of Bush Lot Farm - and he too is real, Khemraj Narsingh of No.69 Village, and he is very much alive. We do not have horses and animals and dead people voting, as what happened before. John Leitch of Lancaster Hog-stye and many other tens of thousands of East Berbicians can testify to the

modernisation and the transformation that is taking place across our country.

Mde Speaker, my colleague, Dr Ramsammy, the other geographical representative, will speak on some other matters and other developments within in that county.

In conclusion, Mde Speaker, Guyana's agricultural stride and potential have been recognised wide and far. Recently, we have had a visit of the Director General of the FAO, and because of what he has seen we have done - and our plans, he has taken the decision that Guyana will soon have an FAO office, and this FAO office will allow us to benefit from greater institutional support to propel our agricultural sector. *[Applause]*

The above policies and projects in the agriculture sector are intended to sustain growth in all areas, and these are also intended to create more investment in the sector, ensure more food security, create more employment, enhance our exports, and certainly create many more opportunities and profit for our people, especially our farmers, fishers and foresters. The overarching goal, Mde Speaker, is to transform agriculture, in all of its dimensions, and for each one of us here - our farmers, citizens, policy-makers, to view this sector in terms of food and agribusiness enterprises. That is the eventual goal.

Mde Speaker, once again, I would like commend the Minister of Finance, and I wish to also commend this Budget to the National Assembly, and seek the support of all Members for its approval. Thank you very much. *[Applause]*

The Acting Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member. Honourable Member, Mr Ernest Elliott.

Mr Ernest Elliott: Mde Speaker and Honourable Members, I rise to make my contribution to the 2007 Budget debate, which Budget was presented to this Honourable House on Friday 2 February 2007, under the theme ‘Building a Modern and Prosperous Guyana’

Mde Speaker, what a joke. I sat here, most disappointed as a first-timer in this House, to hear these words and promises on what this Government has done for this nation, and the vision it has for the next five years. Yes, Mde Speaker, a vision for further unemployment, crime, discrimination, lack of foreign investment, unstable political climate, hopelessness for our young people, high cost of living, combined with Value Added Tax (VAT), lower wages and salaries.

Mde Speaker, in modernising this beautiful Guyana, this Government has to create an environment to attract investments at all levels in society - meaningful consultations with all stakeholders, building of bridges and restoration of confidence in the minds of the Guyanese people. Mde Speaker, building of bridges, restoring of confidence is what we need in this country.

This Government must set up, and enact, the necessary pieces of legislation for restoring power to the communities through local government.

Mde Speaker, my party, the Peoples National Congress – 1 Guyana, in its 2006 manifesto, moved forward with one Guyana. In page 8 it sets out the Party’s position on local government reform. Comrades you can read it. As my Party’s geographical representative for Region 4 – Demerara/Mahaica, I am concerned that there is still delay on the part of the PPP/C Government for not coming to grips with the reality that local government reform is the way to go, and I would like to urge this Government, based on my Party’s position, to move swiftly. The people of Region 4, and this country, are ready to rebuild their communities, after some 14 years of destruction and political interference.

NA –BUDGET DEBATE 12 FEBRUARY 2007

Mde Speaker, let me turn now to the budgetary allocations for Region 4 - Capital Expenditure for 2007. I had the privilege of serving the council of Region 4 for a number of years under the chairmanship of Mr Alan Emanuel, JP, where we built a strong working relationship with all political parties elected, for the development of the regions.

What is strange is that, since the election of the PPP/C Government, I observed that, despite all the efforts made to prepare a reasonable budget, with the inputs of stakeholders, at the end of the day, the Region was not given adequate funds to manage the affairs on behalf of the residents. Rather, this Government, instead of giving the elected and constitutional bodies monies, it has been diverted to local PPP/C Community Development Councils (CDCs). I therefore urge that this practice be stopped forthwith, and all allocations be given to the legally elected peoples representatives for the development of the Region. *[Applause]*

Under the Capital Expenditure, I observe that no provision was made for land and water transport for the Region. What a shame! How this Government, who is so caring, so they say, how do they expect the chairman, vice-chairman and administration to carry out their tasks effectively.

Mde Speaker, for the past 6 years, the RDC of Region 4 has been-making requests for new vehicles, but to no avail. I urge the Hon Minister of Regional Development, and this Government, to rethink from the request of the Regional Democratic Council for allocations for land and water transport that will facilitate the work of the administration of the Region. I also observed, under the Capital Estimates - Buildings Administration, the sum of \$25M was allocated for the construction of a new administration building. Let me inform this Honourable House that, after the destruction of the Regional Administration Building at Paradise, by fire, one week of the National and Regional Elections 2006, I understand that the then Minister of Regional Development, officers from his Ministry, and

NA –BUDGET DEBATE 12 FEBRUARY 2007

officers from the Regional Administration, excluding the then Regional Chairman have decided to rebuild the office at Triumph.

They also went ahead and prepared drawings and tender documents. Now the tender has been awarded for the construction of the building.

I just cannot understand why the haste. This present council of the RDC has not even seen a copy of the drawings, but the Government was adamant on its decision to have the construction of the building at Triumph.

The elective body, by right, should have been involved in the decision concerning the construction of the new building. However, the council, at a statutory meeting in December 2006, took a majority decision for the reconstruction of the building at Paradise.
[Applause]

Mde Speaker, I would like to quote Chapter 28:01, 3:01(1), which states,

To acquire ... this is the municipal powers of councils ... to acquire, hire, erect, furnish, maintain, and keep in repair such offices and buildings, as required, for the purpose of transacting the business of the council, and for public meetings and assemblies ...

Mde Speaker, I hope that the Ministry will see to the request by the local body.

I said, earlier in my presentation, that the funds budgeted have been inadequate to carry out the kinds of local development in all five

NA –BUDGET DEBATE 12 FEBRUARY 2007

sectors of the regional administration in Region 4, over the years ... and 2007 is no exception.

I would like to draw, to the attention of this Honourable House, the following:

- since 1993, the PPP/C government has discriminated in the allocation of funds for the Regional Democratic Council of Region 4;

My Party, the Peoples National Congress – 1 Guyana, has great concern for the deliberate act to destabilise this premier Region.

The people of Region 4 are also concerned about the allocation, and the under- development of a number of communities. Capital expenditure in Region 4 requested some \$943.7M for works throughout the Region, in keeping with its mandate.

Under *Bridges*, the Region requested \$56M, but was only awarded \$9M to construct bridges in Region 4. The Region requested a heavy-duty greenheart bridge leading to the Eastville Housing Scheme, replacing the present old structure, which is dangerous to life and limb. This was not granted.

- the completion of a number of bridges in Bare Root on the East Coast of Demerara, East and West Fifth Street, requested by the Regional Democratic Council in 2006 was not granted.

Buildings – Education: the Region requested \$404M, but was allocated \$26M. Mde Speaker, education is vital for building a modern and prosperous Guyana. *[Applause]*

In the 2006 budget debate in this House, my colleague, the Honourable Member Mr Dave Danny questioned the non-approval

NA –BUDGET DEBATE 12 FEBRUARY 2007

of funds for the construction of a secondary school at Hope, East Coast Demerara, to replace the Swami Pernandan Secondary School, which is still on a shift system with the Swami Pernandan Primary School at Cove and John on the East Coast Demerara. The parents, teachers and students are under pressure. The education department of Region 4 continues to ponder on this unhealthy situation.

Mde Speaker, I made careful checks in both allocations, in Ministry of Education and Region 4. No allocation was included for the construction of a secondary school at Hope, East Coast Demerara.

One would have thought that education for our children would have been a priority. I therefore urge the Hon Minister of Education to re-examine this unpleasant situation.

Furniture - Education: The Region requested the sum of \$76M, but only \$6M was approved. Mde Speaker, this amount is only a drop in the ocean, taking into account the furniture shortage in many schools.

Over the years, the school population has increased twofold, and stands today at 35,760, that is on East Coast, East Bank and the Highway. 1,599 qualified teachers, with 130 schools, with breakdown as follows:

- 18 secondary schools, 6,427 students, 366 teachers
- 56 primary schools, 23,307 students, 856 teachers
- 58 nursery schools, 6,026 students, 375 teachers

NA –BUDGET DEBATE 12 FEBRUARY 2007

Mde Speaker, while recognising the schools population, on the other hand, I want to inform this House that there are 14 overcrowded schools in the Region. For example, Grove Primary School on the East Bank; Enterprise Primary School, East Coast Demerara; Vryheids Lust on the East Coast of Demerara; Helena Primary School, East Coast Demerara; and Paradise Primary School on the East Coast Demerara - just to name a few.

Mde Speaker, this situation certainly leads to chaos and confusion, but the department of education is grossly understaffed and cannot carry out its mandate in an efficient manner, with one Regional Education Officer, and seven technical officers. At present, the status is as follows:

One Regional Education Officer and one Technical Education Officer, who is expected to retire at the end of February 2007. Mde Speaker, this is certainly an unacceptable situation in the education department of Region 4, and I believe that this is happening throughout the country; and I implore the Minister of Education to address this urgently. The Region, in its good wisdom, submitted for consideration, in the 2006 and 2007 Budgets, the foreign aid in the delivery of education, but funds were not allocated for the following:

- 1 The construction of a nursery school at Dazelle Housing Scheme, Paradise, where the land was made available by the Co-op Society.
- 2 The extension of the Paradise Primary School, East Coast, Demerara, to cater for the heavy overcrowding. A point to note, Mde Speaker, this school has been providing top students for the past 5 years.
- 3 The extension of the Golden Grove Secondary School, which is heavily overcrowded.
- 4 The construction of a primary school at Yarrowkabra.

Even the outreach by the Government in the election campaign also promised the people at Yarrowkbra. We put it in the budget, but funds were not allocated. Mde Speaker, with careful consideration, I observed that no allocation was made for the completion of the Buxton PIC, for the third phase. You go to Buxton and, in the handout given by GINA, it said some \$6.5M completed that school last year. What a lie! That school is still to be completed, and we are awaiting allocations from this Government to complete that building for the benefit of the young people of Buxton. *[Applause]*

Mde Speaker, I draw the attention of this Honourable House to a press statement made by our Leader of the Opposition, and Leader of the PNC/R- One Guyana on Thursday 13 July 2006, based on confusion in education. I would now like to turn to page 4. Once again in this year, Mde Speaker, like last year, where the department of education was unable to place some 2000 children who sat the common entrance exam. This year the situation remains the same. The education department of Region 4 had to force entry into a number of schools, so as to accommodate those children on the East Coast. What a shame, Mde Speaker! *[Interruption: ‘You feel like the victim, eh?’]*

Mde Speaker, I quote from our Leader:

The secondary school systems should be managed to do the following things. There must be adequate numbers of school places, in the various regions, and municipalities. There must be adequate numbers of school places in schools, of the appropriate type of training of the children. All schools should have adequate vocational education, as well as academic education. The selection of children for the Secondary System must be fair, transparent, and stress free.

Agriculture Development: Mde Speaker, coming on the years of the new Minister of Agriculture, I would like to inform this Honourable House that it was a result of the foresight of the Regional Democratic Council of Region 4, because of the vigilance of that council, observed the deterioration in the general irrigation system that caused this Government to spend millions and millions of dollars after the 2005 floods. While I must commend the new minister on the recent action taken to ensure that all the drainage and irrigation systems in Region 4 are properly serviced and maintained, however, the farmers on the East Coast and the East Bank, while accepting that position, are now contemplating on returning to their lands; but we have one hiccup - That is, to provide proper farm to market roads. As I check the budget, I haven't seen any allocations for farm to market roads.

Roads – Region 4: Mde Speaker, the Region requested some \$122M, only \$41.1M was allocated. It is clear this this Government continues to destabilise this Region. It is because of this situation why my Party has been pushing and preaching for an acceptable formula that will allocate resources to local bodies in an objective manner. Mde Speaker, I am calling, on this side of the House – I am calling my colleagues on that side of the House, to speed up the legislation for implementing all outstanding reforms in local Government, which will include fiscal transfers of funds. *[Interruption: ' He must be talking to deaf people. ']*

Mde Speaker, Honourable Members of this House, I will like to draw attention to the latest political development in Region 4. The substansive REO, who retired last September at age 55, was offered a month to month contract, and later took ill on the job and has so far tendered his resignation. The present GREO, who is acting in the capacity of REO, is in receipt of the resignation of a PPP/C councillor and chairman of the finance committee, who is expected to be the new REO of Region 4 and, while I was preparing my

presentation, I took a break to look at my newspaper, and while looking at page 10 of the *Kaieteur News*, on Saturday 10, on the bottom of the right hand column - *New REO is appointed*.

Mde Speaker, the PNC/R - One Guyana condemns this blatant political act. If regional development is one of the keys of moving Guyana forward, the Regional Government must be given the task of recruiting competent staff, including that of the REO/clerk of the council. As it is now, the REO's are political tools of the Government, who see their roles as large and overall. The situation at Linden is an example of PPP/C political control. Mde Speaker, this Government speaks about good governance: I urge this Government to listen to the voices on this side and put your house in order – put your house in order, because the people out there are looking forward for good governance. *[Applause]* The people of Region 4 are looking forward for local Government elections, and local Government elections must be held with a clean list, so that everybody will have an opportunity to vote for the grouping, or individuals, they want to run their local Government Bodies.

Mde Speaker, I join with my colleagues, on this side of the House, in putting forward my position, based on the allocations made for Region 4 in this budget for 2007. Thank you, Mde Speaker. *[Applause]*

The Acting Speaker: Hon Minister, Mr Harinarine Nawbatt.

Hon Harinarine Nawbatt: Thank you, Mde Speaker. Mde Speaker, as a result of the highly commendable budget presentation by Dr Singh, *[Applause]* and the obvious excellent content of the budget, I was expecting that this budget debate would have been characterised by objectivity, honesty and decency. But it appears, Mde Speaker, that the conscience vote by some on the other side of the House, during the amendment to the gambling act, has now left some of those, from that side of the House, with no conscience at all. But before I get into my Ministry's presentation, Mde Speaker, I will

like to make reference to some of the remarks ... [*Interruption:* “You are quite familiar with no content. You are quite familiar with that. Some people on the East Coast, at the University, could attest to that”] Some of the remarks made by the Honourable Member, Mr Basil Williams, in connection with the salary increases granted to public servants and teachers, made reference to the disparity between 5% and 6%, in those two categories.

I would like to correct what was said, Mde Speaker. The Honourable Member mentioned that the teachers were given 6%, as against the public servants’ 5%. Apparently, he didn’t undersatand it too correctly, or he didn’t present as it was. The teachers were successfully negotiated and signed a five-year agreement for 5% across-the-board increases, in addition to 1% merit increment, which you know, as well as other benefits in that five-year agreement. Because the year was coming to an end, and because the merit increment was not in place, the teachers requested that 6% be granted to them in 2006, and that was agreed to by the Government. [*Interruption:* “No, no, no, but there is a difference.”] From 2007, the 5% would be granted across-the-board, and the merit increment of 1% would be put in place. Whereas, for the public servants, they were negotiating – They failed to reach an agreement with the Government. They demanded arbitration, and the majority of members in the public service requested the Government to take some action. The Government had to decide, and the Government agreed to grant the public servants 5% increase in their salaries for 2006. [*Interruption:* “This is not distortion. This is what happened”] With respect to representation of Trade Unions in Semi-autonomous Agencies, it is a fact that all those Semi-Autonomous Agencies, which have been established during this Government, have been authorised to carry over their union representations into those agencies; and the Public Service Union, is the Union represented at the Public Hospital Corporation. That is the fact! That is the fact!

Back to Housing, Mde Speaker. The PPP/C Government has done incalculably more, in 14 years in office, than the PNC did in its 28

years. *[Applause]* Not only in housing and water, but in every sector. Expenditure in the Housing Sector has moved, astronomically. From \$29M in 1992 ... I would have thought that the PNC Government would have been so ashamed of their performance in Housing, that they would have been quiet. From \$29M in 1992 to \$1.1661B in 2007. That is the increase in Housing between 1992 and 2007. This \$1.661B exceeds the 2006 expenditure by over \$500M. The intention of this expenditure, Mde Speaker, is to continue to improve the lives of the most vulnerable people of the society. While benefits would be derived by all segments of the population, special emphasis would continue to be placed on low income earners and other disadvantaged groups within the society. The promises in successive PPP/C manifestos, since 1992, have been honoured, Mde Speaker, and squatting has been reduced to practically zero throughout the country. *[Applause]*

There is no longer need for the masses of the people to squat, in an effort to have a roof over their heads, and cardboard, plastic, and discarded pieces of wood, as walls to surround them. *[Interruption: "Aubrey squatting in the University? We will deal with him"]* And, remember, Mde Speaker, this was widespread, even after the infamous, well-publicised, and much touted slogan – To house, feed and clothe the Nation by 1976. It is a fact, that more than ten years before 1993, land allocation for housing was virtually non-existent in the Governments' agenda. With your permission, Mde Speaker, I wish to share a few achievements of the Housing Sector of the Ministry, over the past five years.

The Government of Guyana – IDB Low Income Settlement Project, which commenced in 2001, achieved an overall completion rate of 95% at the end of 2006, and is scheduled for successful completion in May of this year. \$795M were spent 2006 on Housing and infrastructure under this project for over 9,000 housing lots, in areas, including Zeelot North and Blocks A, B and C Sophia. To date, a total of 18,431 houselots, in twenty-one low-income schemes, in Regions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 10, were provided with infrastructural

NA –BUDGET DEBATE 12 FEBRUARY 2007

works by the end of 2007. Whereas, Mde Speaker, during 1993 to 2000 - an eight-year period - 7,200 transports and/or titles were processed. For the period 2001 to 2006 – six years – 30,000 transports and/or titles were processed for allottees for both Housing Schemes and Squatter Settlements. For the same period, 2001 to 2006, 24,652 house lots were allocated, and regularisation of 165 squatter settlements continued, with a 120 substantially completed.

My latest check revealed that Norton, Williams, the Kings' family and Mother Blair family, were all allocated in this 24000 house lots. For the period 1993 to 2006, a total of 74,000 house lots were allocated throughout the ten Regions of Guyana. Infrastructural works were done to benefit in excess of 50,000 of those lots – in both Housing Schemes and squatter settlements. And for the 24,000 remaining, infrastructural works are ongoing. During 2006, the Planning and Settlements Development Department of CH&PA completed the development plans for Parika, Lethem, Bartica and Charity. These were given priority, since they were identified to be developed as Secondary Towns in the National Development Strategy. These proposals are to be submitted to Cabinet for consideration and implementation during this year, hopefully by 2007.

In 2007, Mde Speaker, as I have said before, the Ministry intends to spend \$1.661B to further enable the population to own their own homes, provide security of tenure, and improve the quality of life in squatter settlements. Of this amount, \$500M will be spent to complete infrastructural works under the IDB Funded Low Income Settlement Programme. At Parfait Harmony, Caneville, Sophia A and B, and Block 22, Wismar, where in excess of 14,800 persons will benefit. Works include construction of roads, drainage, water distribution network, etc. \$8M will be spent under grant funds, provided by the European Union for low income housing. This is a programme which commenced in 2005, and is to provide infrastructural works on five sites. Namely, Westminster in Parfait Harmonie, Belle West, Cummings Lodge Squatter Settlement, 'C'

and area ‘Y’, and Plantation, Glasgow. To date, all designs have been completed, and the work contracts have been tendered, with the exception of Bell West. Construction works have already commenced at Westminister. The project is expected to benefit in excess of 20,000 persons. This programme also includes a community development component, which provides for the construction of community projects, such as community centers, playfields, and nursery schools. \$350M has been earmarked from Government of Guyana Funds to be spent on the construction of roads, drains and structures, in a number of areas, including Charity, Anna Regina, Sophia, Bartica, Lethem and Linden.

Also expected to be achieved during this period ... this is 2007 to 2011, are the completion of infrastructural works for a further 5,000 lots in squatter settlements, and another 9,000 lots in housing schemes. The period would also see the allocation ... [*Interruption: “You didn’t understand. You weren’t listening, you weren’t listening”*] The period would also see the allocation of 3,000 lots for middle-income persons, 11,000 lots for low-income persons, and the construction of 1,000 low-income houses, by private developers, on land made available by the Government of Guyana. To complement these, a total of 17,000 transports and titles are to be processed.

In this regard, Mde Speaker, collaborative effort has already commenced, involving the deeds registry, land registry, and the Central Housing and Planning Authority, to speed up the issuing of transports and titles to home owners. During 2007, Mde Speaker, the ministry also intends to work closely with the Guyana Power and Light Company, to continue the electrification of housing schemes, the increased occupancy, and promote more home construction. With respect to policy, Mde Speaker, the Central Housing and Planning Authority intends to develop a five-year strategic plan, which would ensure its continuation as an efficient, reliable, customer-oriented, and transparent agency, in its land use and mandate to the people of Guyana.

The 2007 to 2011 period is intended to realise the development, an implementation of a National Housing Policy; to address the development of low-income housing in a more structured manner, and to facilitate improvements in the Housing Sector as a major contributor towards the reduction of poverty. The ministry would continue to highlight the fact that mortgage interest rates, by at least five financial institutions are as low as between 5.5% and 7% per annum, from a previous staggering high of 30% per annum. The ministry would also continue to work closely with the local financial institutions, to enable access to finances for home-building by low and moderate income groups. The letters of assurance, negotiated between the ministry and the financial institutions, have been of tremendous help to prospective home-owners in acquiring mortgages in a timely way. We also have to continue to monitor the rate of occupancy, in the schemes, with a view to determining the number of unoccupied lots, and the reasons for these being unoccupied. This will be used to inform the decision to repossess the unoccupied lots or not.

Mde Speaker, the achievements by the PPP/Civic Government from 1992, not only in the Housing Sector, but in every sector of the economy, have possibly been responsible for the people of Guyana returning to the PPP/C Government in 2006.

Water: Mde Speaker, the water sector, prior to 1993, has been in an equally unsatisfactory and undesirable situation. But despite this, and as His Excellency the President mentioned in his presentation to this Ninth Parliament; and I quote: *“Unprecedented advances have been achieved in the provision of potable water supply.”* The President also gave the assurance that large sums of money would continue to be invested in this sector, and this commitment is evidence, by the inclusion of \$2.435B, under the water sector of this ministry. This allocation, Mde Speaker, has exceeded the 2006 estimated expenditure by again \$500M. While it is obvious that improvements have been achieved by many aspects of GWI operations, it is public knowledge that problems continue to plague

the entity, and much more could have been achieved. The Board-of-Directors of GWI, after prolonged discussions, and taking all the relevant facts into consideration, has taken the decision, Mde Speaker, to terminate the performance-based management contract with Severn-Trent Water International Limited with effect from 15 February 2007. Discussions are, at the moment, continuing between the Board of the GWI, the Government, and Severn-Trent, to conclude the most amicable termination possible, due to ethical considerations. I would prefer not to comment further on the decision to terminate this contract until all the outstanding matters have been finalised, except to say that the contract was terminated for Severn-Trents' failure to achieve certain specified targets. Those who have gone to the media have obviously breached an agreement, but we, as a Government, do not intend to follow in this direction.

The management of GWI is, at the moment, preparing a turn-around plan for the company, which should be presented to the Board and the Government by the 15 February 2007. This transformation, Mde Speaker, is expected, as the Minister of Finance mentioned in his budget presentation, to reorganise the main water provider, GWI, and I again quote ... *“Into an organisation that is characterised by efficiency, reliable production and distribution on customer services.”* We expect, Mde Speaker that young, capable, energetic and committed Guyanese would be in the forefront of this process. We, as a Government, are convinced that GWI can, and will do a much better job in the near future.

