

**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**

179th Sitting

2 p.m.

Monday, 19th March, 1979

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (63)

Speaker

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

Members of the Government – People’s National Congress (46)

Prime Minister (1)

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

(Absent)

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

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

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

*Cde. F.E. Hope, **(Absent)**
Minister of Finance

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

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

*Cde. V.R.Teekah,
Minister of Education, Social
Development and Culture

*Cde. R.E. Jackson
Minister of Foreign Affairs

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

Ministers (2)

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

Cde. C.A. Nascimento **(Absent – on leave)**
Minister, Office of the Prime Minister

Ministers of State (10)

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

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

***Non-elected Ministers**

Cde. K.B. Bancroft, J.P., **(Absent)**
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, Office of the
Prime Minister

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

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)

*Cde. F.U.A. Campbell,
Minister of State for Information,
Ministry of National Development

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

***Non-elected Ministers**

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

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

Other Members (15)

Cde. W.G. Carrington, C.C.H	
Cde. S.M. Field-Ridley	(Absent – on leave)
Cde. E.H.A Fowler	
Cde. J. Gill	
Cde. W. Hussain	(Absent)
Cde. K.M.E Jones	
Cde. J.G.Ramson	
Cde. P.A. Rayman	
Cde. A. Salim	(Absent – on leave)
Cde. E.M. Stoby, J.P	
Cde. S.H. Sukhu, M.S.	
Cde. C.A. Sukul, J.P.	
Cde. H.A. Taylor	
Cde. L.E. Willems	
Cde. M. Zaheeruddeen	(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)
-------------------------------------------	-----------------

Deputy Speaker (1)

Cde. Ram Karran,
Deputy Speaker

Other Members (12)

Cde. J. Jagan
Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud, J.P. Opposition Chief Whip
Cde. Narbada Persaud

Cde. C. Collymore
Cde. S.F. Mohamed
Cde. I. Basir
Cde. C. C. Belgrave
Cde. R. Ally
Cde. Dalchand, J.P
Cde. Dindayal
Cde. H. Nokta
Cde. P. Sukhai

(ii) Liberator Party (2)

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

OFFICERS

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

Acting Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly – A. Knight

PRAYERS**ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER****Leave to Members**

The Speaker: Leave has been granted to Cde. Nascimento for 19th to 26th March, and to Cde. Salim from 19th March for two weeks.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following Paper was laid:

Report of the Commission of Enquiry – Guyana Electricity Corporation. [**The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Development, on behalf of the Prime Minister**]

PUBLIC BUSINESS**MOTION****APPROVAL OF ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 1979****BUDGET DEBATE**

The Speaker: Cde. Janet Jagan.

Cde. J. Jagan: Mr. Speaker, on December 13, 1976, when Finance Minister Hope read the Budget Statement for 1977, he told us that “1976 was a bad year for production”. Then he also said on page 64 of the Budget Speech:

“This year the economy of Guyana is in temporary recession; but all the forecasts suggest that 1977 would see an improvement and 1978 given good weather could positively be prosperous. Therefore let us face a temporary difficulty with resolution in certain knowledge that a better period lies ahead.”

When he read the Budget Statement for 1978, Finance Minister Hope said “there was little growth in production and earning”. And, for the 1978 Budget, we had these promises: one, the

completion of the textile mill in early 1979, two, the bicycle plant, the leather tannery and the shoe factory to be completed and brought into production by early 1979.

In this year's Budget we are told that to achieve any measure of success the programme for 1979 has to be pursued with imagination and even ruthlessness and we are given eight points for recovery. The second point we were told about on page 41 was:

“... we must accelerate the completion of the new manufacturing enterprises that are now under construction – the textile mill, the glass factory, the bicycle factory, the leather, boot and shoes factories”.

Well, where are we? We had all these promises for 1977 and 1978. We have been promised all these factories and now again we are promised that sometime this year and I will say “perhaps”, we will get these factories. Perhaps, and I cannot understand why it was not included in the Budget Statement. What has happened to the bran oil plant that was imported from the German Democratic Republic some years ago? We were told that it was at a cost of \$8million. We are also informed that various components of the bran oil plant are scattered around in different parts of the country. Who knows? We do not know. Perhaps the Ministers will tell us why they have not mentioned in this year's Budget statement any prognosis of completion of factories. Why are all these factories taking so long to complete.

The **Daily Chronicle**, March 31, 1973, a long time ago, said “Guyana to start Bicycle Industry”. The Guyana Graphic, January 25, 1972: “\$1/4 million G.M.C Cannery at Ruimveldt”. **Daily Chronicle**, March 28, 1972: \$1 million Kaolin Plant by year end”. **Guyana Graphic**, May 4, 1972: “Guyana will get \$3 million Cement Kiln and Plant”. **Guyana Graphic**, April 7, 1972: “Erection of Textile Factory Soon”. All the high- sounding promises but what do we have? Nothing: Why is there no planning? Without scientific planning and capable persons to carry out plans, we have what we have in Guyana today, chaos, chaos and failures!

The last published Development Programme for 1972/1976 appeared in mid 1973 as a draft. What has happened to the final revised plan? Where is the plan for 1979? Is there a plan? In last year's Budget we were told about some plan but where are the plans? Who has seen them?

Certainly the nation has not seen them. We have no planned economy and this is one of the reasons for the persistent failures in production.

The Feed, Clothe and House the Nation drive ended in a dismal failure; we are still years away from self-sufficiency in food production. All we hear is “Produce more”. Why are we not having production of the necessities of life? Let us take one of the vital imports and an import that is using up a great deal of our foreign currency which the Ministers weep about so much. Let us take cooking oil which is constantly in short supply. Housewives have spent not hours but days and days seeking oil. Guyana has the possibilities, all the possibilities to produce what cooking oil it needs. But what is the reality? The Demerara Oil and Cake Mill worked for three and a half days during the whole month of November using only thirty-three tons of copra purchased in the Pomeroun.

I can remember years ago when I was a member of the P.P.P. Government, we did everything possible and succeeded in increasing coconut production. One of the areas that we concentrated on was the Pomeroun where copra production was going up, where farmers were given incentive bonuses to plant coconuts. But what is the situation today? The area had been beset by floods. The Government has given no assistance; prices are poor; there are no incentives to farmers. Maharaja Oil Mill at Cove and John and the Demerara Oil and Cake Mill Ltd. have a combined capacity for 60 tons of copra every twenty-four hours; 14,400 tons of copra are required to keep the two mills going five days a work at forty-eight weeks in the year. The average intake of copra for 1976 was 4,687 tons which is a deficit of 9,712 to keep full production of the mills that we have. The average crude oil recovered for 1976 was 703,125 gallons of refined oil and 646,875 gallons of deodorised. But the average consumption of 1976 was 1.4 million gallons of cooking oil. That means that 757,125 gallons of oil had to be imported. So, the production drive is obviously a failure.

We are importing products that we can produce here and I speak of two main products: oil and milk. We are expending large sums of foreign currency in purchasing both milk and oil. Now, bran oil is considered to be one of the most superior forms of cooking oil. When the

19.3.79

National Assembly

2.15 – 2.25 p.m.

People's Progressive Party was in office, we made all the arrangements for the purchase of a bran oil mill which at that time was costing \$900,000.

2.25 p.m.

I mentioned earlier that there has been a bran oil mill brought into Guyana. I cannot quote the correct number of years because I do not know, but I think it is well over five years that the machinery has been here. When the Coalition Government came into office they terminated the order for the bran mill and yet the People's Progressive Party was absolutely correct. Now that they have the need for the mill they do not have the capacity to implement it. We have the machinery, we have the material from our rice industry, we have skills, we have a constant shortage of oil and yet nothing is done. Food production has gone down for many reasons which I need not mention here and which one of my colleagues will deal with.

We were told that we would feed, clothe and house the nation. But are we housing the nation? We were promised 65,000 dwelling units during the 1972/1976 period. A bare 7,000 new units were built. But these units were not all built by the Government. Many of them were built by private individuals on their own initiative. In 1979 we are promised a paltry 500 houses. We have thousands of people living in the slums, in the city and in the rural areas, under the most unfavourable conditions. In 1976 this Government allocated \$13.3 million for housing but the actual amount spent was \$11.5 million. In 1977 \$4.4 million was allocated, of which only \$2.6 million was spent. Last year \$2.6 million was allocated and \$1.9 million was spent. This year we are supposed to spend \$3.2 million, but who knows how much will be spent? There is an allocation of \$3.2 million yet \$1.6 million alone is to be spent in the housing bureaucracy. We have a huge bureaucracy for housing, but there are no houses. This is the way the Government functions. It is shameless. The people would build houses if this Government had the intelligence to provide the house lots. Thousands of Guyanese can put up their own small houses if they are given assistance in securing housing lots. Instead this Government behaved shamelessly at Bath when people squatted because they had no where to live.

We cannot talk about clothing the nation because the textile mill has not been functioning. The price of clothing is out of the reach of the average person in Guyana. A pair of

shoes will cost between one and a half to two weeks' pay. A simple dress will cost a woman three to five days' pay. Children's shoes are \$32.00 per pair. A man would have to work two or three days to buy an ordinary shirt. A pair of pants would cost over a week's pay and a cooking pot would cost the family almost two weeks' earnings. A simple, ordinary frying pan costs \$18.75. One china plate is being sold at \$10.75 and \$12.50. I was in Guyana Stores this morning and I saw that one drinking glass cost \$2.25.

Let us deal with transportation. Many people pay a quarter of their salaries for transportation. I know many workers who pay more than a quarter of their salaries for transportation. Rent takes up varying amounts but in many cases it takes about 50 per cent of a family's salary. Then a family has to buy clothing and fuel, and this takes a large slice of what is left for food. With rising prices and shortages we are having the results of all these things and, as I mentioned before, food is becoming one of the most expensive items. I heard Dr. Reid say last week that children are not suffering from any unusual malnutrition. Now let me quote from a Government book. I am quoting from official Government figures to answer the Minister's claim that there is no malnutrition.

In 1974, grade one malnutrition – 40.5

In 1975, grade one malnutrition – 39.3

In 1976, grade one malnutrition – 39.3

In 1977, grade one malnutrition – 39.7

Look at the infant mortality rate. For one thousand live births, the figure has risen from 38.2 – **[Interruption]** Perhaps, Cde. Speaker, you can ask the members to be quiet.

The Speaker: You see, Cde. Jagan, when the members on your side heckle, the others do not ask for help.

Cde. J. Jagan: I venture to say that there will be unfortunately an anticipated increase because the level of poverty has been growing. Health and nutrition are inter-related problems. I wanted also to refer to the question of the number of doctors who are available in our country

19.3.79

National Assembly

2.25 – 2.35 p.m.

who should be assisting in the medical services. According to the 1977 population estimate based on 826,014, we had 1.3 doctors for every ten thousand inhabitants in this country and we had .13 dentists for every ten thousand inhabitants in Guyana. If my figure is correct, right now there are 41 vacancies for doctors. This means that medically we are not receiving the assistance we need.

2.35 p.m.

