

**THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
OFFICIAL REPORT**

[Volume 7]

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

169th Sitting

2 p.m.

Wednesday, 29th November, 1978

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (62)

Speaker

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

(Absent)

Members of the Government – People’s National Congress (45)

Prime Minister (1)

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

(Absent – on leave)

Deputy Prime Minister (1)

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

Senior Ministers (12)

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

Cde. S.S. Naraine, A.A.,
Minister of Works and Transport

Cde. B. Ramsaroop,
Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House

Cde. C.V. Mingo,
Minister of Home Affairs (Absent – on leave)

* Cde. H. Greene,
Minister of Co-operatives and National Mobilisation (Absent)

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

*Cde. F.E. Hope,
Minister of Finance

* Cde. G.B. Kennard, C.C.H.,
Minister of Agriculture (Absent)

* Cde. M. Shahabuddeen, C.C.H., S.C.,
Attorney General and Minister of Justice (Absent)

Cde. V.R. Teekah,
Minister of Education,
Social Development and Culture (Absent)

*Cde. R.E. Jackson,
Minister of Foreign Affairs (Absent – on leave)

*Cde. J.A. Tyndall, A.A.,
Minister of Trade and Consumer Protection (Absent)

Ministers (2)

Cde. S.M. Field-Ridley,
Minister of Information and Culture (Absent)

Cde. O.E. Clarke,
Minister of State – Regional (East Berbice/Corentyne)

Ministers of State (10)

Cde. F.U.A. Carmichael,
Minister of State – Regional (Rupununi)

***Non-elected Minister**

Cde. P. Duncan, J.P.,
Minister of State, Ministry of Economic
Development and Co-operatives

Cde. C.A. Nascimento,
Minister of State,
Office of the Prime Minister

(Absent)

Cde. K.B. Bancroft, J.P.
Minister of State - Regional
(Mazaruni/Potaro)

Cde. J.P. Chowritmootoo, J.P.,
Minister of State – Regional
(Essequibo Coast/West Demerara)

Cde. J.R. Thomas,
Minister of State, Ministry of Health,
Housing and Labour

(Absent – on leave)

Cde. R.H.O. Corbin,
Minister of State, Ministry of National Development

(Absent)

Cde. S. Prashad,
Minister of State – Regional
(East Demerara/West Coast Berbice)

Cde. R. C. Van Sluytman,
Minister of State,
Ministry of Agriculture

Cde. L.A. Durant,
Minister of State – Regional
(North West)

Parliamentary Secretaries (5)

Cde. M.M. Ackman, C.C.H.,
Parliamentary Secretary,
Office of the Prime Minister and Government Chief Whip

Cde. E.L. Ambrose,
Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of Agriculture

Cde. M. Corrica,
Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of Education, Social Development and Culture

(Absent – on leave)

Cde. E.M. Bynoe
Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of Trade and Consumer Protection

Cde. C.E. Wright, J.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of Economic Development and Co-operatives

(Absent)

Other Members (14)

Cde. W.G. Carrington
Cde. E.H.A. Fowler
Cde. J. Gill
Cde. W. Hussain
Cde. K.M.E. Jonas
Cde. J.G. Ramson
Cde. P.A. Rayman
Cde. A. Salim
Cde. E.M. Stoby, J.P.
Cde. S.H. Sukhu, M.S., J.P.
Cde. C. Sukul, J.P.
Cde. H.A. Taylor
Cde. L.E. Willems
Cde. Zaheeruddeen

(Absent)

(Absent)

Members of the Opposition (16)

(i) People’s Progressive Party (14)

Leader of the Opposition (1)

Cde. C. Jagan
Leader of the Opposition

(Absent – on leave)

Deputy Speaker (1)

Cde. Ram Karran
Deputy Speaker

(Absent – on leave)

Other Members (12)

Cde. J. Jagan	(Absent)
Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud, J.P., Opposition Chief Whip	
Cde. Narbada Persaud	
Cde. C. Collymore	
Cde. S.F. Mohamed	(Absent)
Cde. I. Basir	
Cde. C.C. Belgrave	
Cde. R. Ally	
Cde. Dalchand, J.P.	
Cde. Dindayal	
Cde. H. Nokta	
Cde. P. Sukhai	(Absent)

Liberator Party (2)

Mr. M.F. Singh, Leader of the Opposition	(Absent – on leave)
Mr. M.A. Abraham	

Officers

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

Acting Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly – A. Knight

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National Assembly

2.15 -2.20 p.m.