I have been given assurances by GWI's management, as recent as this morning, during a meeting, that this will be indeed so. The report on 2006 expenditure includes the amount of \$535M to be spent on the Agricola Trunk Main water distribution systems. Installations of water meters in Georgetown, specifically Prashad Nagar, sections of Campbellville, South and West Ruimveldt, and Tucville, as well as the commencement of the refurbishment of the Shelterbelt treatment plan, which is to be continued in 2007, and completed in 2008. A new customer management and billing system

NA –BUDGET DEBATE 12 FEBRUARY 2007

has been installed, and is now being finally commissioned for full implementation. To date, \$335M has been spent on this system, funded by DIFID. It is expected that this high-affinity system would be fully operational by the end of the first quarter of 2007, which is next month end. And with revenues of \$2.6B being projected as achievable during 2007, it is anticipated that \$2B, or 75% will be collected. Billings of commercial customers would be done on a monthly basis, while domestic customers would be billed on a quarterly basis for those who are metered, resulting in improved cash flows. Campaigns will be undertaken to ensure that all consumers, connected to GWI system, are recorded in the customer's database, which is intended to reduce the illegal connections now prevalent, particularly in certain areas. One proposal being actively considered is the use of persons within the communities to identify the users who are connected to GWI system - both legally and illegally, to ensure an accurate database of consumers. Depending on the success of this initiative, consideration would be given for the reading of meters by those same persons within the communities. Supervision is intended to be done by GWI's permanent staff. While improving the billing regime, to enhance collections, other systems will be introduced to remind customers of their indebtedness by the production of overdue reports.

Payment plans for both metered and unmetered customers would be arranged, including the estimation of future consumption, and payments on those estimates for metered customers. Also included are installment plans for unmetered customers to enable payment on a quarterly basis, as well as the expansion of the use of collection agencies in Berbice, Bartica, Lequan and Waknaam; whereby payment stations will be taken to the customers, rather than having them go to GWI's offices, far distances away from where they live. It is anticipated that GWI's revenue would be increased as a result of such initiatives.

NA –BUDGET DEBATE 12 FEBRUARY 2007

In addition, Mde Speaker, the new billing system would be used to log customers' complaints, by the customer service section in the regulations complaints unit, with the intention of dealing with such complaints in the most efficient, expeditious and customer-friendly manner. Concerted efforts to improve the efficiency of GWI have already started, and would be an ongoing process. Communities will be informed of the dates and places during each month, when members of the public would be able to discuss matters affecting them with GWI staff from March 2007. This is the Cabinet out-reach programme, and the ministerial out-reach programme being extended. With respect to pensioners, Mde Speaker, over \$75M were paid by the Government of Guyana to the Guyana Water Authority for more than 8,000 pensioners in 2004. This has increased to \$86M in 2005, and \$98M in 2006, and this concession to pensioners will continue in 2007. This is the caring Government that we speak about.

Mde Speaker, during 2006, the Corriverton Water Supply Improvement Project commenced with the sites being identified and acquired for the construction of two water treatment plants, which will result in improved levels of service and quality to 32,000 residents, between No.51 Village and Molson Creek. In 2006, GWI's teams visited 7,000 homes in the project area, and 1600 leaks were detected, and are being repaired.

Phase 1 of this project, which extends from No.51 Village to No72 Village, is expected to commence construction during March of this year, by a Japanese contracted firm – Kitano Construction Firm – with supervision provided by Tokyo Engineering Consultants. The first phase of this project is to be completed on 28 February 2008; and phase 2, from No.72 Village to Molson Creek would be completed in 2009. \$300M of a total of \$1.1B of Japanese grant funds is budgeted to be spent during 2007 on this project. In addition, Mde Speaker, the amount of \$585M of DEFID funds - this is grant funds - would be spent in 2007 to bring the total expenditure support to GWI, including amounts paid on the performance-based

management contract, and other institutional support to \$3.3B. This is to fund the acquisition of pumps and motors, and institutional strengthening. The World Bank also intends to continue its support to the water sector with the amount of \$300M, to be spent on the construction of water treatment plants at Lima, Anna Regina on the Essequibo Coast, Vergnegen in Parika on West Demerara, and Cotton Tree, Rosignol, West Coast Berbice. The treatment plants in Regions 2 and 5, would be the first in these 2 Regions. The first treatment plants to be constructed in 2 Region and Region 5. The total expenditure by the World Bank is estimated at \$1.522B, under the water sector consolidation project. These interventions, Mde Speaker, which also include the rehailitation and drilling of wells, and the installation of transmission and distribution mains and metering and service connections, would obviously improve the quantity, distribution, and quality of portable water supply.

The Acting Speaker: Time Hon Minister.

Hon Clement Rohee: Mde Speaker, I would like to move that the Hon Minister be given 15 minutes to continue.

The Acting Speaker: The question is that the Hon Minister be given another 15 minutes to continue.

Hon Harinarine Nawbatt: Thank you Mde Speaker. These interventions, which also include the rehabilitation and drilling of wells, and the installation of transmission and distribution mains, and metering and service connections, would obviously improve the quantity, distribution and quality of potable water supply; improve the wellbeing of the population and, ultimaltely, assist in the reduction of poverty, for approximately 50,000 residents. Under the IDB Funded \$4.4B Georgetown remedial and sewerage project, phase 2, expenditure of \$761M has already been incurred and, during 2007, a further \$915M, of which Government of Guyana contribution of \$80M, has been budgeted for the construction of the iron removal plants at Sophia and Central Ruimveldt, rehabilitation of

NA –BUDGET DEBATE 12 FEBRUARY 2007

the treatment plant at Shelter Belt and the continuation of the installation of water meters, the rehabilitation of the 13 sewage pump stations to make all 25 operable in 2007 would be funded by the Government of Guyana. The IDB is expected to commence funding in 2008, to replace and rehabilitate the 25 pump stations, yard sewers and sewerage pipe network. The Coastal Water Supply Programme has been allocated \$240M, in 2007, for the completion of wells and transmission mains in areas such as La Grange and Meter-Meer-Zorg.

Two new wells are to be constructed to replace the No. 47 and Charity bore-holes. Permit me, Mde Speaker, to take this opportunity to sincerely apologise to the consumers served by the La Grange and Meter-Meer-Zorg wells for the prolonged inconveniences caused by the non-completion of these wells. I admit that these are two projects which the management of GWI have had no reason to be proud of. GWI is presently tasked with the preparation of a comprehensive report on the delays experienced in the completion of these wells, while simultameously exerting all their efforts, in having them completed by 30 June 2007, as I indicated.

In the meantime, Mde Speaker, residents are continuously supplied with water by GWI, which is an extremely costly exercise. Today I was told that the order has been dispatched for the materials for those wells. We hope to have them finished earlier, but the deadline date is 30th June. The \$240,000M under this programme, funded by the Government of Guyana resources, also includes the upgrading of existing systems, in Regions 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6, improved levels of service, as well as improving revenue generation, while reducing operational cost. The Hinterland and Linden water supply allocations for 2007, of \$20M, and \$30M respectively, would continue the works done in these locations. For the Hinterland areas, specifically targeted are Port Kaituma, Canal Bank, and Mabaruma in Region 1. Siparuta and Orealla in Region 6. Jwala and Parima in Region 7. Mahdia and Paramakatoi in Region 8 and Aishalton in

Region 9; and Rockstone, Ituni and River View in Region 10. To date, Mde Speaker, solar systems have been successfully installed at St Cuthberts Mission, Aishaeton and Sand Creek. Research is currently underway to determine whether solar operated systems can be most effective and efficient for targeted Hinterland communities.

Mde Speaker, in answer to the observation raised by the Honourable Member Fernandes, with the Mabaruma gentleman, who had a dream, I would wish to report, that I have been advised that, by the end of March, the dream of that gentleman would be coming through, and that the Mabaruma system would be effective. *[Applause]* To date, for Linden, Mde Speaker, West Watooka water treatment plant was successfully refurbished, during 2006, at a cost of \$5M, and approximately 5000 residents are now benefitting from improved levels of service, operational reliability, and improved quality of water. Amelia's Ward and West Watooka are also identified to benefit from new distribution lines and, as a consequence, a more efficient water supply by the end of June 2007. Further, Mde Speaker, Linden in Region 10 has been identified as the first, from a list of five areas, to benefit from the implementation of a water safety plan, which will ensure the safety of water, Mr Norton, from the source to the end-user - The first to be identified, and the first to have such a plant. This intervention is to be funded by the Civil Defence Commission of the USA, the National Oceanic Agency of the USA, in collaboration with Pan American Health Organisation, and with technical assistance and supervision by the Guyana Water Inc.

During this term of Government, Mde Speaker, a has been promised in the PPP/C manifesto of 2006, the ministry will be pursuing the establishment of a National Water Council, for the integrated management of water resources, in accordance with the Water and Sewerage Act 2002. This council would formulate and administer a national water policy, as a result of which the water resources would be more efficiently managed in the medium and long term. Two other areas of serious concerns to GWI's operations efficiency

include the cost of energy and the leakages experienced within the system. Energy costs now account for approximately 60% to 65% of GWI's operational costs, which will have to be reduced in order to expand and improve operation efficiencies. In addition to these costs, fluctuation and voltage regulations result in damage to equipment, which are extremely costly to repair and replace and, as a consequence, disruptions of water supply for extended periods occur. Discussions have been ongoing with GPL to alleviate this problem, and would continue in 2007. GWI's distribution network, Mde Speaker, is plagued with leakages, which needs to be repaired as soon as they occur, or as soon as they are reported or discovered. Unfortunately, the financial and physical capacities to do so have not always been available to GWI, and during this term of Office, the Government would be making additional, concerted efforts to secure the resources for this aspect of GWI's maintainance requirements.

Mde Speaker, I wish to assure this House ... and especially the Minister of Sports, that systems are being put in place to ensure that adequate supplies of water would be available during the special events planned for during this year, to cater for the increased demands. Specifically, for the World Cup, and to a lesser extent, for the Rio Summit, not at the expense of any other area. In conclusion, Mde Speaker, I wish to say that the staff of the Ministry of Housing and Water, including GWI, would continue to *put their shoulders to the wheel*, to work assiduously to satisfy the population with respect to their housing needs, as well as the provision of clean, safe, odourless and continuing supply of water, to contribute towards the building of a modern and prosperous Guyana, so that a brighter future, for all, could be assured. Thank you very much. *[Applause]*

The Acting Speaker: We now have the next speaker; I think it's a member of the AFC. Honourable Member Mr Patterson.

Mr. David Patterson: Thank you Mde Speaker. Mde Speaker, with regards to the 2007 Budget titled '*Building and Modern and*

Prosperous Guyana’ I’ll like to make these brief contributions. Firstly I would like to offer my congratulations to the Hon Minister of Finance, Dr. Ashni Singh, on the presentation of his maiden Budget. Under the circumstances, he’s done an admirable job in presenting what can only be termed ‘an average economic report card.’

While we fully endorse the ideal of a ‘Modern and Prosperous Guyana,’ we do not feel that this is the Budget to achieve this. Mde Speaker, Budget 2007 is a collection of words, promises, hints of possible actions, and quotations for large sums of expenditure. Budget 2007 does not show any evidence of being prepared with the needs of the people of Guyana in mind. Mde Speaker, a Budget debate works on the premise that there is something to debate. Budget 2007 lacks the content to properly fuel a debate. Hence, my objective will be to seek more clarity from the Hon Minister , so that I may understand the proposed direction our Government is intending to carry us, and I should restrict my clarifications to the sectors which I have been assigned ... [*Interruption: It’s a Budget not the Manifesto. We had a chance to talk about the Budget Manifesto*]

Under the sector termed ‘*Transport and Hydraulics*,’ on page 28 and 29, under the subheading ‘*Infrastructural Expansion and Modernisation*,’ the Hon Minister listed several projects that the Government intends to execute this year. This subheading is correctly named, since in my research in preparing it, I was unable to unearth one, one new road project that has ever been constructed under this Government – that is in the 15 years this Government has been in power, and they have not constructed a new road project, and by a new road project, I am referring to the construction of a new access road linking 2 points, or a community that were not previously linked, by a roadway. An example, a prime example, would be the Linden-Soesdyke Highway, which linked, which by road link they were able to ... Linden was able to be linked to the Coast by road.

NA –BUDGET DEBATE 12 FEBRUARY 2007

I know this Government always claims, and rightly so, that since they ascended to power in 1992, they have done a tremendous lot in repairing, and we would acknowledge that you have repaired a lot of roads, but you have not constructed 1 new road. This Budget simply caters for repairs and upgrading our existing roads and infrastructure. It is a pity that the Government has not seen it fit to at least commence work on say the proposed Ruimveldt to Diamond road link, which would have brought economic benefits resulting from the opening of new lands for expansion.

Mde Speaker, I note that this Budget makes provisions for yet another feasibility study on the proposed Lethem to Linden roadway. However, one could be mistaken in assuming that, by the mere fact that the Government has endorsed the completion of the Takutu River Bridge, and have committed themselves to investing \$38M in a multi-purpose complex in Linden, that they would have already considered this a feasible ... *[Interruption: in Lethem]* they would have already considered this road a feasible venture. Mde Speaker, maybe this Government is awaiting another report from the Louis Barger Group which would recommend that the best route for this link between Brazil and the Coast would be via a different region; that is why we are commissioning yet another feasibility study.

Mde Speaker, with regards to air transportation, it is hoped that the \$400M that was identified in Budget 2007 includes provision for the improvement to the ferry services to the Northwest District in order to provide some measure of relief to that area's long-suffering residents.

Mde Speaker, looking under the housing and water subsection, I know that on page 36, in his Budget presentation, the Hon Minister of Finance indicated that the Government intends to speed up the process of acquiring house lots. It is something we welcome, and I

hope that speeding up the process also includes a more transparent approach to the eligibility for applicants for house lots, and the new speed-up approach shall be removed, far removed from political interference.

Mde Speaker, on page 36 of the Budget presentation, it was reported that the Government will be undertaking a number of initiatives to regularise squatters' settlements. We endorse this process since there is a great need to have these areas regularised. However, a loud caution must be issued to ensure that the necessary infrastructure is in place to ensure that proper sanitation is available so that we do not have a recurrence of some of what currently exists. It is interesting to note that the Government is seeking to allow more persons access to titles for their properties. However, the bottleneck in this process has not been the granting of titles, but it has been a person's ability to afford to construct their home. This ability will now be severely hampered by the introduction of VAT. In all their much hyped public relations programmes what the GRA has not told the general public, in particular potential low-income home builders, that the construction costs for homes in that bracket will increase by a minimum of 10% ... [*Interruption: 'Low holders, stick you will learn'*] The Hon Minister, in his wisdom, has zero-rated and exempted certain building materials; namely locally produced materials, but has omitted to notice that composite items, including these zero-rated materials, will increase. Let me cite you 2 examples - concrete and timber. Mde Speaker, the majority of components required to make concrete are zero-rated, namely sand, stone and water. These items did not attract any consumption tax either. However, their net result is that their base prices remained unaltered. However, in the case of cement, the main component of concrete, the price has risen – it used to be 5% consumption tax, it is now 16% VAT. The net result is that, under the VAT system, concrete prices have risen, and the spin-off– block work prices have risen, plaster work - all the related items have risen, so has - steel, zinc sheets, paints, nails, windows. What the Hon Minister has failed to tell everybody is that house prices - the cost of constructing

NA –BUDGET DEBATE 12 FEBRUARY 2007

a house, will increase under the VAT system. You also have to pay VAT on labour. Additionally, let me give you a next example for the fellows who want to talk about wood. A simple item such as a door; while timber is zero-rated the costs of the locks, the nails, the hinges, the paint for the door, have all increased. Mde Speaker, coupled with the very modest, almost invisible adjustment to the Income Tax Threshold, the net result of this Budget would be that fewer persons will be able to afford to build homes this year.

Mde Speaker, with respect to water and sanitation, in his presentation, the Hon Minister of Finance, on page 36, reported that there is in place a five-year Water Supply Strategy Plan, which will evolve GWI into an efficient and reliable water production agency. What he failed to provide was any details on how, and who are the stakeholders who contributed to the development of this plan, and what sort of consultations were undertaken. Yet there was a reporter in the Kaieteur News of February 10, and it was collaborated - the House was just informed by the Hon Minister of Housing and Water ... *[Interruption: 'Stabroek News, yes, that's okay'... I glad you read both]* It was reported in the Stabroek News of February 10, 2007, that the Board of GWI has decided to terminate the management Contract of Severn Trent, effective January 25 2007. Mde Speaker, according to the Stabroek News Article, the Board meeting was held on January 25 2007, a full week before the presentation of this Budget to this Parliament. Surely the Hon Minister of Finance, through the Hon Minister of Housing and Water, would have been aware of this development, and should have deemed it necessary to at least provide an explanation to this Parliament how that would affect his five-year plan, and I note that the Hon Minister of Housing and Water made no mention about the Five-Year Water Supply Strategy Plan.

Mde Speaker, with regards to Local Government, under pages 41 and 42 of Budget 2007, the Hon Minister mentioned that a modern taxation system is being derived. However, no timetable has been given for its completion and implementation. Similarly, other than a

passing mention to a new formula for fiscal transfers, we have no details, nor timetables. Without such information local authorities would once again have to execute their responsibilities in accordance with the handouts provided to them from the Government. With regards to the valuation office in the Ministry of Finance, no mention has been made how the Hon Minister of Finance plans to ensure that this division is fully staffed. Mde Speaker, this Division is currently operating at 50% capacity. It's operating with less than half of its required staff. What is the Ministry of Finance's position regarding the services for professionals to serve as the Chief and Deputy Chief Valuation Officers? Has the Government agreed to retain the services of the CARICOM national earmarked for this position for over 1 year? If not, are they willing to confirm the person currently executing the duties of Chief Valuation Officer?

Mde Speaker, Mde Speaker, the matter of a long, prolonged Local Government Elections is still unresolved. The Alliance for Change will like to, once again, state that we deem the non-holding of these elections to be undemocratic. We note that a Local Government Task Force is being re-established. However, once again, the membership to this Task Force appears to be exclusively restricted to the Government and the majority Opposition Party - the majority Opposition Party, and we hereby submit that, for this and any other matter of national importance, broad-based consultation is necessary. Mde Speaker, the issues raised here today are no means the totality of our concerns, but if addressed, they would give us some useful directions into the future of a modern and prosperous Guyana. Mde Speaker, I would like to suggest that the Hon Minister of Finance, along with his fellow architects of our economy, start constructing a plan that is more reflective of the needs of the people for presentation in 2008. Mde Speaker, I thank you. *[Applause]*

The Acting Speaker: Hon Minister, Dr. Frank Anthony.

Hon Dr Frank C S Anthony: Mde Speaker, I rise this afternoon to support the Budget titled ‘*Building a Modern and Prosperous Guyana,*’ presented by my colleague, Dr. Ashni Singh. Indeed, his comprehensive and well-thought out presentation has left very little room for debate and, as expected, there has been no debate on the fundamentals, just skirmishes and distractions. *[Applause]*

Mde Speaker, the building of modern and prosperous Guyana is not an easy task. We must pause to reflect the national and international realities. We must pause to reflect on where we have been, and what we were. On the 30th of March, 1992 the then Finance Minister Carl Greenidge presented a Budget titled ‘*Keeping Guyana on the move Forward.*’ In his speech he said

In order to help with the problems faced by youths in the community, the year’s programme contains \$19M for the development of youth and sports. This allocation is intended to facilitate the procurement of sports equipment and gears, which will no longer be subjected to tax, upgrading of sports facilities and community centres, and youth development programmes in general.

On the 2nd of February 2007, when this Finance Minister presented the Budget, sports was not relegated to insignificance, but generously punctuated his speech. He elevated it from a recreational pastime to give it the importance it deserves. *[Applause]* He projected real GDP at 4.9% in 2007, and said:

“this growth will be fuelled by the anticipated stronger growth in sugar, the recovery in the mining and quarrying sector, as well as the activities and connection with Cricket World Cup and other major events of this year.”

Sports therefore are not a trivial matter. It is an important contributor to our economy, and a stimulator of growth in many sub-sectors, such as construction, housing, environmental assessment, tourism, and hospitality services. This was clearly articulated in our Budget. Apart from its economic value, sports have many significant social benefits. These include the improvement in individual and community health. This will cause a decline in medical costs; a reduction in crime rates; the inculcation of discipline and character; the development of a sense of fair play; the improvement in the delivery of a quality education; the improvement in gender equality, and the empowerment of women; its contribution to peace by bridging ethnic and social cleavages. This is why the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, and the National Sports Commission, have embarked on a process to finalise the National Sports Policy. A series of consultations were started with stakeholders, and the process is expected to be completed during this year. In addition to the policy, intensive consultations are ongoing, with sports organisations and associations, players, coaches, media, community groups, and many others, on the development of a national strategic plan for sports. There have been several working groups that were formed, which include sections such as the revitalization of community sports, school in sports, sports administration and management, and the improvement of specific sporting disciplines.

The National Sports Commission is coordinating and facilitating this process, so it is anticipated that this process would therefore result in a coherent and transparent National Strategic Plan for the next 5 years. Mde Speaker, during this year, the National Council on Physical Fitness would also be launched. This Council comprising of public, private and non-governmental organisations would be responsible for advocating and promoting physical fitness throughout Guyana. As you are aware, the chronic non-communicable diseases are a major contributor to morbidity and mortality in our country. Embracing an active lifestyle has many benefits. It prevents obesity, it discourages the use of tobacco, drugs

and alcohol, it enhances functional capacity, helps to maintain a quality of life and independence for older persons. It has many health benefits for women – improving maternal health and reducing infant mortality. It also will help to empower persons with disability. This Council will work steadfastly to get Guyanese to get fit for life. That is why in this Budget, we have allocated \$10M.

As the old adage goes '*Prevention is better than cure.*' We intend to work aggressively with the Ministry of Health, the Pan-American Health Organisation, and other interested associations and organisations, to improve physical fitness for all Guyanese. During the year we would be promoting fitness walks, road races, including reintroducing the annual marathon run. We would also be opening gyms in various communities so that more and more people can have access to sporting facilities.

Young people are disproportionately affected by HIV and AIDS, and other STIs. The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports will train sportsmen and women, and coaches, to educate young people, who are involved in sports, on HIV and AIDS and STIs. A good example of how sports would be used to spread health messages is the use of the Cricket World Cup mascot '*Mello*' to speak to school children on the issues of HIV and AIDS. This mascot, which is sponsored by UNAIDS and UNICEF, would be in Guyana from the 16th of February, to the 24th of February. 'Vision 2011 for Sports' will also see an improvement of sporting infrastructure in Guyana. This year we would start the first phase for a swimming pool complex. In this phase we would construct a 50 metres Olympic-sized swimming pool. This would allow our swimmers to compete in the right facilities. On completion of the swimming pool complex, it would have a 50 metre Olympic-sized pool, and a 25 metre warm-up pool. It would also have spectator-seating around the pool for viewing of swimming competitions.

With the completion of this sports facility, we would be able to host international swimming competitions right here in Guyana.