Right now, my information is that there is an epidemic of hepatitis. And already, a prominent cricketer had died from that disease. Hepatitis is a dreaded disease. It can cause death, it is an environmental disease, and it in particular comes from poor or contaminated water supplies. One of the major symptoms is jaundice. Our gastro enteritis death rate is fantastically high; it is 147.7 to 1,000 populations. We have not only a shortage of doctors, a shortage of food-poverty, malnutrition – we also have a drug shortage. Yet in Jonestown thousands and thousands of different types and quantities of drugs were allowed into the country. How is it? What kind of drugs were brought in? Our people are finding great difficulty in obtaining drugs. When they are patients in the hospital they are forced to go out and purchase them with their own money.

While on this subject, perhaps the Minister could tell us something about Dr. Lawrence Schacht. Was he a registered doctor? How was he allowed to practise freely in Jonestown? These are important questions I would like him to answer..

This year is the International Year of the Child. What are we doing to see that our children live? I have given statistics to show that things are not good enough. It is nothing to laugh about; it is something for us to take very seriously. We must see that children in the first year of their lives, which is the most difficult year of human being, survive that year. We must see that our children are not condemned to malnutrition and they are not condemned to spending their lives in the slums, that they are not condemned to unemployment, to the possibilities of delinquency, crime, begging.

All of us see children walking in the streets begging. All of us see children, who should be in school, who are working because their families need the additional support. It is for us to

see that in their childhood they are happy, that they are fruitful. This 1979 budget has given us very little hope that we would be able to achieve these things, that we would be able to ensure for our children that there will be full employment, that there will be an end to unhealthy conditions, an end to malnutrition, that our infant mortality rate will drop. I would like in closing, sir, to refer to the poem of Martin Carter who said:

“But whatever we are let us never forget to rap a tender hand upon the brow of the child. The longer we take to do so the longer divide”.

[Applause]

The Minister of Health, Housing and Labour (Cde. Green): Cde. Speaker, may I formally congratulate the Cde. Minister responsible for Economic Development on the Budget Speech he presented to this honourable House on the 12th March, 1979. It was done in the midst of difficulties not peculiar to the people of this country, the difficulties which face all developing countries and particularly in all circumstances where the Government and Party are serious about development and seeking long term solutions. When we are seeking solutions we cannot behave like the irresponsible parent who issues sweets and sweetmeats to the children neglecting their basic health and well being.

We have never on this side of the House attempted to fool the population of this country. We have attempted to analyse our own situation, analyse our history, our economic history, our social history and even our political history and to look at it against the background of our needs, our own aspirations. We have made the point very clearly time and time again against the background of our history, the difficulties facing this and other countries. The only answer to a real forward movement is a coming together of our people and our people must be prepared in the words of the Prime Minister when he first took office, to work hard. We have made many exhortations in the past because a lot of people have been persuaded by organisations and groups not to play their effective part in the production of our new society. In fact, Cde. Speaker, the budget attempts and suggests to this nation that perhaps it is a good thing that we face some of these difficulties. I have no doubt, Cde. Speaker, that if the people of this country accept the proposals of the Minister responsible for Economic Development, accept the formula, the

prescription given by Cde. Leader, that we have a future ahead of us in spite of the ranting of the political opposition. We will succeed.

Cde. Speaker, we had hoped to hear from the real leader of the Opposition a contribution dealing with the problems within the health sector and the other sectors of the society. But we listened to the usual, first of all using figures either through an attempt to fool or through ignorance; I am not sure which it is, Cde. Speaker, figures which do not reveal the facts of the matter, and I propose to give but one item which was dealt with in this House once before.

There are certain issues which are sensitive but the Opposition seems interested in using those issues. One is this question of malnutrition. Publicly, officers of the Ministry of Health have attempted to explain what is malnutrition, under-nutrition and even what some people term over-nutrition. We have attempted on this side of the House to try to explain to people that many of the foods available locally are of high nutritious value, but that people still succumb to their old prejudices and old beliefs so that malnutrition is not peculiar to Guyana, and even though malnutrition in most countries is directly related to the economic situation and poverty, malnutrition exists in every country of the world. Malnutrition exists in the richest countries. In fact, malnutrition exists even in families that are opulent and well-off in the developed world.

2.45 p.m.

We have analysed the question of malnutrition as a combination of our own history and an unwillingness on the part of some people to change, and on the other hand, perhaps our education programme has not reached to all the masses as we would like it to. The member who spoke before me referred to grade one and grade two malnutrition. Cde. Speaker, grade one and two malnutrition is technically a situation where the person is considered by the Gomes formula as not being properly nourished or not reacting effectively to the food that is being taken. In fact, Cde. Speaker, in the under-five age group, our grade two malnutrition status is 16 per cent, and 1.7 per cent in the grade one group which I think is good for a developing country like Guyana.

I do not wish to repeat but, go around this country, you no longer see the obvious indications of serious malnutrition, like people unable to work; you see children laughing and

19.3.79

National Assembly

2.45 – 2.55 p.m.

playing. These days you do not see what we call “white corner” and we would like the Opposition, since the members seem particularly interested in this question of malnutrition, to join the campaign to educate people in terms of the effective use of local food and to mix exercise, recreation and good foods so that they will be properly nourished. In fact, I am prepared to make available the skills at the disposal of the Ministry to help some of my friends on the opposite side because it is not a question of finance on their side; maybe they need proper advice so that they will be properly nourished. It is not a question of money in some cases, Cde. Speaker.

One other remark before I speak on the Budget again. The Member has two favourite themes. One is malnutrition and the other one is Jonestown. In some miraculous way they bring in Jonestown but we have announced that there will be an enquiry and one member behind me remarked that we should talk about “Jonestown Janet”.

Cde. Speaker, we accept the need that exists to reorganise and extend the health service in our country and we, last August, signed a loan contract which amounted to about G\$20 million and another for U.S. \$2.1 million to assist in reorganising and extending the services in the Ministry of Health. The loan itself will not automatically ensure the achievement of the various strategies proposed. Some of the proposals include training of para-medical staff; some of the proposals include attempting to increase and improve what is admittedly a shortage of top professional skills in the medical field.

But Cde. Speaker, some people seek to direct every single ill or deficiency in the society to the Government. This Government is not as a Government responsible for the fact that the world is short of medical practitioners and the fact that the physicians who exist tend to gravitate to the capitals where they can get monetary or a different type of satisfaction. The fact is that the demographic arrangement in our society adds to the difficulty in the field of health in particular. We have first the fact that about 47 per cent of our population is under the age of 15 years. Another fact that we need to take into account when we criticise the health services is that 93 per cent of our population lives on 2.4 per cent of our territory and the rest is scattered all over the country. Over a quarter of our people live in localities of less than 2,000 persons and if one can

imagine each of those localities or areas demanding a certain level of health services, one can understand the pressures that exist in the particular circumstances.

In addition, Cde. Speaker, a determined effort in the new plan is being made to swing around the emphasis of the health services. At the moment, the emphasis is curative. About 90 per cent of our health personnel are engaged in hospitals and on the curative side. We hope to completely reverse this so that the emphasis should put the majority of health workers in the preventive arena so that we accept the old adage that prevention is better than cure.

The Budget Speech referred to the effort to complete a phase of the housing programme this year. Last year I noted in this honourable House that we deliberately held back the housing programme because we thought at that particular time we should give priority to a number of other urgent matters which faced the country. As you are aware, the building industry in and outside of Government tends to react very sensitively to any movement in the economy of a country. We are no different and the fact is that last year when we experienced shortages in foreign exchange, the government had to place emphasis on the procurement of similar goods and a number of other items which the people needed. Therefore, the priority was not placed on housing last year. We however, as was announced in the Budget, propose to complete the 580 houses which are in some stage of construction at the moment and I found it very interesting that a party that did not build a dozen houses for the people could attempt to criticise us for proposing the completion of 580 houses. **[Interruption]**

The Speaker: Comrades, please let us proceed.

Cde. Green: Cde. Speaker, this year since we have had the opportunity to look at the question of housing very carefully, it is proposed to reorganise – and in fact we have almost completed the exercise – what is now termed the Ministry of Housing and we are introducing certain administrative reforms to provide for more effective planning and co-ordination in this important sector of Government.

2.55 p.m.

The Central Housing and Planning Authority will in future function as a separate authority and not as part of some Ministry. The Authority will operate as a separate entity with a national Board responsible for planning and co-ordinating the housing sector. Agencies such as the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund Committee, Guymine, will be subject to the direction of the Board. As far as housing and infrastructural activities of these agencies are concerned, the object is to bring about some uniformity in so far as the workers and the building of these houses are concerned. We propose, also to ensure that the co-operative sector in the Housing Ministry is effectively manned so that some of the difficulties which we faced over the past few years in this area have been particularly useful to us.

We have over the past few months – and again in the Budget Speech – been indicating the need for increased productivity as distinct from increased production. It is not fair for me to go over much of the ground covered by my colleagues, except to note that in the field of labour we are particularly concerned that some of the leaders in the labour movement have not yet responded effectively to call for increased productivity. In fact, some people feel that merely asking for an increase in the minimum wage is going to solve our problem. As Cde. Hoyte noted, we have had discussions with the Trades Union Congress on the general economic situation in our country and we recognised that there must be an effort over the next period to ensure that every worker puts his best foot forward, and we should agree, as a people, to deal quickly and effectively with persons and groups who do anything to interfere with effort for increased productivity.

In 1977, when the minimum wage agreement was signed between the Government and the T.U.C., we made it very clear that that agreement was an act of faith, in the words of the agreement with the Trades Union Congress and its affiliates. And I assure they meant that all their affiliates would do everything within their power to ensure that in all sections and areas of activity there is full production and also that there is increased productivity. We need to ensure that that commitment is a reality in 1979. I am confident from recent indications that even those groups which were led astray can no longer be easily led astray because people learn quickly in

this country. I believe that the majority of workers recognise today that increased productivity is the answer to the problems we face.

However, in an effort to make that a reality, we have proposed the scheme of incentives. Some groups assume that incentives will function in the way that there is some mass of money somewhere and that if they can put up plans which do satisfy the basic criteria of the incentive committee they still get additional sums. The idea behind incentive proposals is that money will be paid to workers as a result of increased productivity above the norm. We, therefore, need in every area of activity, by discussions and by agreement, to agree to the norm of productivity and production. We have seen in many areas the level of production slip so low that we would need to agree to the norm before we can discuss an effective incentive scheme.

The assumption behind the promise made by the Minister of Economic Development in the Budget Speech is that as a result of additional effort by workers, the cake would be enlarged, and consistent with the Government's policy, out of that larger effort, the workers will be able to share the rewards of their efforts. It has been made very clear, therefore, that the incentive scheme is intended, again like an act of faith and an undertaking, that if the workers produce more, that surplus will go to the very workers involved in the production of these surpluses. We hope that we will have the co-operation of all the unions and the workers in this exercise. Already, in some areas, things like Workers' Councils have been effective but, again, some people are being persuaded not to participate fully.