2.15 p.m.

ELECTION OF A MEMBER TO PRESIDE AT THE SITTING

The Clerk: Comrades and hon. Members, as both the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker are unavoidably absent, the Assembly will have to elect a Member to preside at this Sitting. Nominations are therefore invited.

The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House (Cde. Ramsaroop): I beg to nominate Cde. S. H. Sukhu to be the Member to preside at today's Sitting of the National Assembly.

The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister and Government Chief Whip (Cde. Ackman): Second.

The Clerk: Comrades, there is one nomination. Cde. S. H. Sukhu has been nominated by Cde. Ramsaroop; the nomination has been seconded by Cde. Ackman. There being no other nominations, Cde. Sukhu is therefore declared duly elected Member to preside at this Sitting.

[Cde. S. H. Sukhu, M.S. in the Chair.]

PRAYERS

2.20 p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE PRESIDING MEMBER

Leave to Members

The Presiding Member: Leave has been granted to the Cde. Prime Minister, Cde. Mingo, Cde. Thomas for today's Sitting and to Cde. Corrica for the period 26th November to the 6th

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National Assembly

2.20 -2.30 p.m.

December, 1978.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS ETC.

The following Papers were laid:

(1) Small Industries Corporation (Dissolution) Order 1978 (No. 122), made under section 63 of the Public Corporations Act, Chapter 19:05, on the 20th November, 1978, and published in the Gazette on 21st November, 1978.
[The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Development]

(2) (a) Development Credit Agreement (Import Program) between Guyana and International Development Association - Dated October 24th, 1978. (Credit Number 853 GUA).

(b) Loan Agreement (Import Program) between Guyana and International Development Association - Dated October 24, 1978. (Loan Number 1633 GUA).

(c) Financial Paper No. 2/1978 – Schedule of Supplementary Provision on the Current and Capital Estimates for the period ended 15th November, 1978, totalling \$64, 088,672.

In terms of Standing Order No. 68, the Minister of Finance named Friday, 1st December, 1978, as the day for the consideration of the Financial Paper.

(d) Guyana Agricultural Co-operative Development Bank (Amendment) Order 1978 (No. 123), made under section 15 of the Co-operative Financial Institutions Act, Chapter 75:01, on 20th November, 1978.

(e) Statement of Guarantees given by the Minister of Finance under section 3 of the Guarantee of Loans (Public Corporations and Companies) Act, Chapter 77:01, for the quarter ended 31st March, 1978.

(f) Statement of Guarantees given by the Minister of Finance under section 3 of the Guarantee of Loans (Public Corporations and Companies) Act, Chapter 77:01, for the quarter ended 30th June, 1978.

(g) Statement of Guarantees given by the Minister of Finance under section 3 of the Guarantee of Loans (Public Corporations and Companies) Act, Chapter 77:01 for the year ended 31st December, 1977.

[The Minister of Finance]

The Presiding Member: Comrades, please note that the Financial Paper No. 2/1978 is to be considered at the Sitting on Friday, 1st December, 1978.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Cde. Speaker, if you would permit me, I had indicated to the Leader of the House, Cde. Ramsaroop, when he said that it was the intention to debate this Paper on Friday, that we were requesting that the Paper be taken on Monday in order to give us reasonable time to examine the Paper to be able to properly make a contribution on it, bearing in mind that the sum involved is \$64 million. In fact, this is another Budget in a year for which a Budget has already been presented. Cde. Speaker, supplementary estimates never...

The Presiding Member: Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud, on a point of correction, I would just like to draw your attention to page 63 of the Standing Orders which deals with supplementary estimates of expenditure and statements of excesses. I shall read just a part:

“...and shall be appointed to be considered on a day to be named by the Minister presenting the Paper but not earlier than one clear day after that for which the Paper was presented.”

I think you will appreciate that you have got, as the Standing Order says, one clear day. So, I will now rule that we that we are within the bounds of the Standing Orders.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: My point was not that the Standing Order did not permit the Paper to be debated on Friday but you will recall that on the last occasion, the Standing Orders were suspended on matters of great gravity. This is a Parliament and one would expect that the Opposition would be able to consult with the Government and the Government would consult with the Opposition. I am not saying that it is contrary to the Standing Orders but I am saying that it was a request from the Opposition that instead of taking the Paper on Friday – I am very conversant with the Standing Order – take it on Monday. I am not saying this for the first time. I indicated that to Cde. Ramsaroop on the first day when he indicated it to me, to give us enough time to consider the Paper. It was a request from the Opposition and I am sure that you will not say that the Opposition cannot make a request which is reasonable.