[Applause] Additionally, preliminary works would be done to establish multi-purpose sports facilities in the counties. These facilities will augment the existing sports infrastructure, and will include a synthetic athletics track and football fields. The upgrade in sporting infrastructure is required for us to provide adequate training facilities for our athletes and, at the same time, to have all the requisite facilities for hosting of international track and field events in Guyana. During the year, we would initiate a new programme called sports for development; that is, using sports to mobilise youths into educational and employment programmes. We would also continue our *sports for peace* programme. As some members are aware, we started a pilot programme with sports teams from several villages on the East Coast. These include Buxton, Annandale, Enterprise, Friendship, Lusignan. These teams competed against each other in a very cordial atmosphere. It is a good example of how we can use sports to build national cohesion; and I am also pleased to announce that many of the members in the Opposition have lent their steadfast support for this programme, and I look forward to your cooperation and collaboration as we continue to implement many such programmes during this year.

Mde Speaker, our flagship facility, the US\$25M Guyana National Stadium at Providence, has been given the ‘thumbs up’ by the visiting ICC team. We are ready [Applause] to host the matches from the 28th of March 2007. Mde Speaker, I would like to invite all Guyanese to be part of this historic event to see the first matches at the Guyana National Stadium at Providence. Sadly, everyone would not be able to fit, because we can only accommodate 15,000 persons. So Honourable Members, friends, I urge you to buy your ticket into cricketing history - get it while it’s still available. There is much more than can be said about sports, and for sports, but I’ll leave that to my other colleagues that will be speaking after me.

Mde Speaker, in the area of Culture, the Ministry continues to nurture the dance forms through the National School of Dance, and the National Dance Company. This year the school would continue

NA –BUDGET DEBATE 12 FEBRUARY 2007

its annual tradition of putting on several shows at the National Cultural Centre, and at other national events. It is expected that some of the productions would have a significant edutainment component.

In this year's Budget, monies have been set aside for the construction of a costume cupboard for the Dance School. The Burrowes School of Arts continues to be a very outstanding school that is able to help creative people unleash their artistic talent. During this year, the school would continue to graduate artists. It would also be holding its annual exhibition, where it would showcase the talents of young, and more established masters. It would be exploring new areas of training, such as fashion design and computer graphics.

The Ministry continues to manage the assets of our 3 museums. These are the National Museum, the Walter Roth Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology, and the Museum of African Heritage. These museums have an active outreach programme into the schools and various communities. During this year the National Museum would be repainted, and a museum garden created, with the assistance of the Private Sector. The museum will resuscitate its lecture series and summer programmes for children and several special exhibitions depicting aspects of our history. In addition, discussions will commence with several institutions to develop a virtual museum, using our current holdings.

The Walter Roth Museum would continue its collaboration with various universities to conduct archaeological excavations and anthropological studies. This year we would resuscitate the anthropology and archaeology journal, and we would also restart the junior archaeologist programme.

The Museum of African Heritage would continue its community outreach work. This institution would also play a lead role in the Ministry's programme to commemorate the 200th Anniversary since

NA –BUDGET DEBATE 12 FEBRUARY 2007

the abolition of the Slave Trade, and 170 years since the emancipation of enslaved Africans in Guyana. The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports will be coordinating a National Committee to ensure that this significant milestone is properly commemorated. *[Applause]*

On the 19th of February we would be adding another museum to the Ministry's holdings that is, the Dutch Heritage Museum. As you aware, the Dutch was in Guyana from 1580-1803, a period of 223 years. This museum would be housed at the Court of Policy building on Fort Island, not far from the Brick Fort, built by Gravesande in 1744. Today, this brick structure that was built by Gravesande 263 years ago is still standing ... *[Interruption: 'Laurence Storm Van Gravesande - know your history']* This building is still standing, but is now threatened by the mighty Essequibo River. We have budgeted monies under the Ministry of Works and Communication and the National Trust to help to prevent any erosion of the foundation. The development of this museum would enhance the Ministry's drive to preserve our historic sites, and to promote heritage tourism. This would help to create a special niche in the tourism market.

The National Archives Building was declared open on the 7th of March 1981 by the then Vice-President Desmond Hoyte and, in his address, he said that

“it would be temporary accommodation, and that I would try to do everything in my power to ensure that we give a high priority to the construction of a permanent archives building.”

This year will mark 26 years since that address, and I am pleased to announce that, by the second quarter of this year, we would be moving into the new archives building located in Homestretch Avenue. *[Applause]* This would be the permanent home for the archives.

The National Trust would continue its work to safeguard the National Heritage and Monument Sites. We would continue to publish pamphlets, brochures, and books of historic importance, to assist Guyanese in understanding their rich cultural heritage. The Ministry would continue to work in promoting various festivals in our country. This year's Mashramani celebrations promise to be quite exciting. The traditional Calypso and Chutney Competitions are ongoing; Masquerade Band competitions would be held next week; the Children Costume and Float Parade would attract participation from many schools, with UNICEF and UNAIDS sponsoring some of the schools to promote healthy lifestyles among children.

The National Float Parade on the 23rd of February 2007 will be one of the largest parades ever in the history of Mashramani. *[Applause]* Already several camps have indicated that they would be bringing thousands of persons on the road. This festival is growing, and is a permanent feature on our tourism calendar.

I would like to acknowledge the growing contributions of the Demerara Distillers Limited, Guyana Telephone and Telegraph Company, and Ansa Mc Al in sponsoring some of these events. It has allowed us, for the first time, to take Mash to all the Regions of Guyana. *[Applause]* There are many other cultural initiatives that the Ministry would be undertaking during the year. This would be in the area of music, drama, theatre, and the improvement of the National Cultural Centre. The Endowment of the Arts Fund, with a provision of \$100M, would be used to fund some of these initiatives as we go forward. Like sports, it is the intention of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports to develop the creative and cultural industries to become a significant contributor to the GDP of our country. I am confident that, with these new Public Sector investments and partnerships with the Private Sector, that we are witnessing a cultural renaissance in Guyana. *[Applause]*

Mde Speaker, 'Vision 2011' has many new and exciting opportunities for our youths. We have started the process of revising the National Youth Policy, and developing the National Strategic Plan. Initial work has started with an Inter-American Development grant, and this would be completed during this year. This would be the precursor to the G\$1.5B investment in the youth sector to assist young people in the transition from puberty to economic independence. *[Applause]* These opportunities include providing drop-outs with a second chance to education and skill training, facilitating a start to a working life, and giving young people a voice to articulate their needs, and a chance to participate in delivering it. In this regard, the Kuru Kuru Training Programme would be expanded to accommodate more than 300 residential students. The classroom and work areas would also be expanded; the curriculum would also offer additional courses, including peer education and training for each student on HIV and AIDS. The non-residential programme at Sophia, that attracts a number of vulnerable youths, would be expanded to accommodate more students. This model would also be replicated to other communities. Many of the graduates are already securing employment. This programme is making a big difference in the lives of many young people. Only last Saturday a batch of 63 students graduated in catering, refrigeration, art and craft and welding. *[Applause]* The Government believes that spending G\$1.5B on youth programmes would help us to reduce poverty. As you aware, the capacity to learn is much greater for young people than older persons, so missed opportunities to acquire skills, good health habits, and the desire to a play a meaningful role in society can be costly to remedy at a later stage. It is also a known fact, that better-educated parents have healthier and better educated children. So if we invest, as we are doing now, in our youths, these inter-generational effects would help to lift these families out of poverty in the long run. The reduction of poverty and the creation of prosperity is certainly the aim of this Government. *[Applause]* We would continue to expand the President's Youth Award so that it is in all the regions of Guyana. We would continue to run our Summer camps for our

young people. We would also be improving the New Opportunity Corps, providing better facilities for the youths living there. During this year we would complete the revision of the Juvenile Delinquency Act to bring it in keeping with international standards and best practices. We would also be collaborating with the Ministry of Human Services and Labour, and the Ministry of Home Affairs, to operationalise the holding centre for juveniles. We would also retain the Guyana Volunteer Programme. This programme, which was created to assist us in the hosting of Cricket World Cup, we would retain this as legacy, because we now have more than 1000 volunteers that are trained.

I listened to 2 of the presentations before me, and I was a little surprised and taken back by the Honourable Member, Mr. Elliot. But to you I want to say, Sir, there is a quotation from Joel in the Old Testament, Chapter 2, verse 28. It says “*Your old men shall dream, dreams and your young men shall see the visions.*” While you were daydreaming about our hopeless youths, we have the vision in the 2011 to transform the lives of Guyanese. [Applause] And to the Honourable Member, Mr. Patterson, when I listened to his presentation, it reminded me of the renowned Trinidadian, Paul Keens Douglas and in his monologue he said - his monologue on the choir, he said “*Some politicians were members of his school choir. They were good at opening their mouths and saying nothing.*” [Laughter and applause]

Mde Speaker, Mde Speaker, I have not dwelled too much in the past. I wanted to keep my presentation in the spirit of *Vision 2011*, as outlined by the Minister of Finance. I think, Honourable Members that this Budget surely cuts through the rhetoric to show the way of how we would be building a *modern and prosperous* Guyana. [Applause] John Gardener, in his book ‘No Easy Victory’ said, and I quote:

NA –BUDGET DEBATE 12 FEBRUARY 2007

Leaders have a significant role in creating the state of mind that is in the society: They can serve as symbols of moral unity of the society: They can express the values that hold the society together. Most important, they can conceive and articulate goals that lift people out of their petty preoccupations and carry them above the conflicts that tear a society apart, and unite them in the pursuit of objectives worthy of their best efforts.

I implore you, Honourable Members, to join the excitement and let us unite in pursuit of this nation's development. I thank you.
[Applause]

The Acting Speaker: Hon Minister Dr. Jennifer Webster.

Hon Jennifer I Webster: Mde Speaker, today my presentation in this House would be in support of the 2007 Budget, on the theme of 'Building a Modern and Prosperous Guyana.' First of all, I wish to commend my colleague, the Honourable Dr. Ashni Singh, on a remarkable Budget presentation.

Mde Speaker, this Budget supports Government's vision for a modern and equitable society for all Guyanese, and I quote from page 1 of the Budget Speech, which was presented in this Honourable House by the Hon Minister of Finance:

This Budget indicates Governments commitment for the formulation, and implementation, of appropriate and relevant policies and plans, which are aimed at improving and realising the aspirations of all Guyanese.

Mde Speaker, the achievement and maintenance of a stable macro-economic environment is very important to inspire investors' confidence, reduce poverty, and improve social welfare. We intend to pursue policies that will result in sustainable fiscal deficits, reflecting prudence in expenditure policies; balance with recognition of the need to continue investing in critical sectors; maintain low levels of inflation, continued stability in the exchange rate; low and reducing interest rates to ensure the availability of affordable financing for Private Sector investment; a favourable balance of payment position, along with an international reserves position that would be consistent with long-term external sustainability; a level of external borrowing that would be consistent with long-term fiscal sustainability; continuing to improve fiduciary oversight, reforms to further improve transparency, accountability, and good governance, promoting and facilitating investment to create more jobs; facilitating investments in other sectors, including ICT, garment manufacturing industries, agriculture and agro-processing, mining and forestry.

Mde Speaker, in January 2007, Government introduced the Value Added Tax system in an effort to broaden the tax base, and to improve tax administration. Mde Speaker, I wish to reiterate the point that, at every stage, Government has adopted the most consultative approach, as it relates to the implementation of the Value Added Tax system. VAT was advocated a long time ago, as long as 1993, by a former parliamentarian in this House, Mr. Clive Thomas, and again in the 1995 Budget Debate. All of the major Private Sector bodies advocated VAT to Government. When the VAT legislation was presented in Parliament, the Government took both the regulations and the bills to special Select committees. This allowed for detailed scrutiny by representatives of the House, and indeed, the special select committees took the unusual approach of inviting submissions from the public. Only recently, when Government brought amendments to the schedules of the VAT Act

in December 2006, those amendments were approved, unanimously, by this House. Government therefore repeated how encouraged we felt in this regard. The recent attempts, therefore, to highlight the challenges and glitches in the press can be viewed as partisan, and it failed to commend the efforts of those businesses that have been able to implement VAT in accordance with the Law, and have taken cognisance of the adjustments, and passed the benefits on to the consumer. In fact, in the Chronicle newspaper edition of February 6th 2007, and I quote:

The Private Sector Commission commended the Government for the steps it has taken to bring immediate and tangible relief to the consumers, who were severely affected by the impact on the cost of living upon the introduction of the Value Added Tax.

Mde Speaker, is this not testimony to the fact that Government continues to hold various consultations throughout Guyana with various bodies, and the wider populace, on the implementation of the Value Added Tax System? As a result of consultations the Government has since extended the list of zero-rated items to include 40 additional items. In addition, zero-rated items include essential domestic services such as education services, and educational materials; water and sewerage services provided by the Guyana Water Incorporated and the Kwakwani Utilities Incorporated; electricity supplied by the Guyana Power and Light; funeral services; locally-produced garments; heavy-duty industrial machinery; locally produced building materials, computer and computer accessories, to name a few.

Mde Speaker, the Honourable Member, Mr. Murray, recommended that special mechanisms be put in place to monitor those businesses who have sought to use the introduction of the Value Added Tax System to increase prices of various commodities. Mde Speaker, Government, through the GRA, will be monitoring this situation,

and will move to institute penalties against those found to be culpable. We hope that, when such action is taken, the Honourable Member will maintain his supportive position. Mde Speaker, in accordance with the law, members of the VAT Board of Review will be appointed, and will commence work shortly. This Board of Review will address complaints of VAT registrants.

I wish to touch on the issue of public procurement. Mde Speaker, Government is proud of its track record of transparency and accountability. I wish to reiterate that it is this Government that introduced regular reports on the public accounts, which are now submitted to Parliament annually. In addition, Government has ensured that the Treasury Memorandum is now laid in the National Assembly. This memorandum sets out the Government's response to the recommendations made by the Public Accounts Committee. Government has introduced a competitive procurement process in public tendering, when it passed new procurement legislation in the year 2003, established a National Procurement and Tender Administration Board and, during the last quarter of the year 2006, Government mandated for use throughout Central Government, which includes all ministries, regions and departments, the use of standardised bidding documents for the procurement of goods and services. Increased usage of these standard bidding documents would result in a decrease in the incidents of unsatisfactory work, since the conditions therein are aimed at ensuring award of contracts to competent contractors, and likewise, contractors being penalised when in default.

Mde Speaker, Clause 49:1 of the General Conditions of Contract of these standard bidding documents provide for procurement of works, make provision for any contractor, found to be responsible for the delay of any contract, to pay liquidated damages to the employer at the rate per day stated in the special conditions of the contract, for each day that the completion date is later than the intended date. As such, Mde Speaker, this Government has placed emphasis of getting value for money in areas of procurement of its

goods and services provided to the citizens of this country. In fact, awards of major contracts are now published on the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board's website, and publicly announced.

Mde Speaker, our procurement system must respond to global changes and complexities. Our procurement model must allow our Government to deliver the right product, at the right price, to the Guyanese populace. All ministries and departments are also required to pre-qualify contractors for the provision of goods and services via the public tendering process. Mde Speaker, some procurement policies and practices are hallmarks of good governance. We are therefore working relentlessly to ensure that our system is comprehensive with the support of a well-established structure that would ensure the enforcement of the Procurement Law, and more-so, foster the monitoring and evaluation mechanism.

We continue to work on emulating the best practices in procurement through the use of modernised procurement procedures and processes; the training of competent and effective pool of staff; the development of an independent control mechanism, including a system to address bidders' complaints, and execute independent audits, with mechanisms to aid the enforcement of provisions to address issues relating to those defaulters, as set out in the Procurement Act.

Mde Speaker, Government continues to place emphasis on a number of financial and public-sector reform initiatives. In fact, under the FFMP Project, the sum of \$590M has been allocated, in this year's Budget, to continue to support reform initiatives to further strengthen public sector financial management. Mde Speaker, to this end, the Government has embarked upon a number of processes to further enhance the capability of the integrated financial management accounting system, which could now provide, at the end of each business day, a reliable statement of all approved expenditure. Government now intends to take further action to

improve this system by introducing a revenue model by the end of this year that would give the Accountant General the capacity to inform the Government on the amount of revenue collected. Further, along this line, to improve Ministries' properties and systems, an additional budget module is being introduced that would allow a computerised budget preparation system, and an automated budget of the respective line ministries. This would enhance the online preparation, execution, and reporting of budget activities by line ministries. To this end, it is anticipated that the Budget to be submitted by the Hon Minister of Finance in the year 2008, would be a product that would have benefited from all the systematic improvements.

The IFMAS system has now been extended to include Regions 1, 8 and 9, as Government moves ahead to further improve government accounting in those regions.

Mde Speaker, let me say that the Ministry of Finance, like other agencies of Government, has had its fair share of problems; but we have begun to address these, with the hope that these solutions will improve the quality, and timeliness, of the services which Government is mandated to provide to the public. Mde Speaker, sums in excess of US\$8M have been allocated for improvement in tax administration and tax policies under the FFMP. In the context of the latter, the sum of G\$283.6M has been expended, to date, to support the VAT implementation process. Mde Speaker, Government's efforts at comprehensive reform and modernisation of the public sector is evident, and that is why, also, in this 2007 Budget, the sum of \$270M has been allocated under the Public Management Modernization Programme.

Mde Speaker, our vision for the Public Service is one that is results-driven, and customer-focused. Mde Speaker, there are imperatives driving the demand for, and the approach by Government, to reform the Public Sector. Government is concerned about the ability of the States administrative arm to efficiently achieve its mandate. These

concerns have placed the responsibility to adopt modern management methods and practices for the delivery of goods and services to our people. At the social level, Government has to give due recognition to the citizens' clamour for greater participation in the affairs of Government, and the delivery of quality public goods and services. The call for better governance and transparency in the operations of the State has equally challenged the historical approach of doing business, a fact that was recognised by His Excellency, President Bharrat Jagdeo, in his address at the opening of the Ninth Parliament of Guyana, when he called for a process of change, at all levels of society, so as to achieve greater progress, and I quote ... *“including the way in which we do business, indeed in the way in which we produce and deliver goods and services.”* The challenge to the State is, therefore, to develop responsible, and responsive and representative administrative systems to meet the rising expectations of our citizens.

At the political level, the past 15 years have witnessed demands by both local and international stakeholders for Government to redefine itself in the context of the change circumstances at the national and global levels. This would necessitate a review of institutions, and institutional arrangements, to guide the relationship between Government, its stakeholders, and the wider public. This Government still recognises that it has an active role to play in the macro-economic and social development of the country, and the establishment of the regulatory mechanism to ensure equity and social justice. At the economic level, the changing world environment, and the shift in priority of the developed countries, has witnessed a decline in aid flows, especially in concessionary aid, to developing countries such as Guyana. This situation has been aggravated by the removal of historic preferences for key exports, with attendant consequences for foreign exchange generation, and economic development. As such, Guyana must seek to finance its development through greater mobilisation of domestic resources and more concessionary external resources, and to use these in an efficient and optimal manner for the benefit of all Guyanese.

At the technological level, the 21st century has been characterised as the information age. Increasing by operations are harnessing, improving, and managing information in order to secure competitive advantages, and be more effective and efficient in delivering quality services. The harnessing of modern trends in information technology, and the development and refinement of management information systems, have called into question the existing structure, policies, processes, and mode of relationships which exist between the Public Service and other organisations. Under such conditions, the Public Service must now develop new and innovative policies, structures and processes, in order to respond to various clienteles, and to deliver the quality of goods and services expected of a modern Public Sector.

Mde Speaker, the Honourable Member, Mr. Williams, alluded to Government creating a number of semi-autonomous agencies. I wish to inform the Members of this Honourable House that presently, under Component 2 of the Public Management Modernisation Programme, a study is currently being undertaken to review the operations and functions of a number of semi-autonomous agencies, including statutory bodies. There are approximately 70 semi-autonomous agencies, of which 75% of them can be considered as statutory. Many of these bodies have not had the benefit of a comprehensive review of their operations, functions, activities and establishment. That is why Government has seen the need to conduct such a review of these bodies, to establish a framework for their classification, rationalise their structure, eliminate duplication and overlapping functions, establish clear lines of accountability, responsibility, and reporting, and implement systems for monitoring and evaluation.

Mde Speaker, the successful execution of component 2 of the PMMP, which will focus on improving accountability and efficiency in statutory bodies and semi-autonomous agencies, will result in improved structures and processes, the benefits of which will include clearer delineation of responsibility and accountability,

NA –BUDGET DEBATE 12 FEBRUARY 2007

increased efficiency, the elimination of waste, and the timely delivery of Government's policy objectives.

Mde Speaker, on the issue of debt - The debt stock is now US\$920M, as compared to approximately US\$2.1B in the year 1992. Notwithstanding the issue of Guyana's debt, Government has exercised strong fiscal prudence at the macro-economic level, and has been able to service the existing debt portfolio and bring the debt to a sustainable level.

Mde Speaker, I am sure that you would agree with me that a good legal framework is the key to achieving effective debt management policies, since the debt management office needs to operate in a legal and regulatory environment, which ensures that debt issuance is consistent with specified borrowing limits, and where there is no uncertainty that would undermine the confidence of new investors. In this regard, under the fiscal and financial management programme, reform initiatives were undertaken at the Ministry of Finance to support and enhance the debt management operations within the Ministry. It is the Government's intention to have a more unified approach to its debt management strategy, in respect of both external and domestic debt. Mde Speaker, in this regard, significant resources were allocated to upgrade the technological capabilities of the Debt Management Unit within the Ministry of Finance.

Mde Speaker, in concluding my presentation, I wish to reiterate the fact that this Budget emphasises Government's vision for a better Guyana, where our people will enjoy greater cohesion and prosperity, and a better quality of life; and I therefore join my other colleagues, on the Government side, in support of Budget 2007, and to commend, to this House, Budget 2007 for its approval. Thank you. *[Applause]*

The Acting Speaker: Honourable Member Mr. Norman Whittaker.

Hon Norman A Whittaker: Mde Speaker, I wish firstly to join the chorus of congratulations being heaped, and I say without hesitation, deservedly so, on the Hon Minister of Finance, and his staff, for preparing a Budget, which careful perusal and analysis would reveal seeks among other things to maximise the use of available resources, and by distributing these resources in as fair a manner as is practical, having regard to the population size of our various communities, the needs of the people of those communities, their ability to utilise these resources, and, ultimately I say, having regard to the expected outcomes of the allocation of these resources.

Mde Speaker, I myself examined the Budget carefully, and also examined a few Budgets for prior years, as I sought to discern several things. Among these, whether there has been improvement in the lives of our people, which improvement can be placed can be attributed to the policies and plans of Government as set out in these Budgets, and the resources made available by Government to implement these policies and execute these plans. In short, Mde Speaker, I sought to deduce whether several, or most, or all, of the improvement packages as set out in these Budgets were attained, and the expectations of the planners of the Budget, the Government, and the people that these plans were made to serve, were realised. In the process, Mde Speaker, I focused primarily on the Barima-Waini Region, because that is the Region that is the constituency I represent in this National Assembly on behalf of the People's Progressive Party/Civic. In the process also, Mde Speaker, I would give more than a passing thought to the several issues raised by Honourable Member Desmond Fernandes, when he made his presentation to the National Assembly on the 9 February.

Mde Speaker, my understanding is that our Government's plans for the development of hinterland regions - hinterland communities such as the Barima-Waini Region have, from its very first Budget, when it was elected into office in October 1992, focused on bridging the socio-economic gap between Hinterland and urban communities, and this at a time when the quantum and quality of these resources

were at their lowest ebb. I'm talking about 1992. I mentioned these things, Mde Speaker, because I've understood that the measure of the level of poverty of a people is a function, not only of the degree and the extent to which they access resources: health, education, water, economic resources and the quality of these services and resources; but it's a function, also, of the depth from which you start to bring about developments, and history would record that the PPP/Civic Government had tremendous depth to cover before they can launch development. Mde Speaker, if therefore we accept that improvement in social services, such as education and health, will improve our people's lives, and create prospects for economic opportunities, that would lead to growth and development of our people, then this House will appreciate what His Excellency, President Bharrat Jagdeo, was so enthusiastically talking about, when he addressed this Assembly on the 28 September, when he said, and I quote, Page 3 of that Report:

Our people have seen their standard of living improving dramatically thanks to unprecedented advances that have been made in areas such as education, health, potable water supply, housing and public infrastructure.