I visited an estate a few weeks ago and one man who had his instructions said "we do not want worker participation, we want worker control". We can play around with words, but this is a serious business. I asked the comrade, and I would ask the Opposition, when you talk of worker control, what do you mean, and then describe who is the worker. We have made it clear that in our context the manager is a worker, then you have management and non-management workers. Therefore, the officers in the Ministry of Labour are doing everything humanly possible to get worker participation and involvement at all levels in the production of goods and services to our people. We find that there is a lack of interest, in certain areas, among workers in the field, the factory and in the office. They feel they are not involved and therefore they do not care. One

can sympathise and understand this almost unjustifiable attitude. We would wish this year to accelerate the programme for greater worker involvement in industry, in commerce and in the administrative sectors.

3.05 p.m.

For the year we have attempted to introduce several bits of legislation in this house in an effort to correct some situations which we consider unsatisfactory for the working people. We have, for example, to refresh our memories, introduced several amendments under the existing Labour Act, amended the Wages Councils Act, corrected the difficulties which existed in the Holidays With Pay Act, and introduced a Bill which gives the Minister responsible for labour the authority to fix minimum wages in certain specific sectors of the economy. During the course of this year we propose to amend certain Orders and Regulations to improve the minimum wages and working conditions of workers who fall under various categories, cinema employees, hire car chauffeurs, rural cinema employees, because the law at the moment tends to separate the urban cinema employees from the rural cinema employees, shirt and garment workers, watchmen – **[Interruption]** laundry employees, employees in groceries, hardware stores, quarry workers, the Aerated Water Factories Wages Council Regulations and the Printing Trade Wages Council Regulations. All those things, Cde. Speaker, we propose to deal with within the next few weeks.

Cde. Speaker, the Budget is a challenge to the genius of the people of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana. In the area of labour we have discovered, now that the public sector has been enlarged, a difficulty with our existing recruitment, employment, and manpower procedures. We have already put in place the establishment of a central recruitment and manpower agency. It will be headed by a very senior officer seconded from Guymine. The intention of this agency is to liaise with the State Planning Commission, the Ministry of Education, all the training institutes so that we can have an effective manpower list or scheme or record and that using a computer system we would be able to virtually keep track of every employee in the Government sector initially.

We hope that this would help in effective placement from the time the person leaves school to the time he is ready to retire or is retired. We hope by the establishment of this agency

to be able to place people in places where they can better serve the society. It is clear, if one should look around at the system, that a merged army of people are really in places where they are least effective. We have a number of trained people who find themselves in certain service organisations where their skills are not effectively utilised. We have people, for example, who leave one agency because they are unsatisfactory on a particular job, move to another agency and that second agency is unaware of the difficulties they have faced in the previous agency. This central recruitment and manpower agency is intended to correct all those difficulties, and every single Government corporation, enterprise, business and Ministry will be brought under the general cover of this agency.

Cde. Speaker, the Budget referred to the rising prices of things imported. The Ministry of Health, Housing and Labour has not been idle on this question and using agencies like the Guyana Pharmaceutical Corporation we are attempting to regulate prices in some case. For example, we are alarmed at the cost of fitting spectacles to people in this country and the G.P.C. within days will be able to reduce by half the present cost to the population for the fitting of spectacles and similar matters.

We have produced over the past twelve months over \$1.5 million worth of drugs manufactured locally, and for this year it is planned that over a million dollars in new cosmetics will be produced locally. I do not think I need to talk about the introduction of the breakfast cereal, Family D'lite, which helped with the nutritional problem. In fact, it has surpassed all expectations and right now we are introducing a plant to cope with the demands of the society. In addition, we will be manufacturing bath soap, deodorants and insecticides, and moving towards a point where we can bring the cost of many of these things down to a manageable cost.

The price of drugs, Cde. Speaker, was referred to by the previous speaker. The price of drugs has been going up all over the world. We have introduced a new formulary arrangement to stabilise and regularise the use of drugs in our society. The majority of physicians have reacted favourably to the new formula but, of course, there are some political doctors who without any professional base have been spreading around bits and pieces of propaganda.

We are looking at the Government institutions where people still are misusing and abusing the facilities where we, as in the case of only a few countries, give drugs free of charge to in- and out- patients. And in fact if the abuse of prescriptions by the public and out- patients department continues the way it is, the Minister will have to take a very serious look at the question of the issue of drugs free to out-patients. People are not merely just going and acquiring drugs but if you go to some homes, you will see half-bottles of medicines that are expensive, which they got free, lying about unused. We will have to look very carefully at this problem because we cannot at this stage afford to give away expensive drugs and chemicals to people who do not appreciate the cost of these items.

Cde. Chairman, the year ahead of us, I repeat, is a challenge to every worker in Guyana. I however feel confident that if people recognise that the solution is for us to turn inwards and in every sector to make a determined effort to increase productivity that success is at hand.
[Applause]

3.15 p.m.

The Speaker: Cde. Bynoe.

The Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Trade and Consumer Protection (Cde. Bynoe): Cde. Speaker, permit me first to say how grateful I am to this Government to be given this opportunity to take part in the debate on the Budget presented in this House a few days ago. Before I make my contribution, permit me also to compliment the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Co-operatives, Cde. Desmond Hoyte and Cde. Frank Hope, together with other members of the team who have made it possible to present such a splendid report.

Cde. Speaker, the Budget which was tabled and which is being debated shows the respect this Government has for all the Members of this National Assembly and also for the nation. In fact, the presentation of this Budget reflects in no uncertain terms that this Government has no intention to fool anyone. This Budget may I say, also indicates the – perhaps I may use the word – precarious state of our economy together with the spiralling oil prices, poor prices for our

goods which are being exported on the world market and it also indicates that there has been no growth in the national economy of our production.

Now, having made my opening remarks, I want to take this opportunity to say that I am tempted to speak on consumer protection. Now I recall a few days or a few nights ago, Cde. Narbada Persaud said that all indirect subsidies have been taken away and the masses of the country are squeezed because of the removal of these subsidies. For the short period I have had the fortune of sitting in this House I recall members of the Opposition emphasising in no uncertain terms that the subsidies which the Government has placed on certain items should be removed or must be removed. [**An Opposition Comrade:** “When? When?”] I recall that rice was mentioned in this House and I recall also, Cde. Speaker, that in replying the Prime Minister, the Leader of this country, said that he has no intention or the Government has no intention of removing the subsidy from rice.

Unfortunately, the time came when the Government had no other alternative but to remove the subsidy from rice because of the fact that if not all, most of the rice farmers were recycling the rice. I know what used to happen. I do not have to come to this House to be told that. They used to plant the rice and then after reaping the rice, they would take it to the Board and sell it and then go back to the Board, purchase the rice again and sell it. That is the work they used to do. I speak because I am a rice farmer and I know that that used to happen in Berbice. Now, the Government had no alternative but to remove that subsidy because the Government could not allow that to continue. [**Interruption**]

The Speaker: Cde. Ram Karran, that is a backbencher speaking.

Cde. Bynoe: One of the members of the Opposition also mentioned – I think it was Cde. Basir – that some Minister visited some area and told the people in the area to use congo-pump and sweet-broom instead of cocoa, coffee and tea. I am surprised to hear that coming from someone who belongs to a rural area because in the rural areas, the people there use only coffee and tea on Sundays or holidays I am from the country area and I know that the people from the country want nothing else but these things to drink and look at me! [**Laughter**] I am quite sure and I can boast upon it, that I have as much energy if not more than some of the same people who

19.3.79

National Assembly

3.15 – 3.25 p.m.

say that congo-pump is not good and perhaps that very Minister forgot to suggest to those members to whom he was speaking that they can use other bushes as well, such as iron wed, because when you use those teas, they purify your body. I know that for a fact. I do not have to be told that. And perhaps, Cde. Basir should take this opportunity to encourage other members of his team to use bush tea. Take it from me, it is very good.

Cde. Janet Jagan mentioned housewives having problems when they try to obtain cooking oil and perhaps to get other basics commodities. Now, Cde. Speaker, we must see things as they are and I am one of the women who like to call a spade a spade even if it means my death. All of us are aware that there are people who have been making desperate attempts to take some of the stuff that we have in this country across the borders. I recall in this same House Cde. Nokta mentioned that goods were going across either the Brazilian border or Venezuelan border sometime last year. But we know and all the members of the Opposition know that there are unscrupulous people who are taking these things across the borders. I feel that these people are not concerned with people's welfare. I am positive that they were concerned they would not have removed things from the areas in which they should be servicing the people to take them to another country, thus causing this situation which we face.

3.25 p.m.

We also heard from the other side that because of the fact that some persons in the community want to embarrass this Government, they do all sorts of things; hoard goods in their shops, speak to consumers in a harsh way and when some of them get the goods they jack up the prices to such a height that consumers are even afraid to buy. I can speak for cloth. Polyester is being purchased for \$2 per yard. There is another person who will buy and then a third person comes in. After that the price is jacked up. So in the store polyester is being sold for about \$9 or \$10 per yard. We are making desperate efforts in the Ministry of Trade and Consumer Protection to rule that out.

This situation also applies to wares, where they are purchased at one price and about 100 per cent increase is put on. In some cases we have found out that the increase is about 125 per cent, thus posing problems to the consumers. I have no doubt in my mind that there are

deliberate acts, regardless of who the persons are. I want to take this opportunity to say that the Ministry will no longer tolerate such people. We will endeavour to ensure that, whoever the person may be, that person will have to go out of business.

A comrade just mentioned Gimpex. I do not know anything about Gimpex because I am not from Georgetown. I know about the branch in Berbice. It has been closed for a long time now. A comrade from the other side said that co-ops making a desperate attempt to involve people from the communities. The people themselves are very enthusiastic because they have come to the full realisation that that is the only way they can be serviced properly. As members of co-ops, they get goods at controlled prices and they are given what they need.

I think it is an act of dishonesty for some people to say that this Government is trying to put private persons out of business. I think something was mentioned in the Budget Speech about private enterprise. I think it relates to importation and I would like to quote from page 53, the second paragraph. It states:

“Imports therefore will continue to be subject to a measure of restraint this year; but the budget provides for adequate volumes of food, drugs and fuel”.

I still want to know how persons can come to the conclusion that this Government is trying to run private people out of business. What this Government is saying is that any private businessman or person who does not intend to toe the line, regardless of what, will be penalised. We know what use to happen with the importation. When you submitted a licence for perhaps \$10,000 and you bring in about \$7,000 of goods, no account is given for the \$3,000. That is why the Government had to tighten up on certain things. I think all members of the Opposition are aware of this. I feel it is really an act of dishonesty to say that this Government does not want to entertain private people. **[Interruption]** I think when one comes to this House to make queries, I think one should query something with some merit. But for a member of the Opposition to ask me about King and Haynes – I am not King and I am not Haynes. I am Bynoe and I would hope that if they wanted to query anything they should ask me something that is relevant.

Cde. Speaker, I would like you to permit me to say something about the distribution of basic commodities. The Ministry of Trade has embarked on a system whereby we are

decentralising distribution. So you will find that a businessman in Georgetown who used to obtain large amounts of basic commodities will no longer obtain those large amounts because of decentralisation. It is my firm conviction that a farmer in the Essequibo area or in any riverain area, has no right to come to Georgetown to purchase his goods. He must be able to get it where he lives. He will not lose any time to travel and all the rest of it. As such, a few co-ops are to be set up. We are not setting up those co-ops, the people themselves have said that they want to form themselves into co-operatives.