Indeed, we have to summon a meeting of the parliamentary group, the Paper has to be examined and all of this has to be done within one day, that is, tomorrow, to come back and debate it on Friday. If Saturday was a working day, we would have gone on to the other day. It is only because Saturday and Sunday have come between that I am asking for Monday. It was a reasonable request.

2.30 p.m.

QUESTION TO MINISTERS

Question NO. 29

Cde. Nokta: Cde. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Economic Development and Co-operatives Question No. 29 which stands in my name on the Order Paper:

“Is the Minister of Economic Development and Co-operatives aware that the southern section of Industry Crown Dam, known as Seven Bed Dam, is in a deplorable state and that this adversely affects the lives of residents in the area?”

If the answer is in the affirmative, will the Minister say how early the residents can expect a reasonable maintenance from the taxes they have been paying for this purpose?"

The Presiding Member: Cde. Minister

The Minister of Economic Development and Co-operatives (Cde. Hoyte): Cde. Speaker, the Industry Seven Beds road which is the subject matter of the Question by the P.P.P. member, Cde. Harry Nokta, is situated within the Plaisance-Industry Local Authority. It is in an area which benefits from capital developmental works financed by the Sugar Industry Welfare Fund. Maintenance works are carried out and financed by the Local Authority. It follows, therefore, that the level of construction and maintenance works which can be carried out on the Industry Seven Beds Road depends upon the revenues available to the Sugar Labour Welfare Fund Committee and the Local Authority respectively.

Cde. Nokta has incautiously asserted that the residents of the Seven Beds road have been paying their rates and are therefore entitled to have the road maintained. If it were true that the residents have been fulfilling their civic and legal obligation by paying their rates, then they would have been justified in complaining about the state of the road and Cde. Nokta's implied strictures against the Local Authority would have been well grounded. Unfortunately, however, truth is not on the side of Cde. Nokta.

The facts are that as at 31st December, 1977, the total arrears of rates due owing and payable to the Local Authority were \$92,874.00. At the present time, \$67,000 of this amount is still outstanding. Total rates collectible for 1978 amounted to \$336,000.00. Arrears of rates for 1978 at the present time amount to about \$244,000. With respect to the Seven Beds area of which Cde. Nokta complains, rates collectible for 1978 amount to \$6,560.00. On the latest information, the Seven Beds residents have to date paid rates totalling only \$332.00.

Local Authorities can discharge their responsibility to provide services and development works only if ratepayers pay their rates. It does not like in the month of a ratepayer (or any self-appointed spokesman on his behalf) to complain of inadequate services or development if he has not fulfilled his duty to pay his rates. The residents of the Seven Beds area need urgently to put themselves in order.

As I have already remarked, any capital construction work on the Seven Beds Road would be financed by the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund. The financial resources of the Fund depend solely upon the export of sugar.

A cess of \$12.00 is levied on every ton of sugar exported, and paid into the Fund. Obviously, the higher the production, the higher will be the exports and the greater will be the financial resources available to the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund to provide improved facilities for sugar workers. In 1977, sugar production was low, exports were consequentially low and the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund's resources fell to a low level. All of these adverse consequences flowed directly from the political strike in the sugar industry, the wanton burning of sugar cane, other acts of sabotage, and the intimidation of sugar workers – all engineered by the political faction to which Cde. Nokta has the misfortune to belong. Hon. Members will also recall the frenzied efforts by the leaders of the faction to organise blockage against this country and prevent the export of even the low volume of sugar which was actually produced.

In 1977, the Fund projected an income of \$3.5 million. Its actual income was only \$2.5 million. It is clear therefore that disruptive activities in the sugar industry which result in low production and productivity have a direct adverse impact upon sugar workers by depriving them of wages, bonuses and other cash benefits; by depriving them of physical facilities and amenities such as improved roads, pure water supply, health services and housing; and generally by preventing any improvement in the quality of life and standard of living of sugar workers.