Over the past 15 years, Mde Speaker, there has been increasing allocation for social sector development in our Region, because our Government, and we ourselves in the Region, concur that an educated and healthy workforce is a productive workforce, and that a concomitant expansion of the physical and institutional infrastructure required to promote growth, such as roads and bridges ... [Interruption: 'We gon talk bout that'] ... electricity, allows for the creation of those economic opportunities leading ultimately to the reduction in poverty levels.

I want to start with education. Mde Speaker, in 1993, less than 60% of our children of primary school age were going to school in Region 1. Why? Because there were hardly any primary schools,

and some of the few were so badly run-down ... I speak as a teacher, a school administrator, someone who has been in education in Region 1 for the past 3 decades. In addition, Mde Speaker, the very high level of poverty of our people, the very high level of poverty of our people at that time, most of whom are Amerindians, in the 18 gazetted villages at that time, did not allow them to attend school with any regularity. Their scale of preference, their priorities were set differently. They had to go out there in the farms to make ends meet. Add to this scenario Mde Speaker, inadequate, damaged furniture; few textbooks: mostly unqualified and untrained teachers, lacking the required knowledge, skills, experience and motivation; and you would be able to appreciate the depths that I am talking about from which we had to start. Over the past 14 years ... *[Interruption: "Listen to me and let me trace it and tell you what happened"]* we constructed primary schools where there were none *[Applause]*; we refurbished the schools where they were run-down *[Applause]*; and we extended the schools where they were overcrowded. *[Applause]* Realising that the school buildings alone would not educate our people, we sought to do other things, to furnish them. More than that ... more than that ... Over the years we have realised that no matter what level of resources you put into this thing, unless you get those children to go out to school, you would not be achieving your objective; and so, what we did was that we started to help the parents with uniforms; we started to give them exercise and textbooks; we started to assist them with outboard engines and boats so that they can go to school. *[Applause]* That's what we did.

My friends, when I listened to some of the people on the other side, I'm reminded of the guy who said he wanted to rear chickens; and he decided that he was going to start rearing them first, and when they were half way - somewhere down the line, then he would build the pen. Of course you know what happened - nearly all of the chickens died: So we had our priorities set right, and then we realised also ... My friends, we have a scale of preference; everything cannot be done at the same time. Then we sought to

upgrade our teachers, and to train them. *[Applause]* We used to send them to the CPCE - as many of our resources would allow us to, and then we decided we had to find a better way out; and so we brought the teacher training to the Region, and that is why today we have 3 CPCE Training Centres in Region 1. *[Applause]*

My friends, I want to quote some statistics here for you, because statistics are very important. They tell us the truth. My friends, at the 1st of January 1998, 22.1% of our teachers, at all levels in Region 1, were either trained, or University Graduates, or both. At the 1st of January 2003, five years later, this percentage had risen to 29.5%, and at the 1st of January 2007, it was 47.2%. *[Applause]* Indeed, Mde Speaker, whereas, at the 1st of January 1993, more than 70% of the schools in Region 1 were headed by teachers extra-Region 1, that figure has changed, and at the 1st of January 2007, it had dropped to 19%, and 46% of these head-teachers are either CPCE trained, University Graduates, or both; *[Applause]* and don't tell me about teachers leaving my friends. The result of us training them on the job in Region 1 ... This is in-service training we are talking about. The result of us doing that is that the rate of attrition has dropped tremendously, so we have a stable corps of teachers right now, my friends. In fact, 32 teachers graduated last year - the biggest number. We sent 32 and all 32 graduated - a tremendous achievement. *[Applause]*

My friends, I want to tell you of the CSEC results of the Santa Rosa Secondary School. Now listen to me, one of the ways by which you measure the kinds of results, the kinds of benefits which you get out of investment in education, is the outcome - not only in terms of teachers' performance, but in terms of students' performance; and, Mde Speaker, I wish to say to this House, the CSEC results of the Santa Rosa Secondary School has risen from 37.3% in 2000, to 57.5% in 2006. *[Applause]* That of the Northwest Secondary School has risen from 36.03% to 46.6% over the said period. You measure progress, not only in terms of what is achieved, but from the depths from which we started. *[Applause]* We started with

NA –BUDGET DEBATE 12 FEBRUARY 2007

about less than 150 children accessing secondary education, and by constructing secondary schools at Port Kaituma, Santa Rosa, Mabaruma, and by providing dormitory facilities for those children we have over 1000 children attending secondary schools right now.
[Applause]

Mde Speaker, those students who have graduated have been able to take their rightful positions in society. Some of them have gone onto to tertiary institutions: University of Guyana, GTI, GSA etcetera. We are proud to say that some of them hold significant positions, not only in the Region, but also in the other Regions - they are doing well, and we are proud of that achievement.

Mde Speaker, in the area of Health ... Oh, before I go onto to health, my friend, Member of Parliament Mr. Fernandes, did speak about Information Technology; I want to deal a little with that. This year, in our 2007 Budget, we have some \$30M, which would be spent on building some more teachers' quarters ... These are the kind of incentives we provide for our teachers, and that is why we have a stable corps of teachers, okay? So, besides the remote area incentives; beside hard line allowances and stuff like that, they also get these additional incentives. We would focus more on Science and Information Technology programmes, and I wish to tell this House ... I do not know, you know. Perhaps I have to ask my friend Mr. Fernandes to get permission from his leader and go visit with me when I visit the villages and see these projects. Information Technology programmes have already been introduced in our schools. In the Northwest Secondary School we have 5 computers and an Information Technology teacher, and we also benefit from the services of people from the world teacher in the VSO; at Port Kaituma Secondary School, where the Hon Minister of Amerindian Affairs had provided a number of computers; at Santa Rosa, at Wauna where, under the President's Youth Choice Initiative, computers are there in the schools. In addition, we have a Regional Officer appointed, who helps to guide the whole process. There are also 3 learning resource centres in each of the 3 sub-regions, and

these learning resource centres are staffed by people who are qualified, and have the kind of hardware that we're talking about. So Mde Speaker, we are making progress in Region 1 in the area of education.

Health: Under the health programme for Region 1, we have been allocated \$27.5M, which amounts to 20.7% of the capital allocation ... I'm talking about capital there, and a further \$124M, or 17.8% of the total current allocation. Again I say, if we are to measure the progress that we have made under the health programme, you have to examine from where we started. We started with 3 'run-down' hospitals. We started with 3 'run-down' hospitals devoid of the basic equipment, drugs, staff etc. We are not saying that we have achieved everything, but we are saying that, when you look from where we had started, and the kind of resources that we have pumped into this thing, we have made tremendous progress. It's a pity you couldn't be part of the process. *[Applause]* In every single Amerindian village in Region 1 ... and there are 21 of them, and we have a further 60-70 smaller communities, there is a health-post, or what you may call health hut, and there is a health worker there, and the health workers focus on educating the people. In other words, our approach is one which seeks to prevent, but at the same time to treat, and so they are busy educating the people, in every single community. Even the hospitals - over the past 2 years we have spent over \$20M rehabilitating the Pakiria Hospital at Matthews Ridge, and the one at Kumaka District Hospital at Santa Rosa Village; *[Applause]* and right now we are building a brand-new hospital at Mabaruma - with surgery, x-ray, all the facilities you could talk about. *[Applause]* My dear, so when you visit Mabaruma you can feel safe. If anything goes wrong, you would be well taken care of. *[Applause]* In addition, a lot of our resources have gone into immunisation and vaccination. I did say to you that we are adopting this preventative approach, and so we do these things my friends, because the health of our people is very, very important.

Mde Speaker, we have extended our maternal and child health programmes across the Region. We are educating our expectant mothers. We are intensifying what we call prevention and treatment programmes for ailments such as diabetes and hypertension. We are fighting tuberculosis through the DOX programme. All of this has resulted in a reduction and breaking of the transmission of communicable diseases such as malaria.

In 1992, when you passed by the Malaria Centre - people lie down deh; malaria got them. No staff, no microscopist, no drugs, but the situation has improved tremendously. The levels or rates to morbidity and mortality have declined my friends – not I say so, you check the records. *[Applause]* In addition, we are targeting young people through the formation of health clubs in the schools. We are targeting young people through the introduction of the Health and Family Life Education Programme in schools. We are enlarging and enriching the CHW Training Programme; they do so much more now than when they first started. So CHW's functions are no longer restricted to educating and dispensing Panadol, as some people say. It has been enlarged and enriched. They do so much that in fact people expect CHW come to be Medexes and doctors because they are doing very well my friends.

My friends, Mde Speaker, the outcomes of some of these interventions that I've just spoken about has been that our people in Region 1 have been able to benefit from increasing access to primary health care, and Mde Speaker, health care, like Education, are 2 important items, in any basket of items that you would use to measure improved, or lower living, standards, and they are lightly weighted, I daresay.

I want to touch a bit now on economic infrastructure. Mde Speaker, permit me to examine the progress that our Region has made, and commensurately, the benefits. Our population of some 25,000 persons ... You know we are 7,500 square miles, Barbados could hold in Region about 42 times. You have to appreciate these kinds

of things that I am telling you about. The fact, Mde Speaker, is that, at the 1st of January 1993, there were approximately 19 working cars and vans in Region 1, 18 in the Mabaruma ... [*Interruption: 'keep them figures in yuh head'*] 18 in the Mabaruma sub-region, 11 in the Matakai sub-region, and today, there are over 150 cars, vans, land cruisers, canters, ATVs, motor-cycles – that tells a story. [*Applause*] The story, Mde Speaker, is that, using financial and other resources provided by our Government, we have been able to upgrade trails, to rehabilitate and upgrade our roads on a continuous basis, bringing access. Now let me give you specifics ... [*Interruption: 'I don't want that thing to be peddled'*] Roads linking central Mabaruma ... [*Interruption: 'This is not about gold'*] linking central Mabaruma to satellite communities, such as Hobo, Mabaruma Settlement, Kumaka, Hossororo, Wauna - a distance of over 30 kilometres, have been either reconstructed, or constructed; [*Applause*] and this year it is our intention to move towards the Yarakita area - the farming community that our M.P., Mr. Desmond Fernandes, spoke about; nothing before its time, my friend. [*Applause*] Whilst the farming community of Yarakita waited on their road ... [*Interruption: 'he didn't tell you, I had to tell you'*] while they waited on the road, they got a bigger school, they got a health hut, they got outboard engine and 'balahoo' so that they can still have an alternative means of transport, they got tractor and trailer, and now they would still get their road. [*Applause*]

In the Matarkai sub-region, it has been over 100km of roadway, linking Port Kaituma, Matthews Ridge and Arakaka, and also Matthews Ridge to the hitherto-isolated community of Baramita, and it's in Moruca - in Moruca it has been 15 kilometres of good roads, leading you to the Bemitchi Airstrip, to the hospital, and to communities such as Karaburi, Kamaka, Wallaba; and we intend to continue this process, this progress this year, my friends. In this year's Budget we have an allocation of \$30.8M, and we intend to continue this road programme.

Road And River Transport: Mde Speaker, these are the principal forms of transport in the Barima-Waini Region. By sustaining maintenance and reconstruction programmes for our roads and bridges, and assisting villages with outboard engines and boats to be communally for their own purpose and benefit, we have been able to expand communication linkages in the Region, and to provide the type of economic infrastructure to support growth by helping to ensure access to economic opportunities in areas such as farming, forestry, gold mining, and also to support social services like education and health.

In terms of the steamer service, yes, it is true that we would have liked to have a brand-new ferry - a steamer rather, plying the route. It is true. It is true that many other improvements in the area of travel have been done, like the extensive rehabilitation of the stelling and the wharf at Morwhanna - the port of entry; rehabilitation of the wharf at Kumaka, where the steamer docks, and quite a lot of money has been spent on the M.V. Kimbia, which plies the route, and I wish to say to this House, also that through improvements in living standards, people have been able to use alternative routes in the interim. In the early 1990s, you did not have a service between Kumaka, or Region 1 and Charity: You did not have those kinds of alternatives. You did not have flights coming to Kaituma, 2 flights a day, every day in a week. You did not have the kind of service we have in Mabaruma too. What I am saying to you my friends is that there have been tremendous improvements in terms of the steamer service. The M.V Kimbia has been rehabilitated at a tremendous cost, and there are several alternatives that people have been able to use.

Water: This was mentioned. A newly-elected PPP-Civic Government, in October 1992, and the RDC of the Barima-Waini Region were at once faced with a situation where the people of the Region had very little and, in some cases, no access to potable

water, and even where these facilities were available, they were poorly maintained, and thus they were inoperable. There was a high incidence of water contamination and the spread of water-borne diseases, such as diarrhoea, and this was one of the major cases of infant mortality. Today ... *[Interruption]*

The Acting Speaker: Time ... Honourable Member.

Hon Dr Leslie S Ramsammy: Mde Speaker, I move that the Honourable Member be given 15 minutes to conclude his address.

Motion put and agreed to

Motion carried

The Acting Speaker: You may continue, Honourable Member

Hon Norman A Whittaker: What I am saying is that, in October 1992, there was zero ... The Honourable Member spoke of about half hour or one hour pumping of water; there was zero seconds of pumping, because there was nothing to pump. *[Laughter and Applause]* Today, that 1 hour pumping at Mabaruma ... and he's talking only of Mabaruma, Region 1 comprises 3 sub-regions ... Today that 1 hour pumping at Mabaruma provides a minimum of 90 gallons of water daily to each household *[Applause]* and for the approximately 7,000 - 8,000 persons in the ... *[Interruption: "You may not know these areas, but I see people making copious notes"]* *[Laughter and Applause]* 7,000 - 8,000 persons in the Hobo Hill, Mabaruma Settlement, Mabaruma Township and Compound, Barabena, Kumaka, Hosororo, Bunbury, Wanaina, Wauna Villages, water is also provided for the residents of Port Kaituma by way of pump and generator and by gravity feed to the population at Matthews Ridge. *[Applause]* I visit these areas, my friends. Furthermore, Mde Speaker, in most of the villages, GUYWA, and later GWI, on behalf of our Government and the RDC of Region 1, have installed hand pumps and trestles with water pumps. Meanwhile, Mde Speaker, let me again emphasise that a Hinterland

Water Strategy has been developed for Region 1, and that is being presently implemented. This strategy, which entails digging shallow wells and using hand pumps in some communities, using mechanically-operated pumps in others; and, in the process of implementing the strategy, focus has been placed on improving transmission and distribution systems, for example, in the Wanina and Cookret areas, and that was what our Hon Minister of Housing and

Water was talking about - that is scheduled to be completed by the 30 March. *[Applause]* During 2007 the water systems at Port Kaituma, Canal Bank, and Mabaruma will be further upgraded.

Electricity: Mde Speaker, 1 January 1993, not a single household in Region 1 - not a single household in Region 1 was in receipt of electricity provided by the Regional Democratic Council of Region 1 - the then Regional Democratic Council – not a single household. Over the 14-years period -1993-2006, over \$60M was expended to provide infrastructure; generators and plant houses, to provide and supporting infrastructure. I'm not talking about operational costs, you know, paying workers and so, because that's a couple of millions more that you will have to add in, if you have your calculators; but I am talking about the capital outlay, my friends. Today, our people in Thomas Hill, Mabaruma, Hosororo, Kumaka, Port Kaituma, and Santa Rosa enjoy electricity for periods ranging - not for 4 hours; that is wrong, periods ranging from 5-8 hours per day. *[Applause]*

Mde Speaker, we have tried to cut the cake into as many slices as is practical, *[Applause]* and I am happy to inform this House that, by taking such a measure, between 9-10,000 persons in the Mabaruma area, as far as Hosororo Hill, in the Port Kaituma area as far as Citrus Grove and Oronoque; and in the Santa Rosa Village benefit from electricity; and this, Mde Speaker, is quite apart from the generators that provide electricity to some schools, and to some villages. Honourable Member Trotman would remember the

generator that we gave to the village of Whitewater. [*Laughter and Applause*]

Mde Speaker, during 2007, the residents of Wauna, and Matthews Ridge communities will, as the legal people like to say *setteris* ‘everything being equal’ will also receive electricity. [*Applause*] Electricity, Mde Speaker, is a priority area for improvement to support the development that we are talking about. I now wish to deal with agriculture - a very, very important area.

Mde Speaker, our Government did state, in its Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, that it will, *inter alia* and I quote:

... focus on improvements of economic opportunities as a way of reducing poverty in Region 1. One of the spheres of economic activity that offers such opportunities is agriculture, another is forestry ...

Our farmers in Region 1 have, over the past 7-8 years, continually faced the ever-increasing, unpredictable weather, the vagaries of the volatile market situation, competition from new areas producing similar crops, among other things. The result has been that production of crops traditional to Region 1 – ground provision, peanuts, ginger, have indeed declined ... and we acknowledge that; but having painted this picture, Mde Speaker, let me hasten to inform this Assembly that our farmers did not give up. Instead, while some of the seasoned and older farmers have reduced their acreage of production of ground provision; other new farmers have come onboard. Government’s financial and other assistance to these farmers, in the form of agricultural tools to do drainage and planting materials to restart, has capitulated the process.

In addition, Mde Speaker, there has been much focus in the creation of cottage industries for crabwood oil and value added-products such as crabwood oil soap and cream ... you must try and buy some, they are available [*Laughter*] at Nigel’s and Pegasus; the production

and marketing of organic cocoa, for which there is a niche market; the development of nurseries of peanuts of the AK62 and the Berbice variety at Kamwata, Whitewater and Wauna, and during 2007, a similar nursery for peanuts would be provided at Kamwata/Moruca.

Mde Speaker, we spent over \$1.5M rehabilitating the Hosororo-NARI nursery, and focussed on producing cocoa seedlings and plants, because we had a commitment to the members of the Hosororo Organic Cocoa-Growers Association, to provide them with seedlings and plants, so that by 2008, we can be in a position to provide the 20 tons of cocoa required to be provided to Dutchey International. That was a priority, but we have not abandoned, we have not abandoned the nursery, in terms of providing plants, but that was a priority.

Mde Speaker, a peanut roasting and packaging facility is presently being set up at Wauna, with the ultimate aim of roasting, packaging and marketing peanuts. Towards this end, solar-powered equipment will be provided and installed by Farfan and Mendes. There is also, Mde Speaker, a 200 acres manicole production project ongoing in 10 villages, and this would be expanded during 2007. Furthermore, logging and sawmilling have been encouraged, and in this regard, I wish to inform the House that, over the past 5 years, 5 sawmilling enterprises have been set up in our Region, and they have proven to be economically viable; and even some lumber and dress materials are shipped by the said MV Kimbia to Georgetown.

Mde Speaker, I wish to also draw attention to the recent establishment of the Port Kaituma Loggers Association, operating on 32,500 acres of forest lands, excised by the Barama Company, for the purpose of logging; and this was done at the behest of Government, and over 50 loggers in that sub-region are benefiting. Mde Speaker, the NEOCOL estate that produces palm oil, and provides employment for over 100 persons from Wauna, Whitewater and Kamwata villages did experience some problems of

marketing. Our Government provided interim assistance as a suitable buyer was sought to take over the operations of the estate. Our Government's position on privatisation, as I understand it, is that you do not privatise for privatisation's sake. Proposals for would-be buyers must be sound, viable, achievable, sustainable, and must make the company, the employees, the Region better off - not the same way or worse.

A company by the name of Agri-Solutions Technologies (AST), a duly-incorporated entity registered in Guyana, and engaged in the production of renewable fuels, including bio-diesel in partnership with the Institute of Applied Science and Technology, has entered into an arrangement with NEOCOL for the production of bio-diesel. NEOCOL provides the raw materials, and they process, and I wish to tell this House that the vehicle used by NEOCOL, as well as the plant used by NEOCOL, are presently using bio-diesel, and not the petroleum diesel that we know about.

Mde Speaker, there is so much more that I would wish to say, but I think that people must understand that we cannot address all the needs of our people at the same time - all the challenges of development. Yes, like our Minister of Finance and our Government, we too anticipate a better growth profile for the period 2006-2011; we too share our Government's vision of a modern and prosperous Guyana; so let us all get actively involved and work together to forge further development of our people, or we will be all consumed. Thank you. *[Applause]*

The Acting Speaker: Honourable Members, we now take the second suspension. The House is suspended for half an hour.

.....H Suspension of Sitting

.....H Resumption of Sitting

Honourable Members, the Sitting is resumed. The Honourable Member, Ms. Africo Selman.

Ms Africo Selman: Mde Speaker, Honourable Members of this House, I rise to participate in this debate on the 2007 Budget, a Budget entitled *Building a Modern and Prosperous Guyana*.

Mde Speaker, premised on the fact that the Budget can be viewed as a continuation of policies and programmes of the Government, it is imperative that the formulation and implementation of these policies and programmes take into account the domestic situation, as well as the international climate at that particular juncture. The United Nations Development Programme - Human Development Report 2006, had this to say about Guyana, and I quote:

Suffering from political instability, inter-ethnic tension, Guyana remains one of the world's poorest countries, with an infrastructure barely able to support its population. The country has found it difficult to move away from a typical colonial dependency on agriculture and mining as the main state of its economy.

Mde Speaker, to compound this bleak description of Guyana, as outlined by the United Nations Development Council, the Government has proven to be non-responsive to public opinion, and public concerns. The passing of the Casino Legislation is a clear indication of Government's lack of responsiveness, and hence, the notions of inclusiveness, political participation, Government's subscription to the Constitution, and pursuance of national interest are now in question. Mde Speaker, the people of this nation are grappling to determine whether the Government pursues national interest, or elitist interest; whether the Government pursues economic policies which seek to improve the standards of living of the peak populace, or an elite group; whether this Government

formulates and implement strategic domestic policies to facilitate the development of the entire populace.

Mde Speaker, the International Economic Development Council describes economic development as the creation of jobs and wealth, and the improvement of quality of life. Economic development can be also described as a process that influences growth and restructuring of an economy to enhance the economic well-being of a community. In view of this description of economic development Mde Speaker, when one hears the Government talk about economic development, one is given hope - hope for the reduction of unemployment which pervades Guyana; hope for the alleviation of poverty, hope for a better quality of life.

Mde Speaker, it is important to note that, for economic development to accrue, it is not enough to produce more goods and services, but the country has to produce more of these goods and services which in turn will give rise, spontaneously, to future growth in the economy; for example, the food producing sector must be flourishing so that workers would be healthy and agriculture, on the whole, must be efficient, so that the Government would stimulate.

It is against this backdrop that the PNC/R One Guyana recognises that a modern economy is not dependent solely on large investors, but also on small businesses. Small business growth accounts for a large part of the world's successful economies. As such, special incentives should be provided to support small investors both by encouraging existing investors, to innovate and expand, and by encouraging new investors to enter the world of enterprise.

Approximately 1 year ago, Mde Speaker, a Budget was presented entitled *Transforming Guyana through Modernisation and Partnership*. Premised on the fact that the Budget is a continuation of policies and programmes; one would have thought that the Government would have been telling the people of this nation the extent to which Guyana has been transformed through

modernisation, but since we have not been told, one has to wonder whether the Government was really pursuing the transformation of Guyana. Against this backdrop, Mde Speaker, I am forced to refer to a section of His Excellency, Bharrat Jagdeo's address to the Ninth Parliament, on Pages 3 and 4, in which he said, and I quote:

We will institute a process of change at all levels of society.