In Leguan, there is a co-op being set up and it is already receiving foodstuff to service the entire area. In Wakenaam, even though there is no co-op there, we have taken the opportunity to ensure that the wholesale distributor gets enough goods to service the shops in that area. I challenge anyone from the Opposition to say that that is not true. I have a personal interest in the area because I visited that area and I know the people's needs. The Ministry is satisfied that that is an area which needs attention. And for all areas that I have been able to visit, I make it my duty to recommend to the Ministry as I see it fit that some more attention should be paid to those areas.

3.35 p.m.

Cde. Speaker, one of the comrades mentioned earlier that Rome was not built in a day and it was good for my friend – I will call him my friend because we are friends – to say that the Government has not been doing this and the Government has not been doing that. I know a few years back – I do not know which Government was in the office, maybe, the P.P.P. – we wanted a school in our area and do you know what they told us, Cde. Speaker? They said that we had to look for two acres of land because they knew that there was nowhere around in that area where we could have got two acres of land to put a school unless we went right down 1,000 rods to get to where the rice lands are. And so, we did not get that school in spite of many representations made. It was not until this Government came into office that we were able to get that school in that village. And we must say things as they are. I can talk about it because I was involved in it. My mother was the headmistress there. And we had terrible problems to get them to assist us there. There are many things, but I do not wish to steal the thought from other Ministers, that I

can confront the Opposition with because I make it my duty, it is part and parcel of me to visit areas, and that was even before I came to Parliament.

The Ministry of Trade is leaving no stone unturned to take food to the people. But what is happening is that some people want to have more than what they need. This Government cannot afford to give people what they want; we can only afford to give people what they need. And as such I want to close by saying that any sensible person, any loyal Guyanese will realise fully the facts given in their truest terms with respect to the Budget which was presented here. In the budget itself mention is made where we fell through, what we anticipated, where anticipation split and what we anticipate should take place again. And I feel it behoves every Member of this House to join hands together if we really would like Guyana to improve its standards at all the levels where people are concerned so that together we can be assured that Guyana will achieve.

I support this Budget fully and I know that all loyal Guyanese will support it. I know also that many felt that there would have been an increase in price of perhaps some of the commodities, the basic commodities, and perhaps some felt that there would have been a decrease in something else. I know also that all of us are aware of the fuel crisis, and that is a world crisis not a Guyana crisis. We read about it, we hear about it and we know about it. I think those who have travelled extensively should know more than I do and I urge them to join with us and let us make Guyana the type of country it should be regardless of who are vagabonds. Each of us I think, in one way or the other, is a vagabond. I do not think that there is any one of us who is pure because I think that all of us are sinful, so then why talk about vagabonds. Let us try and work together and see how best we can build this nation of Guyana.

Once again, Cde. Speaker, I want to say how happy I feel to be given this opportunity just to set the record straight with respect to consumer protection where basic commodities are concerned and to urge members of the Opposition to assist us; they are all Guyanese. I want to ask them, I urge them again to join with us regardless of who is a Guyanese or not. You live in Guyana and you are in this House and once you are in this House you must support whatever takes place in this House. I want to thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak on behalf of consumer protection. **[Applause]**

The Speaker: Cde. Collymore.

Cde. Collymore: Cde. Speaker, we have listened for some days now to our good friends on the opposite side talking about the achievements in the Budget Speech 1979. Cde. Speaker, some of the Ministers, for instance, Cde. Hope and Cde. Hoyte, said that the Budget is quite frank, but as usual, in relation to previous budgets, it is also backless. When they said it is frank, they acknowledged that there are several acknowledgements in the Budget of non-achievement. Well, it is not really often that our friends on the opposite side acknowledge that they have not achieved. But the budget is totally negative though, of course, there are other areas where they could have been equally frank.

Cde. Speaker, the first task, where the gate was opened for the Opposition to help, was dealt with when my good friend Cde. Narbada Persaud, who is a financial wizard, spoke. After he had spoken, Cde. Hope got up and he made the usual speeches and noises about there being nothing wrong with borrowing. Cde. Speaker, he was trying to give the impression that we must continue to borrow and borrow, as Cde. Ramsahoye said, and he is not there any longer. We must maximise our borrowing. This is the same message that the Minister of Finance was trying to convey. But when we look at the Budget, when we analyse the Budget, we see that something sinister is going on. Or if you are watching this thing, it is too heavy but something definitely wrong is going on that is one of the reasons why the economy, cannot generate enough surpluses to finance deficits. The deficits are growing bigger and bigger and bigger in comparison with the total budget. But this is the point my friend was irked about because the Minister was hoping to create the opposite impression that the economy is sound as it is, so continue to borrow.

Cde. Speaker, the overseas institutions will lend money because of economic priorities and even if a country is no longer able to generate surpluses for political motivations those people will still lend money. And we are contending and submitting here today that this Government is receiving large sums primarily because of political priorities and not because the economy can generate surpluses to pay debts. We are digging big holes to fill holes.

3.45 p.m.

What have we discerned from this Budget? For this year we are going to have expenditure tailored at \$868.6 million. But what have we discovered? We have discovered that the actual deficit is much more than the \$174.7 million which the Minister intimated in his Budget statement. We see that the actual revenues which Government will get from taxes and rates and excluding overseas loans, will come up to \$402.2 million. Cde. Speaker, we have a Budget of \$868.6 million; revenues are only \$402.2 million. It seems that nearly half of the Budget, 50 per cent is being financed from overseas, in the forms of loans, credits and alms. We are begging alms.

We see here that the Government is asking for external grants to the tune of \$14.7 million. Are we a nation of beggars? The economy is not functioning properly and the people at large, the masses, are forced to beg and the Government itself, the administration, is begging.

Cde. Speaker, what about Budget 1978? The revised estimates showed \$632.7 million as the budget but the real deficit of the Budget was \$267.4 million, 42.2 per cent. This sum had to be financed from borrowing and alms. In 1977, the budget was \$567.3 million and the deficit was \$211.1 million or 37.2 per cent. Where are we going? This is the reason why the country cannot generate surpluses and that is the reason why we are telling the Government how to do it and in the course of my address, I will undertake to explain exactly how we envisage this type of economics being a thing of the past.

Now, we listened to the Budget statement and we have not heard a single thing about national defence or national security. How can you have proper production and productivity when you do not take into consideration national defence, territorial defence and territorial security? That is why we got Jonestown because nobody is looking; nobody is intimating what is going on. If my good friend the Minister of Home Affairs was responsible for Jonestown, his seat would have been vacant. But a man bigger than he is responsible so nothing is being done. I do not apologise for the Minister. If he was responsible for Jonestown, he would have been dismissed. **[Interruption]**

The Speaker: Comrades, you see when this cross-talk takes place and the members answers, what happens? Would you expect me to stop him?

Cde. Collymore: Thank you very much, Cde. Speaker, I will now continue in comparative silence. We notice that there is nothing said about national security and national defence but when we look at the estimates we see that considerable sums of money are voted once again for the military establishment and it appears to us that the military establishment is the holiest of holies because nothing is being done there but the pruning knife will exercise in the other areas, particularly on social services.

Now what about our national security? We have to look into it in the context of international and national affairs. A few days ago there was an upheaval in the Caribbean and one of the very good friends of our friends on the opposite side was thrown out of office by armed forces. What happened? A revolutionary Government has taken power and we all know that this Government enjoys the support of the vast majority of the people in Grenada but there we find nothing happening. They are talking and talking all the time. Our good friend Cde. Jackson was here a while ago and he left. He went to a meeting in Barbados and they sat there in the Hilton Hotel, posh surroundings and they gaffed. We are calling for the immediate recognition of the Bishop Government: [Applause.] Now, why does the Government not want to recognise the Bishop Government? Are they waiting on the Americans to set the pace? We are supposed to be progressive. If we are a progressive Government, what are we waiting for?

Here is what a bird said. Lester Bird of St. John's, Antigua who was commenting on the need to have this emergency conference in Barbados said in his letter:

“The events in Grenada yesterday, March 13, 1979 pose new and serious problems for CARICOM as an institution. The seating of a Government which attains office by *coup d'etat* should require unanimous decision of all member Governments”.

This is impossible! Within the context of the Caribbean today, you would never get unanimity when it concerns recognising a Government like the Bishop regime. Now we will see where our friends sit. I will now quote from the communiqué which my good friend Cde. Jackson also perhaps put his signature to:

“Ministers noted that these recent events had led to an overthrow of the Government of Grenada and that this was contrary to the traditional method of changing Governments in the region”.

Note that particular phrase “Contrary to the traditional method of changing Governments in the region”. Gairy and chaps like the Shah of Iran could not have been removed by marking “X” on any piece of paper and Cde. Speaker, the same situation obtains in Guyana today!

I was telling you about our defence. If we have a low profile defence, the nation will have much more money to use on social services but we are spending a lot of money on arms. We have three borders and on each of these three borders, we have problems. Why? Three borders, three problems! We have all our neighbours militarising and instead of having a more dynamic foreign policy geared to reducing the national defence expenditure – I do not know what the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is doing. We should diffuse these situations.

Here I have an official document from Suriname, “News in Brief”, and it states that the Suriname Prime Minister wants to have a summit conference with Mr. Burnham but no summit conference is coming out. Why? And the crux of the question is a plan by our friends on the other side to bridge the Corentyne River and to deal also with the New River Triangle. Minister Jack was there recently and accordingly to what Henk Arron said:

“Minister Mr. Hubert Jack was fully empowered by Mr. Burnham to carry on the fishery negotiations and we have agreed that Mr. Burnham and I are to meet in Barbados or St. Lucia in the early part of January”.

This never took place. One would have thought that if you are interested in reducing military expenditure and de-militarising the society, you would have jumped at the chance to have a summit conference. Nobody is going; nobody is interested.

We thought it would be better to hold the discussion on neutral territory; in that case, no one needs to suffer and loss of face. The starting point of discussions will of course be that we shall demand compliance with and observance of the Treaty of Chaguramas. If Mr. Burnham is prepared to do this, then we can discuss other matters, but if he is reluctant to comply with our demands we shall have to seek a solution for the border conflict internationally.

Well, we can read what we want to read in these remarks. We say that not much is being done by our side to diffuse these international border situations.

3.55 p.m.

Cde. Speaker, we are therefore urging a consultative committee to be set up in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I have said before that our foreign policy is the very first line, our front line, of national defence and also the front line of our economic solvency. What do we have also operating against our national security? We had a state within a state – Jim Jones and his regime. We have asked questions in this House. I personally have submitted questions to this House and these questions have not been answered. We are, therefore, perturbed over situations like these because at Jonestown we had enough ammunition to start a civil war and we have seen what mercenaries can do.

We are saying that our military establishment is too costly and we take note also of a very recent event when a ship arrived in Guyana with more weapons. They are buying more guns than food. Against whom are you going to fight, Suriname, Venezuela? That is why we are calling for a more realistic policy from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. People are hungry. We take into consideration the G.N.S., the G.P.M., and the G.D.F., and also internal security which was once a substantial item. The money voted for these institutions is too much and the institutions should be scaled down. Nobody is listening to us. When we ask relevant questions when the Estimates are being dealt with, the appropriate Minister declines to answer, so we are asking, where the Guyana People's Militia is concerned, that this body be demilitarised. We want more people's involvement, more district community involvement and this is going to mean that military costs will be lower because people will be directly involved. We acknowledge that the G.P.M. could serve as a recruitment source for the professional army, which is the Guyana Defence Force, and we have no quarrel with that, but we are calling for it to be demilitarised.