However, notwithstanding the constraints to which I have referred, the Party and Government take the view that the welfare of people is the paramount consideration. As a result, despite the low incidence of rate paying and the reduced income of the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund, substantial work has been done on the Seven Beds Road.

The Industry Seven Beds Road is comprised of four sections of a total length of 6,696 feet, as follows:-

Section A-B – (from Public Road to the Railway Embankment – 1,815)

Section B-C – (from Railway embankment to Industry (South) Housing Area – 1,076 feet)

Section C-D – (from entrance to Industry (South) Housing Area to the Sideline Trench – 870 feet)

Section D-E – (from Sideline Trench to the end of the road - 2,935 feet).

The Sugar Industry Welfare Fund Committee has so far completed Sections A-B, B-C, C-D of the road at total cost of \$195,018.61. In other words, of the total length of 6,696 feet, a length of 4,761 feet has already been constructed. The Fund has approved of the construction of the last section of the road. The Chief Engineer, Roads, Ministry of Works and Transport, has been asked to submit an estimate of the cost. As soon as this estimate has been received and accepted, construction will start.

In view of the fact that the last section of road is soon to be reconstructed, large expenditure for major maintenance activities would not be justified. However, the Local Authority will continue to carry out routine maintenance works on the section until it is reconstructed.

Cde. Nokta: Cde. Speaker, first, I wish to deny all allegations made by the hon. Minister about Opposition parties encouraging the sabotage and burning of cane.

Cde. Hoyte: That is not an allegation, that is a fact and that has been accepted by the I.L.O.

Cde. Nokta: Is the Minister aware that about three months ago representatives from the Industry/Plaisance Ratepayers and Tenants Association took a delegation to Cde. Seeram Prashad and the matter concerning the Industry Crown Dam was brought to his attention? Cde. Seeram Prashad has given the delegation the assurance that as soon weather permits, work will start on this dam and work will continue until the completion of this dam with an all-weather road. If the Minister is aware of the assurance, then could he tell us what is being done with regard to the all-weather dam, and is he prepared to tell this House if and when an all-weather dam will be prepared?

Cde. Hoyte: Cde. Speaker, it is obvious that what I have said has not quite been absorbed by Cde. Nokta. I have said first of all, that the responsibility for construction work is that of the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund. I pause because I would like him to understand that. If it takes a little time for it to sink in, I am prepared to give him the time to understand.

2.40 p.m.

No delegation to Cde. Seeram Prashad is relevant. Secondly, I have been talking about construction; I am talking about all-weather road; I am talking about construction work, not maintenance. What further assurance can I give other than what I have said, that out of 6,696 feet of road, the Sugar Industry Welfare Committee has taken a decision to construct the rest of the road. As soon as the Engineers of the Ministry of Works have given their estimates and the Committee has accepted those estimates, work will start on the rest of the road. I cannot put it in simpler language, Cde. Speaker, I regret.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Cde. Speaker, I have one short question. We accept the assurance of the Minister that the road will be completed by the Sugar Industry Welfare Fund but

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for the future guidance of members, I want to ask a question. If a delegation from an area represents a matter to a Regional Minister, a matter that is out of the jurisdiction of the Minister, or is a matter which he feels is irrelevant to his work, to use the Minister's words, should not the Minister say to the delegation, "Look, I cannot deal with the matter, it is a question for the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund? If a Minister sits and listens to a representation and gives an assurance, does that assurance have no meaning to the people who met that Minister?"

Cde. Hoyte: Cde. Speaker, Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud, I believe, has for years been a student of the law and understands something about the nature of evidence. All we have is an asseveration by Cde. Nokta that there was some delegation and Cde. Seeram Prashad gave some assurance. There is no evidence that Cde. Prashad gave any such assurance. Cde. Prashad has been in the Ministry of Regional Development as Parliamentary Secretary responsible for Local Government for a number of years and he has occupied that position with distinction. Nobody can allege that he is a wild person; that he is a person who does not understand what he is doing, and I refuse to accept that Cde. Seeram Prashad will give any assurance about matters over which he has no personal control. I do not accept the statement by Cde. Nokta. But I will say this, that if a Minister of this Government gives an assurance, that assurance will be carried out.

ADJOURNMENT

RESOLVED, "That this Assembly do now adjourn to Friday, 1st December, 1978, at 2 p.m." [**The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House**]

Adjourned accordingly at 2.45 p.m.