He further advances the policy of change when he said

Mr. Speaker, in the next five years, my Government will work towards the political, economic and social transformation of our country, in which all of our people have equal access to resources and benefits from economic development and improvement in social conditions.

Why would the Government want to institute the process of change at all levels of society, approximately 8 months after advocating, in January 2006, in its Budget, which was entitled '*Transforming Guyana through Modernisation and Partnership.*' This certainly defies logic, Mde Speaker; and the concomitant assumption which could be drawn is that the Government has a propensity of deviating from policies that it formulates. Another assumption which could be derived Mde Speaker, is that the Government will alter the transformation of Guyana, through modernisation and partnership, which would fuel further dependency and underdevelopment. Inherent in the President's proposition on page 4, is an open acknowledgement of the existence of the lack of political, economic, and social inequality in Guyana, which characterises any modern and prosperous society. This is manifest when the President says, on Page 4, and I quote:

My Government will work towards the political, economic, and social transformation of our country,

in which all of our people will have equal access to resources and benefits.

Mde Speaker, the absence of the word ‘continue’ is an indication that political equality, a cardinal feature of a democratic society, for 14 years, has not been operative under this Administration, and it is well-established, Mde Speaker, that freedom and equality pervades any modern and prosperous society.

Mde Speaker, as a young person, I’m of the view that one of the cornerstones of youth development and empowerment is education; I’m sure that the Honourable Member, Amna Ally, would elaborate on these educational issues, but I would like to point out some fundamental purposes that we propose for education. These include:

- 1) The enterprise of civil society depends on educating young people to become responsible, thoughtful, and enterprising citizens.
- 2) Progress in every practical field depends on having capacities that schooling can educate. Education is thus the means to foster the individual, societies, and even humanity’s future development and prosperity.
- 3) One’s individual development, and the capacity to fulfil one’s own purposes, can depend on an adequate preparation in childhood. Education can thus give to a firm foundation for the achievement of personal fulfilment.

Mde Speaker, I want to applaud the former government of this nation, the People’s National Congress Government, for providing free education for all from nursery to university level. Mde Speaker, it is well known that one of the major boosts to greater access to education took place in 1976, when the government guaranteed free education for all - from nursery school to university.

Mde Speaker, in the context of Guyana, education has had a long, progressive history and, as early as 1960, the system was heralded as one of the best in the English-speaking Caribbean. The genesis of such education is rooted in the British colonial power, promulgation of the 1826 Act, which provided for compulsory education, as well as societal values placed in education vis-à-vis social mobility. The nexus between education and development has not eluded the government in Guyana, and has resulted in the maintenance of compulsory education. In addition, the right of every individual to education has come to be viewed as a fundamental human right, and accordingly enshrined in the Constitution of Guyana.

These initiatives complemented the existing framework for compulsory education, and significantly improved access countrywide. Mde Speaker, the provision of compulsory free education can be considered a major undertaking by any Government, and even moreso, in a small developing country. Hence, the government of that day should be commended. Free education at university level is every student's dream. Against this backdrop, Mde Speaker, and on behalf of all the students of this nation, I challenge the Government to let good sense prevail; think and restore free education at university level. *[Applause]* It is worthy to note, Mde Speaker, that under the PNC's watch, private schools had become virtually non-existent, with the exception of a few commercial institutions, but under the PPP/C's tenure, Mde Speaker, this nation has witnessed a proliferation of private schools, predominantly because it is a lucrative business, fuelled mainly by the fact that parents have lost confidence in the Government schools. *[Applause]*. Besides, Mde Speaker, the Government has relentlessly sought to restrict parents' choice as to which primary school they would want their children to attend. This lax situation has resulted in parents, sometimes going beyond their means to have their child attend private institutions. It's a plain shame that this Government continues to ignore the plight of its citizens by not

giving them a chance to fulfil their desires; and the government says that it has brought democracy to Guyana, but is this democracy?

Democracy pre-supposes a system of Government in which freedom of choice, a central ingredient of a true democratic society, is functional. Parents need to be able to exercise this choice.

Mde Speaker, the Government alluded to developing the spirit of patriotism, but this can only be achieved if the Government formulates and implements policies that cater for the needs and development of individuals, regardless of skin colour or creed. Then and only then can the spirit of patriotism be engendered in the minds of our citizens. Mde Speaker, this does not presently happen in our society, and may not happen in the foreseeable future, since the Budget of 2007 has not sought to create a solution to the problem of poverty in the lives of the Guyanese today.

Mde Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister, using an unusually upbeat tone, boasted how Matthews Ridge has about 2 dozen jeeps since the PPP/C's ascent to power in 1992, but what he does not say is how many people from Matthews Ridge, and other communities, barely have enough to sustain them on a day-to-day basis. *[Applause]*.

Mde Speaker, the projection for any Budget should provide full coordination. But the 2007 Budget, grand though it seems, has nothing in it for the common man, who awoke on January 1st 2007 to massive increases in prices, far beyond the constraints of their own budget. At least, Mde Speaker, this Government, which pretends to be the epitome of democratic virtues, should at least consider the plight of the citizens but, Mde Speaker, they seemingly have no intention of doing this, since this would definitely be a contradiction of their indifferent and arrogant approach; and who will bear the brunt of all of this? Our youths of course.

I now turn to make my contribution in the areas of youths and sports. Mde Speaker, while the Government seems to be aware of the importance and potentiality of our youth, and this is shown when the Hon Minister said on Page 37 of the Budget Speech, and I quote:

Our youths are the present and future of this country; it is in them that we must continue to invest and secure the nation's competitive advantage in future.

The Government is showing, in all its years of existence that empowering these vital human resources is not its topmost priority. Consequently, the Government has reneged on its promises laid out in its budgetary allocations. This is vividly evident from its 2006 allocation, in which the Government proposed to inject \$20M into football to support the development of 40 clubs throughout the country, and to assist footballers with their education. Today, this remains every Guyanese footballer's dream. The Minister pointed out, in the 2006 Budget Speech, page 43, and I quote:

“With a view of enhancing youth development and getting more of our young people into gainful employment, we have developed a number of training programmes.”

Mde Speaker, to date, large numbers of youths are either unemployed, or under-employed. Mde Speaker, what is even worse is that there are many youths who are qualified, and yet the problem of unemployment confronts these youths. These youths being marginalised and discriminated against. Mde Speaker, I am of the view that these conditions are conducive to the rise of ethnic politics, which is fuelled by the desire to challenge economic and social marginalisation here in Guyana.

Mde Speaker, there has been a growing trend towards crime, as the dilemma of unfulfilled promises and dreams grip the lives of our youths; everywhere and almost in every community, scores of our

nation's young people are hopeless, many of them lacking the basic skills necessary to empower them, yet the Budgets are projecting programmes to alleviate this lack of skill. It seems, Mde Speaker, that the government is only interested in articulating policies, rather than implementing them. [Applause] The sad thing about this whole affair is that there is no one, or any establishment, to deal with the challenges of disappointment, when our young people cannot truly progress to adult spheres because of the inadequacies of the Government. The Government should hold itself accountable to its promises and allocation to youths. Mde Speaker, in the area where I'm assigned, many of the young people have approached me, despairingly, saying that not only do they feel marginalised, but that there is nothing for them.

Mde Speaker, the people want work, because they believe that being employed will give them a proper perspective in life, and enable them to achieve their dreams, however minute, thus it is our sincere desire that the Government addresses this plight for the betterment of the youths of Guyana. Still Mde Speaker, as a young person myself, and as a university student, I am in touch with youths from all over Guyana; many of them have said to me that they only want to finish their programme so that they can be marketable overseas because Guyana has no hope and no future for them. [Applause]

Mde Speaker, underlying these statements is the fact that other people are generally not loyal to their country and, while it is important that we develop a spirit of patriotism, it seems as if the Government cannot seriously address the pertinent youth issues like employment, and skilled development, then the natural spirit of patriotism, which should accompany these, would never be developed. Alluding to the statements on page 34, and I quote:

We have embarked on the preparation of a five-year youth development and empowerment plan.

Mde Speaker, the above is elusive, and one is left to wonder what the Government conceptually means by youth development and empowerment. The People National Congress Reform - One Guyana's conceptualisation of empowerment is the bringing of all the young people into the mainstream of Guyanese society as functioning and productive citizens. Inherent in the PNC/R's position is an element of inclusiveness. This, Mde Speaker, is clearly missing in the Government's policy of embarking on the preparation of a five-year youth development and empowerment plan. This Government has to acknowledge, and appreciate, that some challenges are peculiar to youths only, and it therefore follows unemployment that it is imperative that the Government consults with a wide cross section of youths.

Mde Speaker, referring to page 37 of the Budget Speech, and I quote:

Over the next five years we will be spending over \$1.5B to equip approximately 25,000 young persons with skills and techniques, such as carpentry, refrigeration repair, and computer programming for economic advancement and personal growth.

Mde Speaker, I am certain that the youths are wondering what would be the targeted areas. Is it the urban areas? Is it the rural areas? Is it the depressed areas? The Hon Minister made the point on page 37 that:

The government will continue to administer, at the New Opportunity Corps, Kuru Kuru Training Centre, which are tailored to train and prepare our young people to make meaningful lives and play a meaningful part in the development of the country.

On reading this for the first time, the question which arose is whether the youths who leave the New Opportunity Corps find their

rightful places in the society. The Minister further pointed out that, and I quote:

To this end \$30M has been allocated in 2007 for the retooling of workshops at Kuru Kuru Training Centre and the New Opportunity Corps.

It has not stated whether \$1 will be spent at the New Opportunity Corps, and \$29M at Kuru Kuru Training Centre. To my mind Mde Speaker, specificity creates room for transparency and accountability; therefore, the Government should attempt to be specific. Mde Speaker, the allocation of \$30M for the retooling of workshops at both institutions is grossly inadequate – a drop in the ocean. Mde Speaker, having regard to the New Opportunity Corps, the New Opportunity Corps is supposed to be a rehabilitative institution, but I was reliably informed that the New Opportunity Corps is more of a custodian institution, and the programmes offered to the youths are definitely not intended to enable them to be productive citizens of this country. What is even more, Mde Speaker, is that all the youths are bunched together, irrespective of their offences, so we have a situation whereby those who are there for wandering are rubbing shoulders with those who are there for robbery, rape, and the like. At the end of the day, in any correctional institution, it is all about survival. Whether these youths are able to leave such a situation and still be able to live meaningful lives is highly questionable. What is needed, Mde Speaker, is an environment truly conducive to rehabilitation; for example, a programme to prepare youths for the transition from adolescence to adulthood should be introduced. Mde Speaker, if the Government is really, really serious about ‘*Building a Modern and Prosperous Guyana*’ then it is absolutely necessary that they not only throw what they consider to be large sums of money into these institutions, but they develop innovative ways of dealing with the real problems.

Mde Speaker, it is commendable that we, as a nation, have a spankingly new stadium to host matches of Cricket World Cup 2007. Indeed, this should be the joy of all Guyanese, and one hopes that this colossal edifice would be used for the development of this famous sport. It is equally commendable that the Government is embarking on the establishment of an Olympic-sized swimming pool. It is our hope that efforts to start this project begin almost immediately, because we fear that the foot-dragging practice that is the hallmark of the present regime will push this necessary facility aside, thus dashing the hopes of many young Guyanese. Again, it is absolutely necessary that the Government pursues, with the same vigour the establishment of other facilities, such as a track for athletics, and a modern cycling track to help improve the quality of these sports in Guyana. Added to this, we would be able to host international meets such as the Junior Carifta Games; such as has been in existence for umpteen years, and held annually in the Region and Guyana has never, and cannot, stage these games, because the facility is not in existence.

Mde Speaker, there was a time, not so long ago, when we produced world-class athletes, such as June Griffith, Jennifer Inniss, and world cyclist Neville Hunte, and today our young athletes do not even have the necessary track so that they can attempt to emulate these sporting heroes of the past. We need to look into this most urgently if we're truly going to climb the ladder of success in sports, and declare ourselves a modern Guyana. The extent to which we modernise would include what modernisation we can bring to other sports, so that we can effectively compete internationally.

It is time Mde Speaker, that the Hon Minister of Sports, Dr. Anthony, work, so that at least by 2012 we can capture 2 or 3 gold medals at the Olympic Games in London. Our sister Caribbean state, Jamaica, has already reached that level of attainment, and I believe we too can, if a better and more concerted effort is made by the Government to develop the talents of all strata of society, and especially our youths, who are presently wallowing in hopelessness.

Finally, Mde Speaker, I firmly believe that this Budget 2007 creates false hope, since it is basically idealistic in nature. The real problems of poverty and deprivation, hopelessness, ‘*visionlessness*’ to coin a new word, short-sightedness, the lack of provision for our talented youths, cultural starvation and stagnation, all continue to pervade our society. For 14 years, the Government has shown its ineptitude in solving the problems, and the Guyanese people have become restless and disgruntled as they grapple with the flimsy false hopes that they hear from year to year. This is a serious challenge to our Government as it is vitally necessary that they strive to do the best for the people, since our survival depends on cogent, careful, and conscientious implementation of strategies, which can be of maximum benefit to all.

Mde Speaker, it is the underlying belief that, if the systems of proper education of the youths, adequate remuneration for citizens, a secure and safe environment for all, a health system in which the nation has confidence, then and only then we can truly say that we are on the road to a prosperous and modern Guyana.

My vision of a modern Guyana is one in which all the political, economic and social forces work hand-in-hand for a better Guyana. Thank you Mde Speaker. *[Applause]*

The Acting Speaker: Honourable Member Mr Neendkumar ...

Hon Neendkumar: Mde Speaker, Hon Ministers, fellow Members of this Honourable House. As I rise to reflect on this comprehensive 2007 Budget, allow me to congratulate the young, brilliant Minister of Finance, Dr. Ashni Kumar Singh, and his reliable and competent staff, for the timely preparation and presentation of this year’s Budget.

Mde Speaker, the theme of the 2007 Budget is indeed appropriate, *Building a Modern and Prosperous Guyana*. Mde Speaker, as a geographical Member of Parliament, representing the people of

NA –BUDGET DEBATE 12 FEBRUARY 2007

Region No. 4, I am pleased to report to this Honourable House that, based on the performance of the PPP/C Government, and particularly during the year 2006, the populace voted solidly for the PPP/C. [Applause] Further, it is indeed encouraging to note that, during 2006, \$468,023,006 was spent in development works in the Region No. 4, in the area of drainage and irrigation works, hence, almost all the villages are cleaned and drained to the satisfaction of our people. [Applause]

Mde Speaker, when I listened to the last speaker, I was reminded of the words of Shakespeare in Twelfth Night, and I quote:

Its something, its nothing ... She is a typical wordsmith, stringing words in the air with no substance. [Applause]

Mde Speaker, I listened carefully to my good friend, the Honourable Mr. Ernest Elliot, and he mentioned the fact, and he talked about the Paradise Regional Office. I wanted to ask my friend Elliot - who burned the office? Who burned the office? [Applause] I'm quite sure, I'm quite sure that Mr. Elliot will agree with me that Paradise was a haven for thieves, because break-and-enter was the order of the day. Triumph is a better-suited place for us to build a new office, because we must take into consideration the people from East Bank, Soesdyke-Linden Highway, and the Demerara River. [Applause]

Mde Speaker, the PPP/C Government was elected by the people of this country, and we are mandated to represent all the people, in all the communities, throughout Guyana. I would like to congratulate Honourable Members, Ernest Elliot and Basil Williams, on the other side of the House, for their role in working together for the upliftment of the Region. [Applause] Both members, along with Mr. Corbin, the Leader of the Opposition, stood to their agreement for us to work together for the further development of the Region.

Mde Speaker, in November last year we had a historic event. Together we invited several villages along the East Coast of Demerara to participate in a two-day of sports. I would like to report that, during those 2 days, I saw the youths from Buxton, Melanie, Enterprise, Strathspey and other villages compete in/and play several sports disciplines. Further, it was most encouraging when I saw senior leaders from both Parties sharing 1 platform and exchanging views with our people at the grass-roots level. *[Applause]*

Mde Speaker, it would be remiss of me if I do not thank Mr. Ernest Elliot, Mr Clement Corlett and Minister Dr. Frank Anthony, for the efforts they put in organising the activities. Further, I would like to thank Honourable Members, Mr. Basil Williams and Donald Ramotar for leaving their busy schedules and spending some time with us on both days. *[Applause]* Let me urge all members of this House to work together for the betterment of our people.

Mde Speaker, I am pleased to report that the development in the Health, Education and Housing Sectors in Region No. 4 are more than satisfying. However, I am asking today in this Honourable House that the Opposition must work with us to stamp out corruption in the Region. To this end, I am not happy with the arrangement, and quality of work taking place in the loam pits, and electricity collection, particularly at Timehri.

Mde Speaker, because of the sarcastic remarks made by Members of the other side of the House, I would like to turn to the bauxite arena. May I remind this Honourable House that the PPP/C Government took over a sick, ‘run down’ bauxite industry in 1992. Allow me to quote from the Budget Speech of the then Finance Minister, Mr. Carl Greenidge, page 75, the last paragraph, and I quote:

NA –BUDGET DEBATE 12 FEBRUARY 2007

Despite soft international markets for bauxite products, GUYMINE is expected to undergo a marginal growth in revenues, that is a reduction in real terms, but a loss of \$457.44M as a consequence of 10.3% increase in expenditure.

[Interruption: ‘What’s the point’? “The Bauxite Industry was in disarray, it was medium, you can’t follow it”] [Applause and Laughter]. The PNC had the Bauxite Industry on sale, but no one would buy it. They lost the support of the bauxite workers when they were tear gassed, beaten, and locked up: Bauxite production was unreliable, and the workers in the bauxite industry were always uncertain about their future.

Mde Speaker, thanks to the PPP-C, OMAI came and took control over the management of LINMINE Upper Demerara operations; RUSAL came in and took over the Berbice operations, and the workers are much more secure. Mde Speaker, the mining town of Linden is now active, busy, and prospering. That town can now boast that the PPP/C built one of the best schools in the Caribbean for the students in the Region. The Linden Foundation School is second to none in the Caribbean, *[Applause]* and it was built by the PPP/C Government.

While on Education, Mde Speaker, I am very dissatisfied with the Region 10 Administration in the delivery of education in that Region. While we cannot deny the fact that there are over 150 excess teachers on the payroll, yet there are not enough teachers teaching in schools. Teachers are all over the place. They are working in different offices, but not teaching. To this end the lack of teachers in the Berbice River, in particular, is not encouraging. Our teachers need to be more responsible, and the Regional Administration must take full responsibility for this state of affairs, and take the necessary measures to rectify same.

I was amazed when I read in the Sunday Stabroek News of January 11, 2007 that student gangs at Wismar Secondary School are involved in violence. As a responsible Member of this National Assembly, Mde Speaker, I immediately sent a letter to Mr. Aubrey Norton and Mr. Raphael Trotman, requesting their involvement for us to visit the area and help to correct the situation; Mr. Raphael Trotman accepted.

Mde Speaker, we, on this side of the House, recognise that our students – youths, are our country's greatest assets, and I want to urge the fullest togetherness for us to resolve the problems among our young people, particularly our students.

Mde Speaker, I commended the Honourable Member, Mr. Winston Murray, who opened the batting on this Budget debate for the Opposition. However, the things we do live after us. The Opposition certainly dislikes when we speak about the 28 years of them in Government. They have a right to dislike us when we speak about those 28 years of disaster, mismanagement, negligence, and corruption Mde Speaker, I would like to remind Mr. Murray that he started the Budget debate talking about 1993. I would like to remind Mr. Murray of what is written on page 2 of Mr. Carl Greenidge's Budget Speech, in this same National Assembly in 1992, and I quote:

By way of a reminder, I wish to draw Members' attention to the fact that the ERP was indeed to correct the following manifestations of those imbalances, Mde Speaker. High and rising level of inflation, extreme and damaging exchange rate velocity, the loss of foreign exchange reserves, a growing gap between the official and parallel market, rates for foreign exchange and increase in building an ambitious parallel market and declining investment, production, and job opportunities.

NA –BUDGET DEBATE 12 FEBRUARY 2007

This is what Mr. Greenidge said. This was the state of affairs in this country. Further, Mde Speaker, Mr. Murray criticised the Government for its lack of action, aimed at removing the dependency on the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank. May I remind Mr. Murray, and quote Mr. Greenidge on page 4 [*Interruption: “find it page 4 paragraph 2”*] of his Budget Speech in 1992, and I quote:

In support of the programme, the Government has obtained resources under a stand-by arrangement, and a three-year arrangement under the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility from the Fund and the World Bank under the Economic Recovery Loan from the IDB; and will receive financial and other assistance from other multilateral, bilateral creditors and donors.

So Mr Murray, you can't tell us on this side of the House that we are holding on to the IMF and World Bank. You started it. You had the thing in the mess. Mde Speaker, the PPP/Civic Government has a proud track record of our performance, which led to our country receiving valuable assistance to clean up the PNC's 28 years of mess, and we are indeed proud of our President's appointment at the helm of the IMF-World Bank Board of Directors. [*Applause*]

Mde Speaker, members on the other side of the House made reference to the Sophia Housing Development Project. May I take them back to Mr. Greenidge's Budget Speech of 1992, page 22 - the third paragraph, and listen to what he says. I quote:

That was what you had this country in. That was what - Comrade Speaker, one of the evils of rampant inflation has been the marked upsurge in destitution and homelessness.

[*Laughter and Applause*] And please turn to page 63, the last paragraph, and I quote:

In 1992 the Central Housing and Planning Authority has been allocated \$29.5 - a mere \$29.5M, mainly for the execution of housing related projects, including regularisation of squatting areas.

Comrades, a mere [*Interruption: ‘What page?’*] “Page 63 the last paragraph. If you can’t hear you should go to the ear doctor”] Mde Speaker, the PNC/R – One Guyana, members on the other side of the House, had no basis to compare the tremendous work by this Government in continuing the upliftment of the standard of living of all the people of this country. [*Applause*] You have no basis to compare that.

Mde Speaker, I now turn my attention to sport. This Government has allocated \$93.371 to the National Sports Commission for the further development of sports in this country. This is indeed a testimony of the PPP/C Government commitment to continue to facilitate the further development of sports in this country. Mde Speaker, from the current budget allocations, we will be improving training and other facilities for coaches and organisers. Coaches across the country are working with associations and federations, clubs, and in the schools. Our coaches and organisers are working with national sports associations and federations, thus enabling the government’s sports development programmes to integrate with the programmes of the various national associations.

Mde Speaker, the National Sports Commission, and the Ministry of Education, are working together to develop the School Physical Education and Schools Sports Programme, the Inter-School Football and Cricket Competition, and attracting thousands of students, while the netball, table tennis, rugby, volleyball, basketball, swimming, and several disciplines, are also organised in schools. Significantly,

the NSC is insisting that all the students who are playing in these competitions, must attend school regularly, and they must advance passing grades as a criteria to participate in these competitions. Mde Speaker, we recognise that all the sporting disciplines must be played in a more organised system in schools, and in communities; hence we are working with an annual programme.

Mde Speaker, I am proud to announce that this Government is fully behind sports at the national and international levels. Our sportsmen and sportswomen have received great support from Government when they are travelling overseas to represent this country. Further, I must let this Honourable House know that we participated successfully in the Inter-Guiana Games last year, and this year our students will be participating in the 2007 Inter-Guiana Games.