What about the G.N.S.? Many times we talk about the G.N.S., saying that we cannot afford the expenditure. We have said over and over again that it is like a Cadillac when the economy is like a bicycle. How can a Cadillac be supported on a bicycle. We are calling for the

demilitarisation of the Guyana National Service. Only yesterday we read that the Director General said that the institution is not performing and they are trying to improve. If they had read what the Director General said they would see what I mean. Demilitarising it would be a step in the right direction. We want the training centres in the hinterland to be closed down. The Minister in his Budget Speech said that some things are temporary. This can be temporary measure by scaling down this institution. They are still buying guns; there was a big ship load of heavy guns. They are spending money lavishly on the G.N.S. and the army.

Between 1974 and 1979, our good friends on the opposite said spent an average of \$16.2 million per year on the G.N.S. and now they are telling the workers they cannot afford to pay the \$14 a day minimum wage. We have said over and over again that this institution is largely military because when we analyse the G.N.S. budget, we see that the bulk of its expenditure is put towards the military aspect. For instance, the bureaucracy in the G.N.S. in 1977 took 45.5 per cent of the Budget while in 1978 it rose to 68.1 per cent. In 1977, 5.4 per cent of the whole G.N.S. Budget, or \$800,000, was spent on agriculture. In 1978 it was 5 per cent or \$400,000. Therefore, we can see when we compare the two that the G.N.S. is a military institution. This is why we are calling for it to be scaled down. Guns will not solve the problems we have.

What about the police, crime and social security? We are engulfed in a crime problem. We have the police straining as they cope with crime. They are doing a job and it appears as though much needs to be done for them to be able to cope. What do we have? We have rackets and corruption in high places. I would urge our good friends on the opposite side to commence a probe of the Guyana Rice Board. It is long overdue and they should start investigating the corruption going on there. We are having armed robberies. Every two or three days we can hear of choke and rob incidents, burglaries, cattle rustling, and nothing is being done to solve these problems.

We hear of people taking narcotics. This is very serious and we should do something about it. Marijuana, which is a comparatively soft narcotic, is going to be followed by other drugs. We have narcotics being smuggled and, of course, there are other offences of smuggling. My good friend Cde. Bynoe spoke about smuggling which is going on. In view of severe

19.3.79

National Assembly

3.55 – 4.05 p.m.

shortage of some commodities, there is intense smuggling taking place across Guyana's frontiers. You know what will happen, and it has happened, that the goods which are coming from beyond the frontiers are being sold and the price control squad is high on the heels of these goods. It means, therefore, that the goods which are not in the shops are smuggled goods. This is what is taking place.

4.05 p.m.

Then there are increasing cases and allegations of police collusion with gangsters. We have zones of fear. There are contained areas in Guyana where people cannot go because these areas are dominated by or infected with bandits. There was a payroll theft at the Ministry of Housing; \$92,000 disappeared. I have not seen any report that this money has been recovered. This is an insult to the Minister. I am in sympathy with him.

In the estimates there is a part which says, safety precaution and revenue protection. Are we protecting our revenue, because it is not the first case where a payroll has been stolen from a State Institution? When there are impersonations of police and price control detectives, these are things which have to be nipped in the bud. Crime intelligence. We are also wondering if we are getting our money's worth from Interpol. We are paying a lot of money to an international police organisation and there are things like smuggling and narcotics. We are supposed to be on top by now. Instead, we seem to be going down to the bottom. Then political crimes are being committed but there is no justice.

During the Referendum campaign, many offences took place in which our good friends on the opposite side and their cohorts at the street corners were involved but, we have seen nothing being brought here, no answers and no and no punishment of those persons who committed those political crimes, like beating people, seizing camera and so on, overturning vehicles. Questions tabled in this House have been ignored by the Ministers, taking into consideration, Cde. Speaker, that you have said that you have nothing to do with putting the questions on the Order Paper. Why are they not answering the questions? No crime report since 1974. Since 1974 we don't know what is going on. We have bits and pieces but we want a total

picture of what is happening since 1974. I said before, and you know, most of all, the Police Commissioner must resign if he cannot hand in a report.

Torturing people: Cde. Speaker, how far should police go in dealing with interrogation? I do not think they should go as far as to apply a hot electric iron to the buttocks of arrested persons. They plug in the electric iron, heat it up and it gets red hot, and they apply it to the buttocks of suspects. Is this the way they interrogate? In every one hundred cases, they are going to get a confession. That confession would be worthless. We have a case, and this case is going to go far, where four youths, two of them are Amerindians, were maltreated by the police at Mabaruma Police Station. They were interrogated following a report of stealing yams and they were branded with a hot electric iron on their buttocks. Do you want me to produce the boys? I can produce the boys and you are going to see. And now they are supposed to go and answer a case.

Cde. Speaker, we notice that the economic situation is getting bad and the police are indeed engulfed in tackling crime within their limited ability. There are many factors which militate against the crime-tackling ability of the police force; many factors, like lack of vehicles, which we will deal with at another stage. But we have to point out this now in the debate, that as long as the economic situation deteriorates, there will be an increase in crime and juvenile delinquency. Look at the paper of today, **The Citizens**; it says that the police were used to round up about three score youngsters from the street corners cinemas, and so on, because they were playing truant.

You must realise that there are concrete reasons why some children cannot go to school. Many of them are needed by their parents to earn more money so that they can balance the family budget, so they have to hawk goods, they are employed in vending. Many of them are working. We have many child workers in this country and many of them sell newspapers at all hours of the night. I do not know if they sleep. Poor people, I am very sorry for them, so we have to take this into consideration that as long as the economic situation deteriorates, we are going to have more of this and the police will be called more and more to tackle a situation with which they are impotent to deal. We will be faced with the task of increasing the police ranks,

increasing the establishment of the police force. Right now we have 3,754 policemen. We may have to go to 4,000 soon or 5,000 if our friends remain in office. And that is a question mark of heavy degree.

Cde, Speaker, last year the police budget was \$21 million, this year we are going to give them \$3 million more so we are going to take on more policemen. Is this the way to deal with it? We do not think that this is the solution to the economic crisis, rather, we feel that there should be an improved crime-fighting technique and an improvement in the economic situation.

Now, Cde. Speaker, what about registration? Our friends on the opposite side are prepared to rig the new elections. They have started already. From the very beginning of 1968 they said that the registration helps them to deal with the voters' lists because it is hard, and on this occasion they are working with that supposition, not experience. Today is the 19th, many areas have so far, not been registered. They have not even seen a registrar – many areas in all three counties. Only on the coast there is a very high degree of registration but in the other areas where many people live there is nothing going on, and even where there is one, the registration is a farce. Many people are still off the list. They have not been registered and they do not know when they are going to see another registrar.

We are not very concerned about this partial, partisan registration and we are asking that a total registration of all Guyanese be effected and if possible the deadline be extended because the deadline is the 31st March and when the deadline is reached, we know that many thousands of Guyanese will be off the list. And for those thousands of Guyanese who will be put off there will be other thousands who will exercise their votes by proxies and postal voting, like the jumbies in the burial ground, etc. This Parliament is being treated with supreme contempt. We had Motions on Notice Papers saying that we should discuss the question of overseas voting, the place of poll, etc. Cde. Speaker, what has been the case? We find that our friends actually ignored this honourable House. They have done like Indira Ghandi, ignored this House.

It is contempt and they have gone ahead to once again proceed within registering of overseas Guyanese. We want to know why it is, if the Government wants to go ahead with this, they cannot air the question? Why can't they table the Motion and discuss and say, "Look, we

19.3.79

National Assembly

4.05 – 4.15 p.m.

are going to vote against it and we are going to proceed". Why can't they do it? This is contempt of this House. It is because it is a rubber stamp. Gairy used to do worse than that and where is Gairy now? Who is next? That is what the posters are asking, that is the question. I am not in power, I cannot be next. They are proceeding with overseas registration in contempt of this honourable House.

And we notice that they are talking about elections, national elections, regional elections, local government elections. For this year, a vote of \$1 has been put so they are not going ahead with that for local government elections. A vote of a large sum has been allocated for registration and elections. We do not know what kind of elections, but, Cde. Speaker, if the Government is indeed going to hold elections in 1979, how are these elections going to be held? What would be the framework? What kind? They are talking about having regional elections. Where are the demarcations of the Regions. We do not have anything of the sort up to this point. And we do not know if they are going to spring something like a thunderbolt on the people of Guyana.

4.15 p.m.

Then we have the farce known as the Constituent Assembly on which many of our friends on the opposite side are represented. Cde. Speaker, we say that this Constituent Assembly is immoral and rather than proceed with this thing, the Government should have free and fair elections – we never had free and fair elections – before we proceed with drafting a Constitution. We must also at this point express our condemnation of the way in which the Government is proceeding in order to get memoranda for this Constituent Assembly. It is splintering organisations, attacking church bodies and pressure groups and dividing them to get representations. This is very bad and we would urge the Government to re-think its methods of proceeding with the Constituent Assembly and its deliberations.

Cde. Speaker, how about National Unity? Much has been said in this August Chamber about National Unity. Nearly everybody who gets up in this Chamber, particularly from the Opposition side, has issued a call for National Unity. This is a clarion call at every Budget time but we do not see anything being done. We do not have the power; the initiative is on the other

side. We have called for a national front Government and a National Patriotic Front. What is the Government doing about it? On three occasions their leader, the hon. Prime Minister, said “No”. Cde. Speaker, we want a National Patriotic Front because we are convinced that this National Patriotic Front and Government will go a far way towards solving the economic and political problems in this country. We make no apology for saying it; we will state here, that as long as our friends do not want it, this country will have nowhere to go; we will be marking time and as the Minister said in his Budget statement, we will be having continuous and consecutive negative growth, always. We are going to have that.

Now to quote the Minister when he was speaking in the same vein of a national unity concept on the Page 3 of the Budget Speech. This was quoted by about two other persons but it is very salient and it is very important, perhaps one of the most important aspects of the Budget statement:

“. . . the Guyanese people no longer accept the passive role of merely filling a crowd scene in the drama of national life: they demand the right to be fully involved, as active participants and protagonists, at all stages and in all aspects of the process of national development”.

Cde. Speaker, are the Guyanese people being involved? When you rig elections you are not involving the people. There must be a reason why the people are not working, are not producing. Has the Government found out the reason why they are not producing? Has the Government found out the reason in cases where there is no productivity, zero productivity? Ask the people why. **[Interruption]** Yes, and that is why I am telling you that as a Marxist, production is connected to political involvement. As long as you deny the people political power or involvement in the political process, you will not get production. That is dialectics; it is as simple as that. The facts are there because this Budget is a budget of failures: zero growth. And zero growth was evident since 1975, not from 1978. We had four years of zero growth.

Now what did the Minister further say on Page 28?

“A major policy cornerstone continues to be the consolidation of national unity as the only sure basis for the nation’s pervasive well-being and continuous development”.

I agree with this statement 100 percent. But how are we going to implement it? By rigged elections, overseas voting? People overseas do not pay taxes; they do not have to face shortages; they are not in the black-outs. We are saying that these are very good precepts but the practice is non-existent and as long as this happens we will not move anywhere forward.

The Minister goes on the page 56. What does he say? Insulting the Guyanese people and their leaders! We, on this side are sincere in our proposals for a national front and we are undertaking to assure the Government that if this is done, we will do the best we can to have increased production and productivity. But the Minister goes on to insult those people on the opposite side who are sincere in giving advice. What does he say?

“In circumstances like these, there are always wiseacres and aspirants to political office who will spend their time regalling the public with idle recriminations; always quidnuncs who will be offering nostrums; and always some honest, well-meaning citizens who may naively believe . . .”

Now this part of the Minister’s statement is an insult to the Guyanese opposition that really wants this country to move forward. But then he goes on to insult an overseas power. He does not have the courage to name the overseas power but we know whom he is talking about when he said in the same paragraph:

“and always some honest, well-meaning citizens who may naively believe that there exists somewhere, external to our own efforts, a peanacea for our economic difficulties. But, most dangerous of all, are those who will peddle the subversive doctrine . . .”

Just listen to this! You are a Marxist, listen to what the Minister of Economic Development is saying:

“. . . But, most dangerous of all, are those who will peddle the subversive doctrine that the real solution lies in our allowing ourselves to be re-colonised *de facto* by some rich, powerful and allegedly sympathetic country”.

Who was he talking about? We do not have to be diplomats to know that he is talking about the U.S.S.R., the Soviet Union, he cannot be speaking about America because America – every week, multi-millions are coming in to prop those chaps up. So he has to insult the Soviet Union but he has not got the courage to put the name here.

Cde. Speaker, what do we find? We find that when we make honest suggestions they are not being listened to. Nobody pays any attention and people or forces overseas who can help this country come out of its mire are being insulted also in the official Budget Statement of the Government. So we do not see any early relief for the Guyanese people.

Cde. Speaker, just one final point before I close: Page 40, what does the Minister say? He is talking about recovery. Of course we have to recover but whether we can recover under our good friends is an academic question. What is he saying?

“To achieve any measure of success, the programme for 1979 and onwards has to be pursued with imagination, vigour, and even ruthlessness on general broad fronts”.

These are a lot of threats to the working people of this country. Ruthlessness. It means that this is in keeping with its orientation, anti-working class. If we are to proceed with economic solvency we have to deal ruthlessly with the working people or the producers of wealth in this country. That is what it states!

Haslyn Parris who is an executive of the People’s National Congress was quoted in the GUYMINE NEWS shortly before the strike as saying that there has to be ruthless recovery. It is not surprising therefore that the Minister has come with this same quotation that there has to be ruthlessness in the recovery on the economic scene. A few days after Haslyn Parris spoke, he was greeted with a general strike in the bauxite industry.

4.25 p.m.

Cde. Speaker, we are saying that this country will only progress when the people have a Government which is responsive to their needs and aspirations and when the people in Guyana have the right to have their votes respected, when they have the right to put in an administration of their own choice and when they have the right to decide their own destiny and the direction in which they want to travel. As long as these things do not transpire, we will have nowhere to go. We will also be looking at one another and marking time in 1980.

The Speaker: Cde. Corbin.

The Minister of State, Ministry of National Development (Cde. Corbin): Cde. Speaker, on Monday, 12th March last, the Minister of Economic Development presented a very frank document to this House which explained in a very detailed and emphatical manner the problems facing the economy, at the same time not only outlining those problems but pointing out quite clearly the way we should recover as a country and proceed steadfastly on the road to socialism in this country.

Quite shockingly and surprisingly, one listened in vain to this debate and the contribution on the other side of the House, hoping that these discussions or this debate would have taken place within the context of the direction in which Guyana is moving. Of course, we had hoped that this discussion would have given an opportunity to the P.P.P. to acknowledge as a fact, as they have done from time to time, that the P.N.C. Government is continuing resolutely, notwithstanding the obstacles in its way, to move this country closer towards its socialist objectives. Unfortunately, we saw a lot of red herrings drawn in the way and a failure of the contribution on the other side of the House to really identify the particular policies which are carrying this country forward towards socialism. Indeed, what the Opposition cannot say which I admit they have not said, is that from the inception and from the overall programme of the People's National Congress, there can be no doubt that this party is committed to socialism and is bent on carrying this country forward. There can be no doubt that the record of this Party in Government is evidence of this direction. There can be no doubt that this country has been moved from a colonial state of independence, has positively started on the road towards control of the national economy, controlling the commanding heights of this economy. There can be no doubt that this Government has begun the production. There can be no doubt that this Government has begun to use its surpluses of that production among the people and to provide equal opportunities in many areas. There can be no doubt that we have begun to remove the basis of class divisions and are working towards the building of an egalitarian society under the People's National Congress Government.

If one must determine in which direction this country is moving, one should not draw little references and throw red herrings in the way. One has to look at the fundamental changes

which this economy has undertaken to really assess whether this country is moving in the socialist direction under the direction of the People's National Congress.

There have been problems as we attempted to move this country forward. Unfortunately, we find that members of the Opposition speaking in this House envisaged this country moving forward and development taking place without any sacrifices or without the Government and the Party facing any peculiar problems. One is very surprised that "Marxists" express surprise at the type of problems we are having in Guyana. For example, with respect to the labour movement, with respect to problems in increasing production and productivity, one is rather surprised that "Marxists" are not recognising the necessary changes which must take place if one is attempting to move a society from capitalism to socialism. But we would have to come to the conclusion that either there is lack of knowledge about this revolution and about socialism which the Opposition speaks so much about, or there is a deliberate attempt to mislead the masses of Guyanese people into believing that we can develop this country, we can build socialism without hard work, without increased productivity and without sacrifice. I will not attempt at this stage to identify which road the Opposition is taking. But this Budget is an indication of some of the problems which we are facing during this particular period of transition. The transition has many problems and, of course, this Budget does not run away from those problems. It sought to identify the problems which we face as we move through this period of transition.

One cannot think of building socialism in this country without recognising that there are certain inherent problems. Of course, this Government could have taken other courses of action but they would have been short -- term and certainly they could have taken us off the main road towards building a free and democratic society where production and productivity generate better results for the working-class people of this country.

The implications of this Budget, therefore, are, first of all, that there is need for national mobilisation. There is the need for a greater understanding of the present economic situation. There is need for sacrifices of the Guyanese people if we are to achieve development. These implications for a country moving forward should not be strange. If we are to succeed, therefore, this is not the time for cheap politics on the part of the P.P.P. which claims to be a Marxist Party.

19.3.79

National Assembly

4.25 – 4.35 p.m.

This is the time for that Party to take principled positions on the questions of the acceleration of the socialist revolution in this country. The members can do that by helping to deal more frankly with the problems which this economy faces and helping to motivate and mobilise the people to overcome these problems by encouraging greater production and productivity. There can be no doubt, however, that if this greater production and productivity is to be a reality, then the energies of all our young people in this country will have to be marshalled to contribute to this whole project of development.

The present Budget does not deviate from this policy and if we look at the overall plan we can see very clearly that this Government recognises the important role which our young people can play in development and has made the necessary provisions not only through the Ministry of National Development, but through the other Ministries which, by the nature of their activities, must deal with youth. This is evidenced by the large expenditure in the field of education, expenditure in the field of information, sports and culture, large expenditure in the field of agriculture, for it is through those areas that the energies of our young people will be marshalled and programmes will be embarked upon to encourage the development and the achievement of our goals which we have so nobly set ourselves.

4.35 p.m.

Cde. Speaker, as we approach the problem of development, as we become enveloped in development, one of the first tasks of this Government is to ensure that the young people of this country understand the nature of the problems which we face, and are not misled by the confusion and the misinformation which are so rampant particularly with publications coming from the Opposition. Cde. Speaker, there can be no doubt that during this transition period the problems which we face must be fully understood and appreciated by all of the young people of this country. It is this apparent level of understanding which has been evident in the discussion in this House that has forced me to draw on some references to aid some of my friends on the other side of this House so that I can remind them – which I presume that they have read and forgotten – that no country has ever passed through this stage of transition without its inherent difficulties. Instead of spreading misinformation the **Mirror** and other such publications should seek to

inform and educate the young people of this country of some of these problems. During this transition period, because of this lack of understanding, we should seek to put the situation of Guyana in proper perspective.

First of all, because of the absence of any magic wand on the part of the People's National Congress, since the P.N.C. does not claim any affinity to Mandrake or to some of the reported miracles which were conducted when Jesus was on earth, one must recognise that if we were to transform this economy there would be of necessity, some period of time before this takes place. There is no magic wand and so it will take time to change the attitudes which have been developed over a period of colonialism, the value and the buying systems which are still today evident in the behaviour patterns of our people and to some extent supported by the activities and publications of the Opposition. We still have to deal, Cde. Speaker, with some of the old institutions which have seen no structural change; we still have to deal with personnel who run some of these institutions and who suffer from the orientation of old. And therefore it takes time unlike some of the imaginations of our friends in the Opposition to eradicate some of the problems which a developing country like Guyana faces; it will take time for us to overcome them.

Nothing indeed comes easily if one follows the argument of the Opposition. We are tempted to believe, Cde. Speaker, that the Opposition is hoping that a woman would give birth to a new child in this world with no suffering from the necessary birth pains. In other words, the Opposition would like to see a new nation, a new socialist society, develop without this country going through the necessary birth pains. But problems are natural during this transition period and it is a cardinal sin for a Marxist to fail to appreciate the problems of the transition period. And Cde, Speaker, to refresh my friends' memories, I wish to refer them to the hero whom they worship, and whom I too admire, to what Lenin had to say about some Marxists who fail to take this into account. I quote from Lenin's Collective Works, Volume 24, page 23:

“Whoever has failed to understand the dictatorship is essential to the victory of any revolutionary class has no understanding of the history of revolutions or else does not want to know anything in this field”.

And he continues to explain, Cde. Speaker, some of the problems during the transition period and particularly essentials of the dictatorship of the proletariat. So, Cde. Speaker, I contend this afternoon that the members of the Opposition pose as Marxists according to this unhealthy trap of failing to analyse carefully and understand the true nature of the problems which we are facing in this country. And they look, with reference to some of these problems, to point out that the problems which this country is facing – which the members of the Opposition harp upon instead of trying to help to solve – are not unusual.

For example, we hear constant talk of frauds, of accountability and control and in fact a certain Member of this House speaks constantly about these things. Cde. Speaker, I am not against the speaking about these problems but certainly from the attitude of the Opposition it does give the impression to many of those not knowledgeable about what they speak, that these problems are unique to Guyana or that these problems will not be faced by any country in a similar situation to ours. And I contend that some of the problems we hear people with, accountability and control, problems of fraud, etc., which the Opposition harps so much upon, are not unique to Guyana. In fact, they are the very first problems which, when the first socialist revolution in this world took place, Lenin had to cope with, the problems of accountability and control, of fraud etc.