Mde Speaker, I cannot address this Parliament without discussing the event which demands the attention of all of us. I'm of course talking about the 2007 World Cup Cricket, and Guyana hosting Super Eight matches. Mde Speaker, the stadium at Providence is ready. Our facilities are fully prepared. However, hosting these games does not depend on the Guyana National Stadium at Providence. Hosting of the Guyana leg successfully means that all Guyanese must take part, as we prepare to be part of this great euphoria, this historic event must be a success story, and I want to thank our nation for the part they have played, and to urge all and sundry to continue supporting this massive event so that the legacy of World Cup will be most memorable. *[Applause]*

Mde Speaker, opportunities are here for everyone, hence our people, as a nation, will be hosting; as it is our hospitality and organisation that would be counted and talked about. The legacy that we leave behind will be highly appreciated by our sons and daughters.

Mde Speaker, I would like to, once more, express my support to the Minister of Finance, and his highly competent team. Thank you. *[Applause]*

The Acting Speaker: Honourable Member, Ms. Bibi Shadick.

Hon Bibi S Shadick: Thank you Mde Speaker. I stand today in a House that has been very noisy for the whole night to offer my congratulations to a young man - an extremely bright young man, whom I knew since he was a student. I knew that great things would have come from him, and heard him very eloquently describing his Budget presentation, which began this debate - a Budget that was crafted to help the process of modernisation and improvement of our country, for all the people of our country, and for that I congratulate him, and I say to him that he has far to go. *[Applause]*

Mde Speaker, I stand here tonight as the duly elected regional Member of Parliament for Region 3 - one of three such people: One of my colleagues, Member of Parliament sits on the opposite side of the House. I must admit that, prior to my seeing him sitting on the Opposite side of the House, I have never heard his name before, nor ever saw him anywhere in the Region; and I can tell you that I have traversed our Region, from river end Essequibo, to river end Demerara; from where the Region begins, to where the Region ends. I understand that he traverses Zeelugt, but I will invite him to go to some other parts of Region 3, and he will see what we are calling prosperity and modernity. I will invite him to go to an exciting place right now. Judith, if you ever went to Mokouria, you would agree with me that the golden apples there are very, very sweet. I got some only last week. I would invite him to go to a place called Parika, which people used to look at as a place where only the gold miners who are going to Bartica would pass through, and I would say to him, and my friends on the opposite side of the House ... and I am sure, you know ... When I was at school we use to arrange tours. I think we need to arrange tours for Members of Parliament, so that he can know what we are talking about when we talk about places like Makouria, of which I think my friend Judith knows the name, but I don't think she knows the place, because people are moving out, don't have anybody to visit, and you know, to places like Clemwood ... and some of my friends probably wouldn't even

know where Clemwood is; and right now, having built a brand new school at Clemwood, this Government is now building headteacher's quarters at Clemwood. I mean, we're moving, and that is what the modernity is, [*Applause*] and that is what would bring prosperity to this country. We need to go to these places. Region 3 is not West Demerara. Region 3 is Essequibo Islands and River, and Demerara River; Region 3 stretches far. Region 3 is a beautiful place, and those people who invite their foreign friends to go to a place called Baganara are going to Region 3, but they think they are going to some city because they close their eyes when they go into the speedboat and they don't enjoy the ambience, and the cool breezes, and the beautiful scenery on the Essequibo. They think of it as bush. Well, that is our legacy, and that is where I would like to say to my young colleague, the Honourable Ms. Selman, who I think, if my memory serves me right, comes from Region 10. Am I right? If I am wrong please forgive me, but I would like to say to her, because I heard her say that she is wondering if the Government is looking after the interests of the entire populace, or an elite group. Well I would like to assure her that the residents of those parts of Region 3 can, by no stretch of the imagination, belong to an elite group and after I finish tonight you will hear of the things that this Government is doing for those people who, as I said, cannot belong to any elite group that you can think about; and while I'm talking about my Honourable colleague Ms. Selman, who looks very young, by the way and who admits that she is at university, and this Government, having been in power for 14 years, would have to admit that, if not all of her schooling, most of it, has been under this Administration. [*Applause*] I was adding up ... and by the way, I am a teacher of mathematics, and I'm teacher of teachers of mathematics; so I say that if you spent 2 years in Kindergarten, and 6 years in Primary School, and 5 years in Secondary School, that gives me 8 and 5 - 13 years. It still leaves a year for the university but, if you are further than that, then you may have spent 2 years of your Kindergarten under the PNC Government, but I am sure that, when you would have started off, when you started off, the building that you went into, you might have been very, very, very displeased

with it, because, you know, in 1992, when we took power, I was a teacher, and all the schools were dilapidated, all the schools were dilapidated, every single one of them was dilapidated, including Queen's College and Bishops High School, which I attended as a child; all were dilapidated, and this Government took a country that was run down, a Treasury that empty, and found resources, and found the energy, and found the commitment to repair those schools and produce a student who at least could do research and probably cut and paste and read in Parliament, somebody like my friend, the Honourable Africo Selman. [Applause] This Government must be congratulated for that. We have produced you, my dear. Our education has produced you. [Applause and Laughter]

I heard the Honourable Member Ms. Selman say that this Government is trying to limit parents' choice of which school they must send their children to. Well, you know what: The parents now have a choice, because they have schools near home, far from home, nice ones, less than nice ones; and private ones, so they have a choice. When I went to school they didn't have a choice. You had to go to the one that was near to you, whether it was broken down, it didn't have a step, it didn't have toilets, you had to go to that one. Parents now have choices, and you must accept that, that that's an improvement in itself, and the ability to exercise a choice, and not to have to accept whatever you can get, is a sign of growing prosperity; [Applause] and you know, I was disappointed because, at the beginning, as a teacher, as a teacher who taught in the public schools of this country, by the way, for 35 years before I retired. I've taught many students and I can recognise ability in students. I pride myself on that, and when I heard the Honourable Member Ms. Selman begin to speak, I said here is a child who has very good enunciation and pronunciation, but my joy was short-lived, because towards the end the pronunciation went, denunciation stayed. But I was disappointed, because everything, everything that the Honourable Member said was based on '*I have been reliably informed,*' without saying '*where my information came from*' and it was very disappointing to hear about the NOC, and what is supposed to be

happening there from some reliable information. I'd advise you my dear, go visit. Ask Dr. Anthony to facilitate a visit, and you would be better informed.

Now, having said all of that ... You see, I didn't mean to talk about what anybody said, but the teacher in me said that I cannot allow things like that to happen. *[Applause]*

I turn to Region 3, Region 3 where exciting things are happening. Region 3, Region 3 which is epitomised by things becoming modern. Region 3, the only place in this country that has banks that operate and open on Sundays; *[Applause]* Region 3 that has Parika, which is the gateway to this country. You know, they were talking about Cinderella County. They talk about Georgetown and somehow Region 3 got lost; Region 3 is now blossoming. Oh yes, my friend.

I want to tell you about the market. You know what pains me ... and that is why I mentioned at the beginning that Region 3 has three Members of Parliament representing the people of Region 3 in this House. It seems as if, however, that 2 are expected to look after the interest of the people and 1 is expected to agitate the people to fight against those things that are going on. Because you know what? You know what? We tarmac a beautiful place at Hydronie to accommodate all those vendors who are on the road, and to bring some order to vending at Parika, Parika that you can go on a Saturday afternoon, and you can go on a Sunday, and you can get the freshest of organic vegetables and fruits and so on - very healthy stuff, *[Applause]* lovely stuff; take a trip, you can go; but what I find, what I find is that my fellow MP spends lots of his time ... Instead of saying, you know, call Mr. Komal Chand and Bibi Shadick and let's work together. We are responsible for this Region. No. My fellow MP spends his time agitating people's insecurities because you know what? You know how I know? You know the people that you took to the Convention Centre? They told me who took them there, yes. So I wasn't reliably informed, I was informed

by the people themselves. So my thing is, my thing is that I am inviting you to come work with us. Come work with us and we will work with you. If you work with us we can make Region 3 a much better place. Exciting things can happen and, Mde Speaker, Region 3 has been on the road to prosperity and modernity from the day this PPP/Civic won Elections in 1992. That day I, as a resident in Leguan, an indigenous native's daughter of Leguan breathed a sigh of relief that I would not have had to pull down my house and move to some place on the West Coast.

Today I spoke to my fellow Leguan indigenous resident, my friend Mr. Murray, and I said to him you don't have a house there, he said *No, I don't have any physical contact*. I said *but you have emotional roots there, even if no physical roots, you have emotional roots*. I have emotional roots there too, and when I was told that the residents of Leguan would have to evacuate because the Government, the PNC at the time, could not maintain the sea defences, and that the island ... it's an anomaly: It's an island that is below sea level; and that Leguan would be overrun by the sea because hey can no longer maintain the sea defences, that it is too expensive, and that the people of Leguan will have to move out, my mother, my father, myself and their 8 other children sat and cried. I am proud to announce that, today, Leguan has surfaced roads and electricity, has running water, has telephones, has state-of-the-art schools, including a secondary school and the people are happy [*Applause*] including those supporters ... because Leguan doesn't only have the supporters of PPP/Civic you know. Leguan also has supporters of the PNC as well. My neighbour was a supporter of the PNC. She died on Election Day 1997 and I went to her funeral. But the thing is that we represent all the people. I'm friends with all of them. I taught their children in school. The thing is that Leguan is a happy place; go visit, it's a beautiful place. The only thing that has to be done ... and I am sure that my colleague, the Minister of Public Works, has a miscellaneous roads programme, and I am sure

that the west and east ends of Leguan ... I'm going to keep badgering him because, you see, they are my constituents, that he upgrades those roads to the standards that the middle is because what? This PPC/Civic Government knew, day one, how to cut its coat according to the cloth that it had at the time. [Applause] We could have done the road from the stelling to the hospital, from the stelling to the school, then from the school to a further place, then from that hospital to a further place; and we do it in pieces, as we can afford. That is why, when my colleague, the Honourable Jennifer Webster spoke this afternoon, and when she talked about the debt going down, and that it is coming within levels that we could sustain, it's not that we are not taking loans, we are, but look at where the debt is now, and look how sustainable it is, and look what has been done with it: There is visible proof of what we have done. All of these things have happened. You know, it's interesting. Today I received, from the Office of the Prime Minister, something that would help me to talk about electricity in Region 3, and there is a thing called the Poor Rural ... What do you call it? Unserved Areas Electrification Programme, and you know what's amazing? You know what those unserved areas were? They weren't places that people now went to live? They were places that were skipped out by the PNC Government, because they thought that their supporters didn't live here - their supporters lived there. So now we got to go in between, and the areas were unserved, and I am happy to report that, in 2006, in Region 3, that the new housing schemes at Crane, Cornelia Ida – DaSilva Scheme, Anna Catherina South, Zeelugt North and South, which were partly what you call squatting areas. You know, since 1992 we had no new squatting areas. Every squatting area you go you hear the people say, *'I been there, I been living here for 30 years; I been living here for 28 years.'* "They complain to Sharma. I listen to Sharma." *'Mr. Sharma we bin here for 30 years and they move we house.'* They were squatting when the PNC was in Government. You know what we call them now? [Interruption]

The Acting Speaker: Honourable Members, the noise level of the House is rising, and the Honourable Member herself spoke of it, but I think if you address the chair, rather than addressing the colleagues across there we would have less noise.

Hon Bibi S Shadick: Thank you Mde Speaker. Yes, Mde Speaker, I would like to just point out to my colleagues, and to this House, that those areas that were unserved, they got electricity in 2006, and to some of the areas would be getting electricity in 2007; and, as I was saying, there were no new squatting areas since 1992. Those squatting areas are now called housing areas. They've been regularised. The people are getting Titles and Transports and so on.

We have, Mde Speaker, in Region 3, in 2006, the areas Crane, Cornelia Ida, Anna Catherina South, Zeelught North and South, parts of the Tuschen Housing Scheme, Vergenoegen South, the Claybrick Road, Canal No. 2, Patentia, Prem Nagar - a famous squatting area of long, Stewartville, Sea View, Belle West, Cornelia Ida Blocks S and Y, and Goed Fortuin were given electricity in 2006, and in 2007 the grid will be expanded to provide electricity to persons in Good Success, Wakenaar, at La Harmonie, Goed Intent, Tamarind Dam, Canal No. 1 Conservancy Dam, Phoenix Park Phase 2, Plastic City, Best Foreshore, Best, Wallers Delight, Boeraserie Railway Embankment - most of it would have been squatter areas. That is electricity that is now going to more than 7,000 more households in the year 2007, in addition to what was done over the last 2 years. *[Applause]*

Mde Speaker, Region 3 is essentially an agricultural Region; agriculture in various forms. In fact, the aquaculture that is growing it has roots in Region 3; very big aquaculture projects in Region 3. Mde Speaker, so drainage and irrigation works in Region 3 are very important. I remember, prior to 1992, in 1990 I think, some huge draglines went to Leguan, and they dug wide trenches, very good trenches, but what happened was that no bridges were built, so people could not go to their farmlands. We have to understand that

when we dig trenches we have to build bridges so that people can cross them. This Government is building bridges. Bridges have been built in so many areas, and then you look for the smaller areas: You build on the main areas first and then you look for the small areas, and this year in Region 3 new bridges are going to be built in certain parts of Leguan - Wakenaam, at Karia Karia, at Ruby, and at Parika Backdam, and those at all new bridges. We are going to spend \$11.1M on those secondary bridges this year. Drainage and rehabilitation - Last year, and in 2005-2006, we completed works under the Poor Rural Communities Support Services Programme, Mde Speaker, at Lanaballi, Birabishaballi, Aleki in the Essequibo River, opening up about 8,000 acres of land that people could now use for farming and, with support from the Ministry of Agriculture, you're going to have drip irrigation system at Parika Backdam, and the Ministry is going to provide support for the cultivation of pepper, especially 'bull nose' pepper which they have a market for, an export market for.

With regards to rice ... and if we look at the Rice Farmers Security of Tenure Act the rice lands of Leguan and Wakenaam are rated the best rice lands - clay lands, because the others have more pegasse and all of that, and with regards to rice, you know, before 1992, and just 1991-1992 ... I know, because my parents were rice farmers; the rice lands were pasture lands. People no longer planted rice, because they had no market. They had nowhere to sell the rice, so they had cows on those lands. The lands became rich from the all the manure and so on. So that, when 1993 came and people were encouraged to replant, the crops were bountiful and people got very good crops, but of course, when we use the lands for crops over and over again, you need to have support on how to use those lands; new strains of paddy and so on. The Rice Producers Association has been very, very proactive in this. In fact they have built a new headquarters in Region 3 - only recently it has been opened. They have a seed paddy laboratory there; there are drying floors that have been put up at Vergenoegen and Leguan. As I said, Leguan produces some of the best rice that we have, and they have enhanced

services now by GRDB and RPA, and so rice farming now has come back to being a very viable occupation for people. Rice farmers are no longer poor. I remember farmers going to the Rice Assessment Courts and saying that they can't pay \$12 an acre per year rent for rice lands because they couldn't afford it, because they didn't make that money. Now those rents have gone up. The Assessment Committees are setting rents higher than \$12. So rice has become a viable crop once again, and because of so much agriculture that is going on ... Of course, in the Canals Polder, which was there for agriculture principally you have D & I structures that were rehabilitated and repaired; you had pumps that were put in at the Canals No 1 and 2; you had the A-line trench at Canal No. 1 that was cleared so that ... clearing up a whole set of ... because, remember, after the floods of 2006 Mde Speaker, lots of these farmlands in the Canals Polder were flooded, and people lost a lot of crops and so on. This year, if you drove on the road to the bridge, you would see heaps of lovely tangerines, which you didn't see for years. They were the juiciest ones that you could have seen, because of all these drainage works and so on that are being done; and crops are now coming back bountifully, all the pineapples and everything, sweeter than ever.

So work is being done in the Canals Polder: D & I has money allocated this year to purchase winches and tubes to rehabilitate D & I structures at Leguan. Leguan was particularly badly off, and I remembered ... The Minister of Agriculture, when he spoke, talked about Leguan. Leguan was in really bad shape when it came to D&I - and the sea defences, I forgot to mention, because I said that they asked us to move. If you could go with a speedboat and pass Leguan now, you will see the new sea defences that are being done. You can see the works that are being done, and the millions of dollars that are being spent at Leguan [*Applause*] to make it viable to live there. They are going to have D & I structures rehabilitated at Wakenaam, at Farm, at Canal No. 1 Polder, and in the Zeelugt Housing Scheme.

When it comes to Education ... I talked about that first. When it comes to education we don't any longer have to concentrate on the coastal part, but we have to concentrate in the river-rain areas. Last year a brand-new school was built at Makouria. There is a new school at Lanaballi. There is a new school at Maria's Pleasure. The last one at Wakenaam that had to be done; that one is completed, a very nice new school; kids are happy. You have schools that are already there: for instance, the primary school at Patentia needs to be rehabilitated, and money is budgeted this year to do that. There is money allocated to build a new primary school at Santa Mission. The Leguan Secondary School had to be extended because more students are staying on the island to go to secondary school and, in fact, as big a part that was there, the extension is as big as that, it's almost complete; teachers quarters at Clemwood, Greenidge Park Primary, Vreed-en-Hoop Primary School, Zeelugt Primary School are going to be rehabilitated; the sanitary block at Kawall Primary School in Canal No. 2 is going to be upgraded. You see, so we are concentrating on improving the structures that have been put there. This year, there is going to be a new Health Centre being built at Belle West; Belle West Housing Scheme there is going to be a new Health Centre. The project is a two-year project, 2006-2007, for nearly \$27M. We have roads that would be constructed in Meten-Meer-Zorg. Now these are not the main roads. These are the roads inside the villages, and if anyone of you has driven through Parika recently, where there used to be a main road with just some houses on the side, now you are seeing streets - paved streets that are going in, and people are living all inside there, and then you see a township blossoming, and this is what makes it exciting - to live in a place like Region 3, and to see the prosperity that is growing, and to see the faces of the people on a Sunday, when they can go into the bank and they can put the money that they have sold their produce for, or they can withdraw some money that they can go and shop with, and where they can take their children, and where they can show that, you know, we are not down-trodden and we're getting to where we would like to be. Nobody is ever satisfied with what they have, and this is true for all of us, including you. But you know

what? My friends over there, you don't have to sit there and say *it's a terrible Budget, and its marginalisation and is this, and that*. Look at the things that are positive, and work with us to try to change those that you perceive as negative. That is what we need to be doing. [Applause] We're all elected representatives of the people in this House.

Mde Speaker, I say to you that it has not escaped our notice that Region 3 has always been accused of corruption, and sub-standard work, and so on. It has not escaped us; but you know, as an example of what is happening, I have in my hand here a letter that was written by the Minister of Agriculture, to whom one had been written by the Regional Chairman, voicing some concerns about a particular contractor on some work that was done on Leguan. The Minister of Agriculture wrote to the Regional Chairman, and he has attached a report from the engineer, Lionel Wordsworth – the senior section engineer, that talks about works undertaken by D & I in Leguan, and talks about the contract that was awarded in 2006 to a contractor, whose name I would not call, to undertake rehabilitation of channels and structures in northern Leguan, and said that, during the execution, additional works were identified, and they said that the contractor had not finished, and that the contractors had been informed by NDIA that if these additional and remedial works were not completed within 3 weeks another contractor would be procured, and no payment would be made for the remedial works, and payment for additional work, would be made upon satisfactory completion. This is one step that is being taken, and many like these are being taken, this is just one that I have in my hand. The thing is that the perception for corruption is always there. Whenever, whenever a case, an actual case, of any wrong doing comes up, things are done about it, things are done about it, and it is time we understand that, when we look at what *Transparency International* says, that is people's perception. If I wear a nice new dress, or a good piece of jewellery, you want to know if I stole the money to buy it. You wouldn't think that I would have gotten it as a gift. People always perceive other people as being corrupt, because you

know what? It is always thought that the person who is in some kind of authority has to be taking advantage of their position or something. That always happens. I used to be, I used to be a person living in this country when the PNC was in Government. I know that I used to name those type of things, so you can do the same thing. *[Interruption]*

The Acting Speaker: Time Honourable Member. Thank you.

Hon Clement J Rohee: I would like to ask that the Honourable Member be given 15 minutes to conclude.

The Acting Speaker: The motion is that the Honourable be given 15 minutes to conclude.

Motion put and agreed to

Motion carried

The Acting Speaker: You may continue Honourable Member

Hon Bibi S Shadick: Thank you Mde Speaker. My point here is that corruption always is a perception. Unlike the Honourable Member, Ms. Selman, who said '*I have been reliably informed,*' many of us are reliably informed about things that other people are purported to have done, but the proof of these things never comes up. If the proof comes up ... and I can assure you that, in Region 3, whenever proof comes up about any wrongdoing, it is dealt with very severely. I can talk for Region 3.

Mde Speaker, I would just like to say to you, and to this Honourable House ...

Oh, we were talking about culture, and we were talking about the importance of culture. You know, it's not all about building kokers and drainage and irrigation - structures and digging trenches and building schools. It is also talking about the good things, the other

things that people come to see - that on your way to Baganara and you pass Fort Island you can stop, and you could walk along a newly-built road from the stelling to Port Elijah, and then you can go to see the Court of Policy that my Honourable Friend, Dr. Anthony, spoke about, where they are going to do revetment to help sustain that Court of Policy building, you know, upgrade it so that it could become something that we can look at, which is our heritage, which is something that we should be proud of. Those are things that we have to be proud of, so culture is important. The thing is, the thing is Mde Speaker, that, when we are looking at the populace, and not just an elite group, we need to look at all the things that make the quality of a person's life better.

When we look at the West Demerara Regional Hospital ... I remember speaking in this Honourable House and talking about health and improvements to health systems. In 1960 Leguan had a cottage hospital; a cottage hospital was built there. It had 8 beds. It had a doctor. It had some nurses and so on. People could have gone there. That hospital went down, you know, it didn't have things to go on. Today, today, pass that hospital, and you know what is being put up? A structure to house an x-ray unit. This is on the island of Leguan at the cottage hospital. *[Applause]* Those are improvements. That is movement in the right direction. That is movement in the right direction.

In Region 3, the West Demerara Regional Hospital was one of the first Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission Centres that was set up - for HIV and AIDS - that the disease should not pass from the mother to the child. West Demerara Regional Hospital is internationally-certified as a baby-friendly hospital. Those of you who are interested in motherhood and those things would know what I am talking about.

Region 3, Region 3 produces students of such high calibre and quality that, every year when examination results are announced, for whatever exam it is, whether it is Common Entrance or C.X.C,

students from Region 3 are named in the top percentage. This is what prosperity and moving towards modernity is about, and I would like to say one last word to my colleague and friend, Ms. Selman over there. The Honourable Member said that there are issues, Mde Speaker, that are important to youths, and one of those issues she named was unemployment. I would like to say to the Honourable Member that the issue that is important to youths is not unemployment, but employability, and education towards becoming employable Thank you very much Mde Speaker. *[Applause]*

The Acting Speaker: The Honourable Mrs. Pauline Sukhai.

Hon Pauline Sukhai: Thank you Mde Speaker. As I make my contribution to the 2007 Budget Debate, I wish to congratulate the Hon Minister, Dr. Ashni Singh, and staff, for putting together a very powerful 2007 Budget. The current Budget does not only allow for allocation for the plans and programmes for 2007, but also outlines the vision to 2011.