What is evident is that these problems do exist in any country but what is important is not the existence of these problems but the ability of a government, the ability of the vanguard of the working class, the ability of the party to deal effectively with those problems. That is the problem, to deal effectively with the problems of accountability and control, not that they exist. But what we hear from this so-called responsible Opposition Marxists is that these things indicate that the P.N.C. Government is fraudulent, that the P.N.C. Government is condoning this, that the P.N.C. Government supports these frauds as if these incidents are not likely to happen in any country in transition to socialism.

Cde. Speaker, I refresh my friend's memory. May I offer to present him with the book after my presentation on the allotted task of the Soviet Government. It seems as if he has come into contact with it but he has not fully understood the implication of what has been said. I

19.3.79

National Assembly

4.35 – 4.45 p.m.

should like for the benefit of my friends to validate what I have just said since there seems to be some doubt about some omitted task of the Soviet Government after the revolution in 1917 and I quote from this volume page 21:

“this legacy is especially apparent . . .”

And I am speaking here of the legacy which the Soviet people inherited from the past.

“this legacy is especially apparent in the problem of accounting and control. The fundamental problem facing the socialist revolution on the morrow of the overthrow of the Kerensky”.

In other words what I am trying to point out is that these problems should not surprise the P.P.P. which claims to be Marxist but instead of helping to deal effectively with the problems which this country faces, it seeks to confuse the population – instead of using what it claims as knowledge to educate the people to be more honest, and to assist the Government to ensure that these malpractices in this country are stamped out.

4.45 p.m.

Cde. Speaker, we have the problem of increased production of labour. The Budget has spoken a lot about this. We would get the impression that these problems are new to Guyana in the light of the words of a recent speaker, Cde. Collymore, a few minutes ago. He would have us believe that the people and that this would happen probably in two days if one were to involve the people. I wonder if the hon. Member has taken time to even analyse the very statement which he has made that the solution to the problem lies in the involvement of the people. In fact the matter is that even this involvement takes time and there can be no doubt that this Government has taken positive steps to do just that by the many programmes, not only through the Youth Division, but through the institution of the regional system. It is done also through “meet-the-people” tours. This is education to give the people of Guyana an intimate involvement in the development programme. Certainly, these programmes take time but the members on the other side would have us believe that these problems can be solved without any time lapse.

Again, Cde. Speaker, I would like to refer to two other sections of this book which I propose to present to my friend on the opposite side. I refer again to “Lenin – The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government”. It states:

“. . . the problem of raising the productivity of labour requires, at all events (particularly after a most terrible land devastating war), several years. The protracted nature of the work is certainly dictated by objective circumstance”.

It goes on to state:

“Another condition for raising the productivity of labour is, firstly, the raising of the educational and cultural level of the mass of the population”.

I hate to make so many references but I have to because in this House we have an Opposition which claims to be Marxist and which is attempting to suggest that because the P.N.C. has avowed its ideology of socialism and because we are moving towards the socialist society, we should not have such problems which we are facing in Guyana. I am attempting to point out to those persons that if they were analytical in their approach to the problems of this country, they would not have been surprised about these problems of raising the productivity of labour. They would have been prepared to deal with these problems and assist in the development of the consciousness of the working class of this country so that they can produce more. That would have been a principled Marxist position in this country. Instead, we have misinformation.

As we embark on this programme of recovery, as we proceed with our plan, we must ensure that the nation recovers from the present stage it is in. The Minister of Economic Development, in his Budget statement, presented a careful plan of action which the Government proposes to pursue to enable Guyana to overcome these problems. The plan has taken into consideration not only the colonial past, but the work habits, union orientation in Guyana and the attitude and values of our people so that the multi-dimensional programme of this Government would be in a position to deal specifically with these problems to ensure that there is production and productivity. I would hope that the Opposition, in dealing with this Budget, will recognise these objectives, conditions, understand the problems and take a positive role.

I would like to refer to Lenin, in the book from which I quoted previously, page 33. Here he is dealing with hooligan agitation. It states:

“Here and there, among Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, a positively hooligan agitation, i.e., agitation appealing to the base instincts and to the small proprietor’s urge to “grab all he can”, has been developed against the dictatorship decree”.

He was speaking here, incidentally, about the dictatorship of the proletariat. He is speaking of the P.P.P. today who, instead of taking a principled position, indulges in hooligan agitation, failing to appreciate the problems objectively. But we should not be surprised at the unprincipled position of the P.P.P. over the years.

We hear members speaking about nationalisation, National Service, and Cde. Collymore particularly went to lengths to speak about there being much expenditure on arms and ammunition instead of food. But this is the type of inconsistency which we have been faced with over the years. For example, we heard Cde. Janet Jagan speaking about housing and all the great things the P.P.P. had done and was supposed to do. I happened by accident to come across this document dated September 1977, “Monthly Review”, in which an article by the Leader of the Opposition was printed. He was writing to “Monthly Review” apparently to correct, as the article states, certain misinterpretations of the situation in Guyana as presented by Jay Mandle who had written a previous article in which he accused the P.P.P. and the P.N.C of using race as the basis of support. How does one relate what Cde. Collymore says and the attitude of the P.P.P. when from this very article, on page 44, the following appears?

“Apart from the call for the democratization of social life, the P.P.P. has proposed, and has been urging, the establishment of a people’s militia, which is independent of, but linked with, the Guyana Defence Force. A genuine broad-based people’s militia, apart from an organizationally strong . . .”

19.3.79

National Assembly

4.55 – 5.00 p.m.

4.55 p.m.

One wonders at the sort of double standards which we constantly hear about. The P.P.P. says we need People's Militia. When the P.N.C. starts the People's Militia they draw red herrings in the way. And this is not unusual with the P.P.P., Cde. Speaker. The P.P.P. seems to be taking this inconsistent role and misleading the world about its past and present roles. Here in this very article is another glaring example from the Leader of the P.P.P. it states:

“Actually, the P.P.P. has always taken principled positions and has demonstrably consistent record of struggle”.

He goes on:

“It opposed the P.N.C. government which, unwilling up to 1970 to move against imperialism and the transnational companies, had declared itself in favour of “co-operative socialism”.

It continues:

“In contrast, seeing anti-imperialism as the gateway to socialism, the P.P.P. had called for the nationalisation of the commanding heights of the economy”.

But I just happened by chance to pick up this document, the People's Progressive Party Manifesto which was published on the 7th December, 1964. I shall read from page 13 of this document. It states:

“It is not the party's policy to nationalise any industry but if it becomes necessary in the national interest to do so, fair and adequate compensation will be paid. The P.P.P. reaffirms that it will not nationalise the sugar and bauxite industries: but it believes that these industries can make a greater contribution to the economy and the party will intensify its effort to bring about a desirable objective”.

The Speaker: It is now 4 o'clock. Perhaps it is a good time to take the suspension. The Sitting is suspended for 30 minutes.

19.3.79

National Assembly

5.35 – 5.40 p.m.

Sitting suspended at 5 p.m.

5.35 p.m.

On resumption –

The Speaker: When the suspension was taken, Cde. Corbin was speaking. Cde. Corbin you have already spoken for 35 minutes.

Cde. Corbin: When the suspension was taken, I was attempting to draw some references which are relevant today as they indicate the inconsistent and in fact unprincipled position taken by the P.P.P. for a number of years on fundamental issues affecting the country's development. I am drawing these references not really to castigate the P.P.P. but with the hope that as true Marxist they will take a principled position on this present Budget which seeks not to hide the truth from Guyanese but to tell Guyanese what are the real problems and to call upon the nation to harness their energies so that we can overcome the present economic problems.

It is my contention, Cde. Speaker, that this double talk is getting the nation nowhere. I had concluded a quotation showing the inconsistency of the call of the P.P.P. prior to 1964 and the cloud article which was published all over the world by "Monthly Review", giving a false impression of the real position of the P.P.P. And this can be said of many matters. I have a document which I am sure they are sorry it is in circulation, this document called the "**Manifesto**" of the P.P.P. If we go through it, Cde. Speaker, we will find so many things like the vote at 18. In this document they pledge faithfully that the P.P.P. believed in the vote at 18, giving young people equal voting rights at 18. Evidence in this very Chamber revealed the position of the P.P.P. when the members had an opportunity to take what they speak of as a principled position, they voted against the vote at 18. But in 1964 they promised faithfully to introduce the vote at 18. And I can read for the comrades from page 8:

"The P.P.P., however, will strive for the implementation of the resolution of the Legislature that the voting age be reduced to 18".

What was their behaviour in this very Assembly a few years later when the P.N.C. took the initiative to vote for the same thing?

19.3.79

National Assembly

5.35 – 5.40 p.m.

The Government was forced because of the economic circumstances to move to the International Monetary Fund and the Government said quite clearly that it was necessary because of the present economic conditions to move, and because of our membership of the International Monetary Fund, to utilise certain facilities which had affected us as members of that Fund. What is the responsible and principled behaviour of the P.P.P. to the International Monetary Fund? It is on record even in this House of criticism that because we have taken a position of associating with the International Monetary Fund we are probably deviating from our ultimate objective.

Again I quote from the P.P.P. document, page 10, of their **Manifesto**:

“The present P.P.P. Government has received over the past two years much expert advice from many sources overseas, including the International Monetary Fund, membership of which will be taken up with independence. The draft Bank of Guyana legislation is now in a very advanced stage, awaiting only the resolution of a few points in consultation with the IMF”.

5.40 p.m.

....

That was the P.P.P. in 1964. When in 1976 and 1977 the P.N.C. Government, faced with problems of the economy, being members of the International Monetary Fund, sought to utilise those facilities, what was this principled position of the P.P.P.? There were special public meetings throughout the country at all the street corners, not educating the people on self-reliance and greater productivity, but castigating this Government as being un-socialist because it has entered into an agreement with the International Monetary Fund. Instead of as principled Marxists, explaining to the population that in order to get out of this International Monetary Fund agreement, we need to produce more, they did that. Now they come, after having encouraged the population not to produce, after they have helped to destroy and make matters worse, to this House and would have us believe that they are serious about the problems which this country is facing. What hypocrisy, after promising that they would be in the I.M.F.

I was very disappointed to hear my very good friend, a member of the Opposition, whilst speaking on this Budget, attempt to say that Guyana is moving to the right because we are having trade with foreign countries and because we are having financial assistance from

foreign countries. Again I wish to quote from the very principled P.P.P. document of 1964:

“THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

“The Party will continue its efforts to win the goodwill and co-operation of the Government and people of the United States for the policies which the Party intends to execute and with this objective will endeavour to promote the establishment in Washington of a Trade and Information Centre at once to precede the entry into full diplomatic relations upon the attainment of independence”.

It goes on to explain how they will proceed to get support and assistance. I am not saying there is anything wrong with such a move, because the P.N.C., recognising that what is important is the right of a people to self-determination, has pursued certain policies and has carried out an independent line. But what is disgraceful is that when the P.P.P. should take principled positions, as referred to by the leader of the Opposition, we see very unprincipled positions on matters on which, as Marxists, they should take a decision and help to contribute to national development.