My contribution will deal with 3 main fields:

- 1) Investment-friendly climate
- 2) Guyana as an investment destination
- 3) Further enhancing the current investment conditions, and broadening investment opportunities in Guyana

Mde Speaker, previous Budgets saw heavy investments in Education, Health and rehabilitation of our social and physical infrastructures, including the rehabilitation of the poor drainage and irrigation systems. Such investment facilitated implementation of projects for rebuilding and correcting the state of the economy - the derelict state of the economy when the PPP/Civic took office. Many unemployed individuals, in that time, in all the administrative Regions, benefited well from short-term employment generated during the rehabilitation and reconstruction phase in this country.

While employment and income accrued to families in the short-term, the delivery of basic social services to the population also improved. Hope among the population was restored, and the potential of our youths, women, and workers began to be unleashed, as the negatives within the society were being transferred into positive environment, all thanks to the PPP/Civic Government. *[Applause]*

The PPP/Civic Government's task, in the initial year, also included creating the enabling conditions to support the social and economic transformation of Guyana. Government made serious investments in Education, and I would like the Honourable Africo Selman to take note. This investment in Education opened newer businesses for those determined to face the challenges of rebuilding Guyana and those who wished to participate in our national development drive. Strong evidence towards this was the increase in the University of Guyana's student population. The intake to primary and secondary schools increased, and Government allocated more funds for the provision of better technical and vocational training, directed to those who wanted to pursue a technical career, or those who may have not have been eligible for entry into tertiary institutions.

The successes from Government's responsiveness brought a new sense of pride and commitment, to Guyana, to the PPP/Civic. Guyanese benefited from Government's investment in human capital, which also served, not only to prepare Guyanese for jobs in Guyana, but as you said, they also left for greener pastures. But I would like you, Mde Chairman, to note the difference, that ... Mde Speaker, to note the difference, that those who chose to leave Guyana were leaving as an asset to the country they were going to, and no longer were they arriving to a new country as a liability to that country, and that is the difference. As Guyanese we are now proud to note that we do not leave our shores as illiterate people looking for greener pastures, but as those who are now more marketable, and can take the challenges both here and abroad.

Mde Speaker, I need to allude to the shift that the Government has taken in the investment climate. It is more visible - the progressive shift the Government has made. The profile of rebuilding and reconstruction has now been changed to a more expansive investment in the new and modern economic and productive infrastructure, which is expected to further strengthen and enable the investment climate that will also support government's effort of modernising the economy, and creating a more investor-friendly country.

Mde Speaker, as I am on investment, I would just like to remind this House of Friday's presentation by the Honourable Sheila Holder, and I would like to note what was said in her presentation, because it bore great relevance to what the PPP/Civic Government is embarking on, and I remind this House that the Honourable Sheila Holder, when she noted that investor-friendly climate is necessary for Guyana, she also noted that the educational system should be producing the workforce for this country, and that investors and investment thrive in a non-criminal society, and that there should be accountability and transparency in every sector. Mde Speaker, she was quite correct, and I wish to note that the 2007 Budget provides, and emphasises, the significant scope and direction for government's intervention to reduce, and to support, those same conditions which she alluded to.

Enhancing Guyana as an investment destination - the sectors' specific strategies and plans allocation in this year's Budget, and with the improved political stability, which we are now enjoying, it is anticipated that this country's investment climate will begin to attract an increased number of investors, and thus be able to move Guyana from one level to the next, and facilitate accelerated development; and I wish to say that Government's commitment to privatisation is a real thing. We have seen that Government has shortened, or has lessened its role as an investor, and we have also seen that Government now has more scope to formulate the policies that address the needs of all sectors, including the Private Sector. I

also wish to allude to the fact that government recognises the Private Sector, today, as the significant sector, or player, to lead Guyana to economic advancement. The Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce, along with Go-Invest, continues to put real high priority on promoting Guyana as an investor-friendly country, and if one uses the Internet, we can also see that the investment guide is available on the Net, and it gives investors potential - both local and foreign, advisories as to where, which section, and all the conditions and incentives, which are available, to encourage investment in this country.

In improving the business environment, I want to point to a few conditions which were non-existent, but has now comes into play; and I would like to say that, today, the Government has enacted an Investment Code, passed a Small Business Act, and has reformed the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission to make Guyana a more attractive destination. We have seen today, that leases are now much more readily granted, and are available, if one meets the required conditions as an investor. We have seen that goods and services at the port-of-entry take less time to clear. In fact, I'm reliably informed that it takes less than 3 days to clear such goods and services by businesses. I have also been told that time taken to register a business is now much more - not a lengthy process anymore, but much shorter. While we complain at the business level, or from the Opposition, that these conditions still are not conducive to investment, I want to posit that Guyana has made quite a lot of improvement in creating that friendly investor climate, which many businesses today are enjoying.

We've also seen that there has been a Commercial Court established in July of last year, where businesses with issues can now, more expeditiously, sort those matters out. We have seen Government implementing prudent fiscal and monetary policies that result in the stabilisation of inflation; and the Budget correctly states that inflation has been now contained, for the longest while, to the single digit.

Mde Speaker, I also want to allude to the fact that there are other conditions in creating a climate that is friendly for investors, and I want to allude to the condition that there is a growing relationship with the private and public sector, and this has harmonised the relationship in our country, and we have seen that there is a more collaborative and consultative situation on the ground. I say so because, Mde Speaker, we have seen that the Private Sector has been involved, at different stages, in the formulation, for example, of the Investment Act; the formulation of the Small Business Act, the ICT Strategy. They participated, fully, in the Presidential Business Summit, which lead to the now very much talked about Competitive Strategy, and we have also seen a healthy involvement of the Private Sector in the crafting of the Tourism Development Plan of 2006-2010. Mde Speaker, these are only a few legislative issues, whereby we have seen that growing intent of much more involvement and acceptance, from the Private Sector, that Guyana has a lot to offer, and that their investment is now a meaningful issue, both for all Guyana, and for themselves.

Mde Speaker, I wish to bring to attention that, while I speak of the involvement of the Private Sector in formulating and consultation on legislative issues, I want to also detail some of the benefits, and some of the conditions that will benefit Guyana as an investment destination: For example, the Investment Act. This Act sets out the pace for a friendlier investment climate; for establishing a competitive Guyana. It will also seek to establish a Council, and that Council will review and recommend to Government, alterations to the regime of fiscal incentives, including incentives relating to tariff and duties, and the export-oriented enterprises; and Mde Speaker, Hon Minister Jennifer Webster, earlier in her presentation, alluded to a better quality in standards of product that are geared for export.

The Small Business and Micro-Enterprise Development: Mde Speaker, the Budget notes the promotion of small businesses and

micro enterprises as an important element for the diversification of production and as an employment-creation strategy. The implementation of the Small Business Act 2004, saw the establishment of the Business Council in the latter part of 2005. This Council, Mde Speaker, is made up of, or comprised of both membership from the Public and Private Sectors. This year it is expected that the Small Business Bureau will be established. This Bureau, it is hoped, will address the development and growth of small and micro-businesses; it will address policies that hinge on small businesses, and it will make recommendations for easier facilitation of establishment for this very thriving and growing sector. Our Government intends to address, not only the larger investors but, as I just related, to support the growing number of small and micro enterprises, and to recognise their significant contribution to our economy.

The outcome of Government's policy for small business is expected to facilitate, and increase the numbers. It is expected to also facilitate their expansion, and guarantee income generated to families; and to secure livelihood options for the future for many poor Guyanese. The strategy is also expected to support the business initiatives of women and youths, that will lead to their economic independence, and minimise national and rural poverty. Again, for those on the opposite side, who feel that there is no attention, or no concerted effort, by our Government, to address the needs, and the unemployment issues in this country, I would like them to take note, and to encourage the young women and men, or youths on the whole, to begin to see, to read, to understand, and to examine Government's policies toward them, and to try to take necessary steps to benefit from these initiatives.

Mde Speaker, on the commencement day of this Budget - last Friday, the Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce dealt extensively with the objectives of the Competitive Strategy. I wish,

however, to add that the implementing unit for the Competitive Strategy is expected to be established this year.

What will this do? It will formalise the Government's preparedness to further facilitate and strengthen Guyana's Competitive Investment and Business environment. So Mde Speaker, we need to take note that Guyana has moved from a very poor condition, a poor derelict state, to a condition now, whereby we are offering our Guyanese people, including the Private Sector, opportunities to take us further into a modern society.

Mde Speaker, I wish to add, also, that we need to further enhance the current investment climate, and what has this Government done to do so? I wish to state, and to refer to the pronouncement in the 2007 Budget, whereby government's intention, currently, is to revolutionise the telecommunications sector. Their plans to further advance improvement in the existing transportation systems, and to support exploration of oil and alternative sources of energy, including the improvement and the capacity of human capital to match the needs of industry in the technical, skilled, and semi-skilled levels. Mde Speaker, these are also very critical factors that investors look for in countries, as they seek out investment destinations. Guyana, at this very moment, is poised as an investment destination.

Revolutionising the Telecommunications Sector: Mde Speaker, we have seen the participation of Digicel in the mobile telecommunications sector, and the intent and expression of the interest of many more, as was reported to this House by the Honourable Leader of this House, the Honourable Prime Minister. The Draft ICT strategy, on page 22, Mde Speaker, signals Government's intention to table a new Information and Communication Technology Bill, which is intended to replace the current Telecommunication Act of 1990, No. 27 of 1990. This is

expected, Mde Speaker, to provide a more competitive telecommunication sector. It is expected to improve the current telecommunication service, create new jobs, and to reduce costs to both businesses and the population at large.

The pronouncement in the 200 Budget, on the investment to be incurred, or to be offered in the ICT strategy, is in sync with the President's announcement in his inaugural speech to this Ninth Parliament. At page 15 of that speech, and I quote "*We would work to connect some eighty percent of our households to the internet, and to make every Guyanese computer literate.*"

I agree with the President, and to quote him,

"ambitious as it seems, it is possible, and the anticipation is that, in the next 5 years, Guyana will work to achieve a high level of access to information; we will work for a high level to access and have a robust knowledge-based country, and to have high levels of opportunities for all young people, as well as for the business community."

Here presents, Mde Speaker, more lucrative investment opportunities that the Private Sector can benefit from.

Government also, Mde Speaker, recognises the cross-cutting implications of ICT. Information Technology is now an integral part of its strategy to modernise Guyana. The Hon Minister Webster alluded to this already, but I need to reinforce it, and that is, IFMAS, after a long gestation, has now quickly revolutionised Government's capacity for improving its financial management. We have been told, in this House, of the expansiveness of IFMAS, and the expansion that will take place in Region 1, Region 9 and Region 8. The benefits from this programme, Mde Speaker, is a

constant improvement in efficiency and in effectiveness, and we have seen that the capacity to deliver basic social services to our population has improved greatly.

Government, Mde Speaker, also recognised that ITC has to be integrated into development for economic growth and social transformation, and have engaged the Private Sector in the formulation of this ITC Strategy. The strategy is anticipated to stimulate implementation of programmes, geared to enhance health, education, tourism, commerce, banking and finance, just to name a few. It speaks to building capacities in computer literacy, and construction of a modern ITC infrastructure, that will bring with it increased capacity to boost productivity, and to prepare Guyana, and the Private Sector, to respond to the challenges of globalisation, and to compete in a globalised marketplace.

The refinement of the ICT Strategy, Mde Speaker, is expected to be completed this year, and anticipated implementation will support Government's goal towards the modernisation of Guyana, as alluded to in the Budget of 2007.

Mde Speaker, I have said that there are 3 important elements which Government has moved to modernise.

The Acting Speaker: Time, Honourable Member.

Hon Clement J Rohee: Mde Speaker, I'd like to ask that the Honourable Member be given 15 minutes to conclude.

The Acting Speaker: The motion is moved.

Hon Clement J Rohee: Having regard to the time, Mde Speaker, with your leave, I'll like to move that Standing Order 10:3 be suspended in order to allow the House to continue its sitting until 11pm.

The Acting Speaker: The motion is that the House go until 11pm. That's the first motion. The Standing Order is suspended. The House will go until 11.

The second motion is that the Honourable Member be given 15 minutes to conclude.

Motions put and agreed to

Motions carried

The Acting Speaker: Continue Honourable Member

Hon Pauline Sukhai: Thank you Mde Speaker. The second element which I was going to speak to, just before the call for time, is that, in the 2007 Budget, there is an allocation of \$175M towards the Cheddi Jagan International Airport. This is expected to further enhance airport infrastructure and facilities; the rehabilitation of New Amsterdam to Molesen Creek Highway; the Ithaca Road - extension to Ithaca Road, and Drill Bypass, the completion of the four-lane Highway from Providence to Mandela Avenue, and the rehabilitated urban and rural community roads.

Mde Speaker, these investments, or the investment for these activities and projects, some of which have been completed and some are ongoing, is another indicator that we are modernising the transport sector. Mde Speaker, the investments to be injected this year for the construction and rehabilitation of bridges, in and around Guyana, is to the tune G\$180M. Mde Speaker, this will also support the acceleration for investors' expansion to many regions outside of Region 4. Mde Speaker, I would also wish to say that this Government has given its full support for the Private Sector investments in the Ogle Municipal Airport Development Project. Mde Speaker, these projects would contribute to greater improvement in local and regional air and land transport, to meet the needs of the travelling public, and to support investments. Mde Speaker, it is critical, because improvement in Guyana's

transportation system is a key determinant of national competitiveness, and this Budget gives support to the renewal of the transportation - both land and air systems. This ties in not only with the linkages for the facilitation of the productive sector, but also to facilitate the improvement of leisure, and will support the expected increase of visitors' traffic from our Regional Caribbean, and international markets.

Mde Speaker, the other critical area ... and I would be brief on it, is the area of energy. The increased interest in oil and alternative energy exploration is also anticipated to create opportunities for job creation, and increase demand for goods and services, and this will promote growth to the service sector. It is anticipated that these exploratory investments would generate some success that would meet the needs for growing energy, and to stabilise the high cost of fuel and power. Mde Speaker, I need also to echo the Budget on the issue of the Petro-Caribe Bilateral Agreement with Venezuela. This is another measure that seeks to address the demand for fuel by our Private Sector, and our national grid. This will ensure a steady and stable output of power that will enhance the operation and productiveness of businesses and industrial needs, while serving the population at large.

Mde Speaker, the Private Sector, represented by the pro-active Association of THAG, contributed tremendously, or significantly, in the preparation of the Tourism Development Action Plan and, Mde Speaker, as a support, well, as a support personnel to the Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce, it would be remiss of me if I do not also echo the Budget, and my Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce, in his Budget Speech. I wish to say that, in the preparation of the Tourism Development Action Plan - 2006-2010, we have seen that the Private Sector, through THAG, made enormous contribution to this Strategy. *[Applause]* Mde Speaker, this speaks volumes of how Government intends to approach making Guyana an investment-friendly country, and also to

strengthen partnership in areas where the Private Sector seeks to invest.

Mde Speaker, we have also seen, last year, the very strong commitment of THAG, and key stakeholders in the tourism sector, when they deliberated and discussed on the regulations that would soon be brought to this House on the establishment of accommodation; the establishment of resorts and lodges; and the standards and regulations that will guide tourism operators, and tourism guides. Mde Speaker, the full involvement of the Private Sector has been very pronounced in these matters. *[Applause]*

Mde Speaker, the Tourism Sector is anticipated to be a major contributor to the GDP by the promotion of a mix of urban and rural hinterland-based tourism product. Mde Speaker, with reference to the Budget, I also need to remind that Government will continue to engage the Private Sector to increase the carrying capacity, diversify the sources of visitors, and to reduce travel costs through greater competition in the tourist sector, particularly as it relates to air transport. Mde Speaker, Government also, in this Sector, intends to increase and expand its human capacity-building, so that this thriving industry can be able to meet the challenges of investors as they take the risk in investing in this industry.

Mde Speaker, my time is slowly up, but I want to say that we need to mention that Government, as a facilitator, will continue to play, and will continue to be a facilitator in this Sector, and we will continue to improve on the promotional aspects of the work, as it relates to this Sector, and we will leave the investment in this Sector to the Private Sector. Mde Speaker, I will also wish to say that, while we will promote, directly it means that we are marketing Guyana as a tourist destination, and we will also want to encourage the Private Sector to continue to market, in their own style and fashion, to accelerate investment, and the growth of this industry. Mde Speaker, I also wish to say that, while everything seems to be revolving now towards the World Cup Cricket, our tourism sector is

NA –BUDGET DEBATE 12 FEBRUARY 2007

also contributing to this factor, and we do so by receiving from the Budget \$9M for capital works that will see the enhancement of the seawalls. As you know, Mde Speaker, the seawall has now become a very attractive site – noisy, I am told; but it means that it is a site where Guyanese and foreigners alike meet to enjoy one of Guyana's tourist products.

Mde Speaker, I'm told that I must wind up, and in winding up, and in conclusion, I want to say that this Budget holds a great future for the modernisation of Guyana, and I want to urge the other Members on the opposite side to support this Budget. I want to say that we, on the PPP/Civic Government side, has enjoyed the presentation, because we know it holds a great future for all Guyana, and we would also want the Opposition side of this House to do likewise - to support the 2007 Budget. Thank you Mde Speaker. *[Applause]*

The Acting Speaker: Honourable Member, Mrs. Judith David-Blair.

Hon Judith David-Blair: Thank you Mde Speaker and I must say goodnight to everyone. Mde Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I stand in this Honourable House to represent my constituency at this year's Budget Debate, but before I go into my presentation, I would like to make some rebuttals to the Honourable Member, Mr. Whittaker.

Mde Speaker, some of our Members are very good dramatists, and pursue to fill this House with distorted information - not knowing that there're other Members in this House who, even though living in other Regions, were born in Region 1. *[Applause]* Mde Speaker, we are not denying the fact that there weren't improvements, or that there weren't continuity from the PNC Government. *[Applause]* But Mde Speaker, these are the facts:

Fact 1: Electricity in Region 1: Before 1985, there was a man by the name of Mr. Chan-A-Sue. I don't know if the Honourable

Member knows Mr. Chan-A-Sue, but Mr. Chan-A-Sue happens to be my godfather. That man provided electricity to the Mabaruma township before the year 1985, and I say 1985 because, in 1985, headed by Ivelaw Blair, under the stewardship of Barrington, Ward and Morrison, electrification was made possible by the Government. *[Applause]* We had electricity in the Mabaruma area, Barima end ... *[Interruption: 'That is inaccurate. You had your time to speak, you know, so you should sit and listen.']* We had Barima end; we had Ha ba; we had the Settlement; we had Barabina; we had Kumaka; we had Mabaruma Compound, and I can go on to naming the backstreet, where you had Mrs. December and those ... I think you should know her from teaching, Sister Dyer, Mrs Depps, and I am calling names because these are facts. So electricity, or electrification, of Region 1 did not come about under the PPP Government. *[Applause]*

When I was born on the 29 August 1960, I came out and I saw light; *[Applause]* and I want to say to Mr. Whittaker, that when I was born, or when I came into this world, it was at the Mabaruma Hospital, under the management, or the care of Dr. Dortin and Dr. Mitchelle. He does not know those doctors. *[Interruption and Applause]* At that time we had an operating theatre, and an x-ray unit. *[Applause]* You know, in those days, under the PNC Government, we never ever allowed \$15,000, or \$5,000, in those days, to be a hindrance to sending out one of our patients to Georgetown by the Guyana Airways Corporation - not a private-owned airways. *[Applause]* We ensured that that person was sent to Georgetown for further medical treatment, if it had to happen and not die at the hands of neglect, and then we find a baby turn up in coffin. *[Applause]*

Mde Speaker, I will go on to the schools now. The first secondary school that was built in Region 1 – Mabaruma, was in 1969 under Norma Younge, not Norman Whittaker, Norma Young. The first state-of-the-art Community High School, under the PNC, was at Port Kaituma, with dorms, *[Applause]* and there were always

primary schools in the Barima River, in the Aruca River, Port Kaituma, Matthews Ridge, Morwhana, Hosororo ... and I can go on to to name different communities connected to Region 1.

I wonder if the Honourable Member can remember that we had residents from Region 1 teaching at these schools, like Henry Smith, Joycelyn December, Yvonne Hercules, Daphne Allen, and many others. What he failed to say to this Honourable House is that the RDC in Region 1 is trying to make Region 1 the concentration camp, seeing that they are denying teachers the access of education of their choice. In Region 1, if you want to go to Georgetown to further your studies, you have to leave your job. If you decide to keep your job, then you have to stay right there. You can't move.

Roads: The roads from Kumaka end to Barima end were always there. We had the Hu bu road. All these roads were paved roads, so right now, what the PPP/C Government is doing, is maintaining, and it is right for any Government to produce, or maintain. *[Applause]*

He spoke about water transportation from Region 1 to Charity – it was there. I travelled there with my father, so I'm testifying. There were always paved roads, as I said. There was a farm-to-market road from Kumaka to Yarakita, and the farmers were the leading suppliers of peanuts to Georgetown. *[Applause]* All this was under the PNC Government. *[Interruption: 'yuh meet it, and it is your right to continue it.'] [Applause]*

I want to remind Mr. Whittaker that the influx of people came about because of the manganese company that you did not speak about, because you don't know about it, and the gold and diamond seekers who were there. He didn't tell this House that, when the manganese company decided to close shop, hundreds of people would have been out of a job, but it was the PNC Government who stood by these people, *[Applause]* and helped them to promote their lives.

You know, he is forgetting that all the roads he's talking about, who built it? Barama. Barama built all the roads. This Government must not take full 100% claim for anything happening in no part of this country, because you always have some company coming in to rescue us and then write-off their debt. We are no good; we can't pay our debts. It got to be written off.

You know, I want Mr. Whittaker ... I was sitting down, Mde Speaker, waiting to hear Mr. Whittaker speak about the fuel smuggling from Region 1 to Venezuela, and all this smuggling, Mde Speaker, happened when Mr. Whittaker was the head for the Regional Democratic Council. *[Applause]*

Mde Speaker, I have a question to ask, like how Mr. Neend Kumar asked about who burned down the Regional Administrative Office. Who are the 2 Regional Officials who own the boat that is smuggling fuel from Region 1 to Venezuela in partnership? Who owns it? *[Applause]* We are all asking questions tonight, and we need answers to them. Mr. Whittaker was then the head of the Regional Democratic Council. *[Applause]*

Mde Speaker, so much for Region 1. I will now go to my speech, and I promise you that I would not be very long, but I would be very factual.

I would personally like to commend the Hon Minister of Finance on his presentation ... *[Interruption: 'You don't understand English Language']* but I must remind this Honourable House that the people of Guyana were expecting to hear some firm commitment from the Government to bring relief to their lives, especially those in hinterland. Mde Speaker, as we are trying to grapple with the 16% Value Added Tax, and the experience of being exploited by some businesses, who too, are not sure of their return we are faced with a 'stresshold' of \$3,000 to the threshold. This increase has no significance, or comparison. You know, Mde Speaker, some people, they think is 'bore hole' alone, but some of them boring some

dangerous holes in this country; but this is the 'stresshold' [H. O. L. D. Mr. Neend Kumar]. This increase, Mde Speaker, has no significance, or comparison with the daily taxes housewives have to pay as they shop. This is even more difficult for the people living in the hinterland, whose cost of living is 200% more than those on the coastland.

Mde Speaker, as we look at page 217 of the 2007 Budget Speech, and I quote:

“More than any other time in our country’s history, a large percent of our people own their homes, and have access to electricity, piped water, telephones, and other amenities.”

Let us not be afraid to face reality, that many of our people have had their electricity disconnected for non-payment; some had their telephone on one-way - just receiving calls, and this is because they cannot afford the bills, because of not having a proper salary. There is now the Value Added Tax on your telephone bills that makes it worse. Some of them even refuse to have the connections from GPL - being afraid of being embarrassed, or being disconnected. Mde Speaker, even as I speak, there are still some areas without water supply, discoloured water and, in some areas where there is supposed to be good service, it is unreliable. Ask the Hon Minister of Housing and Water - after 2 months of breaking down.

Mde Speaker, my constituency - Region 7, is one of the richest, if not the richest Region in Guyana, with resources that contribute greatly to the economy of this country, and the returns to this Region are very small. Mde Speaker, only the Government can say why this Region is being discriminated against. When I listen to the Honourable Member of Region 2, I was happy to know that so much interest is placed on agriculture in that Region, but the same hand should be reached out to Region 7. We, too, have a vast amount of agriculture going on in the Interior, but our farmers need markets for their produce, and machinery to assist them in farming on a larger

scale. As the Minister of Agriculture spoke, I thought I would have heard something for Region 7, but it seems as though only certain regions are important. Very unfortunate for my Region, it has received the smallest budget allocation, and we try to complete the works and projects that this Government think we should have, and do. Mde Speaker, the people of Region 7 yearn for the time when we can say what we need to do, and not have any Government tell us what we should have, and do.

Mde Speaker, the Government chooses to divert the funds to the CDCs that are under the control of the PPP/C supporters. [Applause] Mde Speaker, since 2001 the Region has been asking for some very important furnishings and equipment for its proper functioning. For example, a vehicle for the Regional Chairman, the functioning of the theatre at the Bartica Hospital, the fire tender to assist in times of disaster, introduction of an air service at a cheaper cost for airfares in and out of the Interior, and a steamer service that is appropriate for the type of businesses that are conducted in Bartica and its environs. These are still to be a reality.

Mde Speaker, security is a big question in my Region. We continue to have our share of crime. There is need for improvement in both land and water transportation for the police, so that they will not have to borrow private-owned vehicles to do patrols, and to protect and serve the Region; but ... [Interruption: 'You got a new status. I want you to know that If I didn't fight for that station we didn't get none. A police had to fall off the step and injure his back before we get one'] [Applause] But, Mde Speaker, of all the information in the Budget Speech of the Hon Minister, it is with astonishment to read, on page 45, at 459, and I quote "Work will be executed to renovate the Fire Station at Bartica." Mde Speaker, what misleading information and propaganda. Can the Minister say where this Fire Station is situated? What the Minister should have been saying is that the Regional Authorities were told that the Fire Tender is under active consideration. Mde Speaker, this brings me to August 28th, 2006, when we had a terrible fire in Bartica. As I witnessed the fire,

and tried to assist, I can remember hearing an Hon Minister, along with some of the PPP candidates, saying ‘*Let us help to save some of the belongings of the victims. We have to show our commitment as Regional leaders and Councillors.*’ Mde Speaker, this was the night before Elections Day, but then I listened again, and I heard some angry words. To my amazement, it was because a bulldozer was brought there by the orders of the Minister to bulldoze a house that was not burnt in an effort to save the said house. At that scene people were promised \$1M to rebuild. I do hope that this promise will be kept, seeing that the Budget has now been read, and Elections are over.

Mde Speaker, we had 3 fires in Bartica, and many others in surrounding communities, but we are handicapped when it comes to rendering assistance. I do hope that the Government will really take security as a priority to hinterland areas, because we were told in this House that the government has no control of the borders of this country, with respect to people entering and leaving.

Mde Speaker, it is only in yesterday’s Sunday Stabroek News that I read ‘*Lethem businesswoman robbed by Brazilian bandits.*’ There is need for several police and warden outposts in the interior to ensure that miners are safe when travelling in and out of the interior, with or without production. Mde Speaker, our miners are faced with long Awaiting time to be given firearms to protect themselves, while the high presence of illegal firearms and drug trafficking is continuing. Mde Speaker, employment is zero-rated in Region 7; there has been no new investment, or new jobs created. Our young people are still sitting around idly. Some are forced to go to the interior to find jobs, and return with malaria and typhoid. Our young people need the opportunity to be able to further their education at an affordable cost, or to become skilled, and this is not present in Region 7. They have goals that cannot be accomplished because of various difficulties.

Mde Speaker, the President Youth Choice Project for school-leavers or dropouts is now an annexe to the Bartica Secondary School. Mde Speaker, this project has not accomplished its objective after 4 years of completion.

Housing: Mde Speaker, on page 15, at 336, we read about the \$1.2B that was spent in 2006 to boost power supply and distribution. Areas were mentioned, of which no community was mentioned in Region 7. Mde Speaker, there are housing schemes in Region 7, moreso Bartica, where all applicants in the Four-miles, and the western side of the Secondary School, are without electricity; and these people have paid for infrastructure works. This too, Mde Speaker, is a clear case of discrimination, because housing schemes in other parts of Guyana, that came after those in Region 7, are already electrified, and have asphalt roads. The women of Bartica will again have to protest, and make strong representation, by using the media, to have electricity. Only by force this Government acts to the needs of the people. *[Applause]*

Mde Speaker, a lot of money is being placed in the area of youth and sports. I must commend the Government for this, but Bartica has no proper sports ground or equipment in schools to boost sports, also some communities in the far-flung areas. During the elections campaign, Mde Speaker, the Government had given small gears in the far-flung areas for votes. Let us be honest. Are the goals of these young people met? I would like to know how much money is budgeted for Region 7, and where in the Region will this money be spent. I do hope my friend Neend Kumar will remember the youths of this Region.

Mde Speaker, the Hon Minister, Dr. Anthony, enjoyed himself whilst boasting of Mashramani, and its potential, but forgot to remind this House that the PPP/Civic, at one time, had wanted to play a low-key on Mashramani, blaming it to be a birthday celebration: *[Applause]* But lo and behold, it is now a main key to

promoting tourism, thanks to the People's National Congress.
[Applause]

Education: Mde Speaker, this department continues to struggle for success. Our schools are short-staffed, and overcrowded. At our schools the breakdown is: Primary Schools – 40 children to 1 teacher; in the Secondary Schools – 50 children to 1 teacher; and teachers have to be running from one building to another to have their classes. While we commend the Three Miles Primary School, we wonder where will the teachers come from to take up their rightful position at the school. Parents' help is being solicited, in the primary level, to monitor classrooms. Teachers are still underpaid, and continue to depart for greener pastures. Mde Speaker, about 10 teachers from Bartica, some with their families, left for the Bahamas between September and January. Our teachers in the hinterland should have a salary of 100% to meet the cost of living in these far-flung areas. Some communities are still awaiting school doors to be opened. For example, Korootoko. Mde Speaker, we are hearing of teachers' quarters to be constructed, but the fact is that our teachers need their own homes, and before I move off of teachers, I want to say to the Honourable Pauline Sukhai, that, while she is saying that it is good that Guyana has teachers who can go out there and teach, she must remember that we are leaving our children in Guyana without trained teachers. [Applause] At present, in the Bartica Secondary School, we have about 5 young children, who just had their results for C.X.C., teaching - and they are teaching C.X.C. classrooms. Is this what we need, or what should happen to our schools, and our children? When we stand in this Honourable House as representatives of our people, we should be honest with ourselves, and say what is real, and accept where we're wrong, and accept where there are faults, and let us work together to correct these faults, and not paint a picture that everything is bright and beautiful, when it is not.

For the records sake, I would like to thank those parents in the Region for making themselves available to volunteer in our schools. Mde Speaker, I would like to say that I'm in full support of my colleague, Desmond Fernandes, when he said that the dream of achieving 100% academic and computer literacy can never be realised in the near future because, like Region 1, we have surrounding communities like Karatabo, Rivers View, Kamaira, Dog Point, Fowl Mouth, Bathavia - just to name a few. They too have limited or no electricity.

Health: Mde Speaker, while all might look well ... [*Interruption*]

The Acting Speaker: Time, Honourable Member.

Hon James K McAllister: Mde Speaker, I wish to move that the Member be given 15 minutes to conclude her presentation.

The Acting Speaker: The motion is that the Honourable Member be given 15 minutes to conclude.

Motion put and agreed to

Motion carried

The Acting Speaker: Continue Honourable Member

Hon Judith David-Blair: Mde Speaker, while all might look well, looks can be deceiving. In Region 7, we are still awaiting the commissioning of the theatre at the Bartica Hospital. Patients are still traversing the rough waters for further medical treatment. There is need for a 24-hour system of malaria-testing and treatment. Like every other public servants, the nurses are underpaid. They, too, need their own homes, and the language barrier which inhibits communication between doctors and patients continue to be a problem, and these doctors I am speaking about, Mde Speaker, are the Cuban doctors. This situation needs to be addressed. The appointment of the RHO is still pending.

Roads, bridges and drains: Mde Speaker, the residents of Bartica welcome the upgrading of our roads and drains; but, Mde Speaker, these roads will be too narrow. If we take a look at the roads, if we examine the construction of the roads and the drains, the roads are definitely too narrow. The drains, also, are too narrow, and they're too shallow.

Mde Speaker, during the 2006 Budget Debate, the Honourable Harry Persaud Nokta told us that the Government will be spending \$888M to do all the roads in Bartica, but Mde Speaker, the fact is that 3 main streets will not be done. That is, 7th, 8th and 9th streets. We also welcome the bridge at Agotash, and take note of the Budget allocation for that area every year, while the One to Five Miles Road is being unnoticed by the Government. Mde Speaker, the One to Five Miles area is highly populated, even more than the Agotash area. All of our vehicles use that road to get access in and out of the interior, Linden and Georgetown.

Mde Speaker, we know of the monies that are available, from the royalties of the miners, to do the roads. I guess the Honourable Prime Minister conveniently forgot to say that this money was diverted to the Lethem road, and thus the people living in the 1-5 miles area have continue to suffer. Mde Speaker, Region 7 produces the most gold and diamond for Guyana, and the roads to Issano, Mahdia, 72 Miles, just to name a few, should be given consideration. Mde Speaker, the 2 Hills that are supposed to done at 2 and 3 Miles, is just a small portion of roads. Our pregnant mothers will continue to walk to and from the hospital to escape the fear of having miscarriages.

Mde Speaker, all Guyana knows that the Regions that are controlled by PNC/R - OneGuyana are being neglected, discriminated, or marginalised in one way or the other by this Government. *[Applause]* If this Government really wants to exercise democracy,

let us see the distribution of funds to all the Regions be made according to their needs. Emphasis must not be paid on the Regions controlled by the Government. There should be a good working relationship among the Government and the Private Sector that provides transportation for the Guyanese people, because it is the duty of the Government to provide same. The Government needs to stop fighting these people down, and try to have a working relationship, so that we can all achieve the common goal of assisting our people to move from all points, or all Regions of this country.

Mde Speaker, as I listened to my young friend, Mr. Irfaan Ali, losing his voice while trying to mislead this House about the bridge, I want to remind him that the bridge is still afloat. It didn't sink like Charity wharf. *[Applause]* I want to remind ... *[Applause]* and it is working. I want to also remind him that it was not the PNC that burnt the cane fields. For the Government, it seems as though the PNC did nothing, but let me remind him that it was the PNC that introduced free education; *[Applause]* it was the PNC that started the scholarship programme with Cuba; and it was the PNC that had a good programme for our young people with the Guyana National Service, and the People's Militia. He went on to speak about what the IMF said about the PNC, long years ago, but forgot to mention what the same IMF said about Guyana's involvement with the drug trade. Mde Speaker, drugs in chicken, drugs in fish, drugs in pelourie, drugs in timber. Mde Speaker, drugs in every export commodity, and every part of your body.

Mde Speaker, I think, if this Government should focus on the way forward, and not the decades gone by, we will see a future. According to a Rastafarian, this is an '*I to come Budget*' *[Applause]*; the Budget where large sums of money earmarked to spend, will full a few pockets and many sub-standard works. Many schools have been built and renovated, but will remain half, or completely empty,

NA –BUDGET DEBATE 12 FEBRUARY 2007

as our parents find satisfaction in the private schools teaching, and commitment to promote our young people.

Mde Speaker, it is the Government's duty to build schools and roads, provide healthcare. To have development, investment must be had, jobs created, and life be made comfortable. Mde Speaker, how can we forget the Feed, Clothe and House drive by the PNC, that the PPP so badly criticised, but is sneaking to reintroduce as a 'thief in the night?' It is the FCH that would save Guyanese from VAT. The Government should not forget the PNC, for the playing field is washed out, and the match is over. I wish them now a spinning of the toss to start their own game of developing this beautiful land of ours. Mde Speaker, I thank you. *[Applause]*

The Acting Speaker: Honourable Member, Mrs. Philomena Sahoye.

Mrs Philomena Sahoye-Shury: Thank you Mde Speaker. I stand here tonight in support of the Guyana Government, the PPP/Civic Budget of 2007, for the fiscal year 2007. To the Hon Minister, Dr. Ashni Singh, Minister of Finance, he must be commended for a job well done, and he could be assured that we stand with him, and all Guyana stands with him. *[Applause]*

Mde Speaker, this Budget is a people's Budget, in that this PPP/Civic Government stands tall in making promises and crafting programmes we intend to keep. The 2007 Budget deals with all governmental and regional services in Guyana - from Health and Education - 2 vital components in any country, to Housing and Water, Agriculture, Amerindian Affairs, Social Services etcetera. The messages this Budget is sending is that, as a caring Government, we are dedicated and determined to answer the wishes and aspirations of all Guyanese, but at the same time, this Government has to be very astute in managing the fiscal affairs, be

prudent in our monetary allocations, bearing in mind that we are living in a troubled world. Examine the world economy, and its advanced technology, and various other factors that go with it. If any Government is worth its salt, then it must be able to amply manage, and control, the economic situation, do not plunge the country in more debt, so creating a fiscal situation that is unmanageable. This is why I want to commend the Minister of Finance. The citizens' expectations go higher, and higher, every passing day. This is understandable, but politicians must be honest and desist from feeding half-truths, untruths, and halfbaked innuendos. It will not help the prosperity of this nation. Many have been speaking about housing and water. This PPP/Civic Government has revolutionised the housing sector, [Applause] from mud and swamp to spanking housing developments. With commitment and dedication, we worked in the Housing Ministry to bring with the reach of the poor people in Guyana, the pride of owning their own homes, and also setting in motion [Applause] and also setting in motion a mechanism whereby they could acquire cheap loans – 5-7%; years ago, over 30%. Just to name a few of the things of the Ministry of Housing. Sophia ... Well you know that I'd mention that – A, B, C, D, E, F: Cummings Lodge and Cummings Park - the regularisation of all areas on the East Coast, East Bank, West Bank, West Coast, Region 1. 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10, where persons lived ... and the records could show, on the Railway Embankment, and were awarded \$25,000 to help them to remove their houses so that we could build the parallel East Coast Road, and were given land; where persons on the seawall ... We're speaking of the seawall now – this is what our Housing Ministry did; removed the people, helped them to remove, and gave them land; and some Members talked about they can't afford to pay. Mde Speaker, the house lots are \$66,000 - \$100,000 ... we're not talking about the higher ones, and we can't afford to pay, as they claim.

Where eventually water roads and lights were made available we, at the Housing, are fully aware of some problems being encountered by the residents, but let us, for one moment, examine some figures,

because great writers have said that facts and figures speak without passion or favour, but they are irrefutable, and this is why when I sit in this House and hear some members castigate - with a lot of innuendos, it is said, *Oh what a silent web we weave, when first we practice to deceive.*

Mde Speaker, the house lots ... and many of these people don't go there to investigate. They know the times they go there. How many of them ... and I did not want to deal with the 28 years. I didn't. I didn't want to. I could more than help them. We must bear in mind that it is becoming a problem for many Guyanese to prioritize their priorities. Many say they can't pay, but we know that they have relatives abroad. What is \$66,000? But let us examine another factor. If many of these persons were paying a rent of \$5,000.00 per month, then for 1 year it would be \$60,000, and many of them are on this land over 10 years, which would be \$600,000. If they are renting, and they do not pay their rent – well, then, they are out on the road, and I would like all of us to be realistic. Yes, they are many poor single-parent families in these areas, but we, as a government, have a lot of compassion, and we empathise with them but, at the same time, we know about the 'runnings' of making a profit on the backs of those who want to live a clean life. For example, there are many of them that will come and don't even pay the \$66,000, or \$100,000, and build a small house; and go now in Sophia, the selling price \$1.5 to \$2M. What a shame. And this is what the Opposition should come and let us works together; let us work together, so that we could erase these problems.

Mde Speaker, do not let us short-change ourselves. Let's be realistic, for I have here, the Jamaican Gleaner. On the 16th of April 2006, last year, and I'll like to quote:

*After years of talks and official consultation,
Government's Squatters Management Unit is still*

not off the ground. In the meantime squatting has grown into an epidemic, which state and private land owners are finding difficult to manage.

If squatting has always been a great concern of the Government, and it's something that must be dealt with urgently, we in Guyana have moved leaps and bounds. They can't even deal with the situation; *[Applause]* leaps and bounds.

Mde Speaker, I am not aware of the problems the Jamaican Government is encountering, but what I do know is of the Guyana Government, because of our commitment to the Guyanese people, e have constantly and assiduously worked with them to realise their dreams. The situation in Tiger Bay ... We keep talking and talking, and sometimes I wonder. It was allowed to deteriorate, where an area within the city of Georgetown literally became a haven of evil; where many children were not attending school, many of them sleeping on the wharves of Georgetown, where begging was a norm, where squalor and want was the order of the day, living in hopelessness but today the PPP/Civic Government, because of our concern, we did not only allocate them house lots in Diamond, Tuschen, Haslington, and Bell Field, but an allocation was made for over \$15M so that they can buy materials to build their own homes. *[Applause]* Isn't this achievement? Isn't this investing in our people?

Education and Health - vital components to the development of any country throughout the world. What was our trust when the PPP/Civic Government acquired office? To have a type of country, with its people realising their potential, grasp every opportunity and be a vital ... *[Interruption]*

The Acting Speaker: Member, it is minutes to eleven.

Hon Clement J Rohee: Mde Speaker, I think it's only reasonable to suggest that, in view of the fact that the previous speaker spoke for about 45 minutes, uninterrupted, that the Standing Order 10:3 be suspended to allow the Honourable Member to complete her speech uninterrupted. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The motion is that the Honourable Member be allowed to conclude her speech.

Mrs Philomena Sahoye: Thank you Mde Speaker. What was our trust when the PPP/Civic Government acquired office in 1992. It was to have a type of country where the realisation of its people, and its potential, grasp every opportunity and be a vital part, in unity and love, not only for development purposes, but for the sustainability and strengthening of all human resources, so transforming Guyana to take our rightful place in the world.

In making our decision, we were aware of the fact that no one can survive in today's world if they are not educated. So, we invested a large portion to Education, not only to the building of schools, but preparing the schools with the ambience which is conducive to good learning; also having teachers well-trained, and other mechanisms put in place. All of our children are not academically inclined, so there we had to put programmes in place for vocational training, so as to capture their skills. Very soon we'll be having the remedial programme.

Health, as a critical component in building a modern and prosperous Guyana, stands out, not only as a beacon light, but as the inevitable priority. We must all remember that healthcare in Guyana is free, and many of us who went abroad, or got families abroad, know that you can't even go in an ambulance if you don't have money, much less to touch the hospital door, and we must recognise this. We must all remember that healthcare is free, and that each and everyone of us must play our part in the equitable delivery of all

facets of delivery system, be it immunisation, HIV/AIDS, hospital gear, preventive medicine, or public health.

This PPP/Civic Government, with careful analysis, continues to implement strategies in nursing care by training more nurses, increasing the number of technicians, building new hospitals and health centres, and especially to serve our sisters in rural and hinterland communities. Mde Speaker, in all the other sectors, traditional and non-traditional, be it drainage and irrigation, roads and infrastructure, social services, poverty alleviation, youths, sports and culture, women, children and other vulnerable groups, the Government is working relentlessly in improving the living standards of our people, and further enhancing the physical and institutional infrastructure required to promote growth, well-being, and a prosperous Guyana.

Mde Speaker, no one can deny that the PPP/Civic Government, over 14 years in office, has been able to raise the awareness and consciousness of citizens in all the communities throughout this country, whereby today there exists hearing mechanisms - helping in every way possible. There is more cohesion and commitment in these communities, and a burning desire to work untiringly, and unceasingly, to be proud to say 'This is my community.'

Mde Speaker, I sat here for hours, and days, listening, with rapt attention, as we debated the Casino Bill and VAT. The negativity and innuendos that spilled out against the PPP/Civic Government sent a disastrous message, not only to Guyanese, but reverberated throughout the world. I wonder if we understood what impression we have created.

Guyana is a raw-material producing country and, at the same time, we are forced to compete in a rich mechanised global market. Read through the lines, and you would clearly see the manipulations with plans and programmes. We have a long way to go, because the implementation stage is in process.

There are many of us, in blaspheming the Casino Bill and VAT, we called on the Lord - many of us; but Mde Speaker, the readings from the Bible was in abundance, casting measures for the development of Guyana, but many of us who think we are worthy, failed convincingly to also examine our consciences, because, in the same Bible, it is said 'it is not he that shoutest *Lord, Lord*, shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth the will of the Lord shall enter the Kingdom.' *[Applause]*

Mde Speaker, every house lot that is given out, every step we make for a new school, every hospital that we build, or repair, every nurse that we train, every teacher we train, we are answering those wishes of the people of Guyana, and this is why we will be successful. *[Applause]*

Mde Speaker, there is much more that could be said, and for many of the politicians here, I urge you to acquire the knowledge of the history of this country. Do not look with somebody else's eyes, and speak somebody else's words, but examine the factors of the events of the 1950s, 1960s, 70s, 80s, 90s, and the New Millennium because, my friends, history has a tendency to repeat itself. Guyana has come a long way. Did we make mistakes? Yes we did. Could it be corrected? Yes, they could; but this PPP/Civic Government, we're implementing that strategy for development. Examine the situation carefully, and you would agree with me that Guyana has moved leaps and bounds, but it is not the end of the rainbow. There is a mighty lot more to be done. Do not let us get caught up in euphoria and think that everything will be done overnight. If colonialism could not have answered the wishes and aspirations when they were draining our money out of this country ... [*we ain't talking nothing but dah, we want to kill we own Guyanese. That's our problem*'] You don't ... You must constructively, and not destructively. Do not let's get caught up in euphoria and think that everything will be done overnight. Let us, as Parliamentarians, chart our own course, with dedication and sincerity of purpose, to leave a Guyana our children will be proud of. Let us be careful, for we

NA –BUDGET DEBATE 12 FEBRUARY 2007

moved, for we moved from slavery, indentureship, colonialism, and other things I would like to say; but we are now in a new era, new machinations; new technologies and strategies; new manoeuvrings. What it is called? What it is called? I leave you to make that analysis.

Finally, Mde Speaker, I desire to again commend the Minister of Finance, and to say that Guyana belongs to me: It belongs to you: It belongs to all of us, and therefore we must determine its destiny. Thank you. *[Applause]*

The Acting Speaker: Honourable Members, this concludes our business for today; Honourable Prime Minister, Hon Minister. *[Laughter]*

Hon Clement J Rohee: Mde Speaker, I wish to move that the House stands adjourned until tomorrow, Tuesday 13 February 2007 at 14:00 H

The Acting Speaker: This House now stands adjourned until 13 February 2007 at 14:00 H.

Adjourned Accordingly At 23:10H