I have gone on at length to explain the dilemma not because I wanted to, but to further highlight the problem which young people in this country have to face. It is the young people whom we are trying to mould to make a greater contribution to national development and who have to face, day after day, such misinformation from a Party that claims to be working in the interest of this country. It therefore makes the job of the Government and the Party even more difficult as we attempt to pursue our policies towards youth development. We have to work in an environment where those who say they are Marxists work in a negative way and profess only to be socialists.

In the context of this, therefore, the P.N.C. Government, since 1964, has pursued a very consistent policy towards releasing the energies and talents of our young people so that they could play a more meaningful role in this developmental process. Indeed, it was the Prime Minister who recognised this fact when some years ago he pointed out that no country that sets its growth on prosperity as it comes can chart its course successfully without the conscious and deliberate participation and contribution of its young people. So this Government, the P.N.C. Government, since 1964 has been positively involved in pursuing

policies aimed at developing young people politically, socially, economically and culturally so that they can enable Guyana to attain its objectives in a much faster way than it would have done normally. The policy is aimed, first of all, at bringing the type of consciousness to the youth of Guyana so that they could appreciate and understand the ideological directions of the Government and Party. Without this full understanding, we do not believe we would be in a position to harness all the energies and potential of our young people.

In the field of political orientation, in the field of ideological orientation, the Youth Division in particular has organised over the past years, since 1964, several programmes in many parts of this country to ensure that young people are properly oriented. Of course the problem of raising the consciousness of the worker and, more particularly, the youth, is a continuous process. We would not pat ourselves on the back and say we are successful in this exercise. This exercise is one which is continuous and one which has to be intensive as the years go by. One would see, therefore, that recently, through the Ministry of Education, in order to enhance this consciousness, we have embarked on special national policy programmes in schools so that young people can have an opportunity at that level to acquire the necessary consciousness and understand the role they ought to play in this whole developmental process. Also, through culture and their other sporting activities, various programmes have been arranged to achieve these desired objectives.

In the field of social activities, the Youth Division has been able to organise many programmes to enable young people to see themselves not as separate but as an integral part in the development of this country through its programme of keeping contact with voluntary youth organisations in this country. Through its co-ordination of youth programmes generally, these objectives have to a large extent been met.

Most important, however, is the task of preparing young people to take a more meaningful role in the economic development of this country. If, for example, young people are to respond meaningfully to the call of the Minister of Economic Development and Co-operatives to play a meaningful part, it will mean that young people will have to be trained and equipped so

that they will satisfy the requirements to contribute more to the economy of this country. In this direction, one cannot fail to recognise the reasons why this P.N.C. Government made free education a reality.

It was not out of the blue or without a plan that this was introduced, but it was out if a direct realisation that if an equal opportunity was to result and if we were to give young people a full opportunity to participate and release their energies towards the economic development of the country, then we needed to give them a full opportunity in the education field. Hence, free education, hence programmes which enable them to acquire even higher learning at the University of Guyana, hence intensification of programmes through the various technical institutes in this country, hence the support of even adult education programmes, hence special training programmes organised by the Youth Division to ensure that they are properly trained in the many fields of economic activity. There are also special craft and other courses organised by the Youth Division to provide young people with specific skills so that they can contribute in a meaningful way towards the goal of development. It is in these areas that this Government has pursued a very consistent policy towards enabling our young people to play their proper role in the development of this country. Of course, if economic development is to be achieved ---

5.50 p.m.

The Speaker; Cde. Corbin, you have spoken for 55 minutes.

Cde. Corbin: If young people are to play a more meaningful role in the development of this country and increase productivity, then it is essential that we lift the cultural levels of our young people. Hence, though not directly run by the Youth Division, many programmes in the cultural field have been organised through the Ministry of Education and Culture. In the dancing school, the Minister of Education himself pointed out to this House the many programmes which were arranged and are being arranged. In the field of sports, one cannot fail to recognise the upsurge in sporting activities over the past years in this country; in the field of boxing alone we can see the consistent activities in this direction. Not to mention the many other sports, or, perhaps, our friends do not recognise that this is an important aspect of youth development, for

enabling people to release these tensions, we are in a better position to get them to contribute to national development.

And so, Cde. Speaker, the Youth Division – supported by Government programmes in other Ministries – during last year has continued to carry out programmes in this direction. There were youth leadership training programmes in all districts of the country; special political education programmes; young workers seminars; developmental tasks linking theory and practice and encouraging young people to give of their service, not only at the Knowledge Sharing Institute but in other parts of the country; health and nutrition seminars; family life education seminars; cultural activities directly organised by the Youth Division as evidenced through the youth band, the steel band and the drama club.

We have sports, both indoor and outdoor, organised by the Youth Division, among those groups of the country; youth camps, holiday work and training camps; craft production to encourage young people to develop self sufficiency and more particularly special activities during national youth week to highlight to the nation the many achievements of our young people. At the same time, to give young people an exposure in international community, we have had exchange programmes with many countries to facilitate young people with the opportunity of seeing what is happening in many other countries of the world.

This in a nutshell, Cde. Speaker, indicates the commitment of this Government not only to economic development but to overcoming the present economic problems, which have been identified in the Budget. It also shows a Government that understands the problems with which we are faced; a Government that recognises that young people have a very important part to play in this direction, and also a Government that has pursued programmes which are particularly aimed at ensuring that young people can release their energies towards this objective.

I hope, Cde. Speaker, that the Opposition claiming to be Marxist will pursue a principled position at this time in our country, recognising that the young people need to be guided, will stop misleading them, and ensure that Guyana moves forward.

In conclusion, may I say that the words of this very publication of 1964 are very apt at this time for, on the back page of this very publication, there is the advice, “the masses of this country are not asses”, and this was published in 1964. I think it is good advice for me to give in conclusion to the members of the Opposition, that the masses of this country are not asses. The members of the P.P.P. recognised that in 1964 that is why the P.P.P. is in Opposition. So whether we have Gairy gone, the Shah gone, or who next, one thing is certain, the P.P.P. could never be next.

The Speaker: Cde. Dalchand, between you and Cde. Sukhai, you have 45 minutes. I do not know how you will allocate that time.

Cde. Dalchand: Cde. Speaker, last Monday, this Nation was presented with another empty and most unrealistic Budget. In the past, these Budgets were presented by the Minister of Finance, who, I am sure, is now convinced that this has been a hopeless exercise for the P.N.C. Government. Since 1975 there have been growing deficits. Right now the deficits of this country stand at over \$764 million.

Last year’s Budget was presented in the name of austerity. This year, a new Budget has been presented by the P.N.C. Government, by the Minister of Economic Development. The Economic and Planning Division of this Ministry has been and still is beyond imagination in their planning. The economy has been ruined and is in chaos. The nation, in the opening of the Budget Speech by the Minister, was told that this is a tax-free Budget. I want to question, Cde. Speaker, how tax-free is this Budget when only a week and a half ago, before the presentation of this Budget, petroleum products, including gasoline, dieseline and kerosene oil and many other items skyrocketed again. These items were included in last year’s austerity Budget so I cannot see how the Minister can claim that this is a tax-free Budget. Last year, these items, as I said, were included and by manipulation this year in an attempt to fool the nation, this Government claims to present a tax-free Budget.

I wish to tell the P.N.C. Government that the nation has awakened and cannot be fooled. The P.N.C. Government must take heed of the Shah of Iran and Gairy of Grenada.

The Minister also spoke of the disappointing performance of the economy in 1978. Physical production targets in the main sector were not achieved. Sugar, rice and bauxite all fell short of their targets hopelessly. In 1976, they blamed the weather. In 1977 they blamed the great 135 days' sugar estate strike which, according to the T.U.C., was prolonged by the Government itself. Last year, they said failure to achieve production targets in the main sectors resulted in the fall of merchandise exports thus putting pressure on the foreign earnings side of the balance of payments.

We must examine the root cause of these failures. The Guyanese people are fed up and frustrated. They want the P.N.C. Government to get off their backs, and that is, to resign now. The P.N.C. Government is blaming the workers for not performing as expected. The P.N.C. Government wants to introduce slavery again in our country. It is not the workers who failed. The workers did their best. It was the administrative management and poor factory efficiency that resulted in the fall in production.

6 p.m.

Sugar production fell because of the poor performance of nearly all the factories and it is not true, according to the Minister, that despite there was a record throw-out of cane, the output of sugar was less because of the low sucrose content of the cane. I have a Report from the Chairman of GUYSUICO which shows that cane was produced with as much as 85.6 per cent sucrose. Cane of this quality would take not more than ten tons of cane to make one ton of sugar. But the sugar factories took twenty-two tons. It is a shame to blame the workers in this sector for not doing well. Something definitely is wrong. The sugar factory efficiency is now at its lowest.

The P.N.C. Government allowed Jessels and Bookers to run down the fields and factories before nationalisation. Now the burden is placed on the poor workers to make them profitable. These are some of the main reasons for the shortfall in production. I think it is a shame for this Government to blame the workers. Millions of much needed dollars are required to rehabilitate these sugar factories and fields. Workers are not being treated properly. They are being hurled into trucks like animals. Last year several sugar workers lost their lives while being transported to their work places.

The rice industry is also at crossroads. Production continues to fall because the rice farmers are being cheated in every respect. Farmers today do not have any say in the administration of the industry. During the P.P.P. Government, rice farmers had the greatest say at all levels. The Rice Marketing Board Ordinance was amended in 1960 to give the greatest control to rice farmers. On a Board of sixteen members, eleven rice producers were there; as soon as the P.N.C. got into power, they struck them off and today there is a continuous decline in the production of rice. Rice farmers must be put into every area. If you want production, you will only get production by participation. You cannot get greater production when the rice farmers are being treated like cloth.

The Rice Producers' Association, the mouth piece of the rice farmers, used to receive a grant from the Rice Marketing Board. This grant was completely removed by the P.N.C. Government and instead, Rice Action Committees were instituted. Let the Government tell this nation how much these Rice Action Committees have done to the Industry. Millions of dollars worth of items of expensive machinery short-lived their time. Today there is a scarcity of much needed imported machinery to produce more. We do not even have money to buy spare parts, yet the Government is calling for increased production. How are we going to have that when forty-five thousand families who depend on rice do not have a say in the administration of the rice industry.

Another P.N.C. controlled organisation is mainly responsible for these huge deficits and loss in rice earnings. The Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Trade spoke about subsidised rice. I want to ask if the rice farmers are not entitled to eat subsidised rice. It was not being subsidised by the Government. The rice was being subsidised by the Rice Marketing Board. So I do not see anything wrong –

The Speaker: Cde. Dalchand, I do not think that is what Cde. Bynoe said. What she said was that the rice was being sold to the Board at a high price, purchased back by the people at a lower price and then re-sold to the Board at a higher price. That is what she said.

Cde. Dalchand: Even if that is so, I would like to ask the Minister to say who the people are. These people are supporters of the P.N.C. The people who were caught have not been

brought before the court because they are supporters of the P.N.C. They are not P.P.P. supporters. I am saying that people were prosecuted and never appeared in court.

Another reason for the decline in agricultural production is the lack of much needed drainage and irrigation services, which are essential for high production. As I said before, during the time of the P.P.P., more than half the members of the Board were farmers and when they appeared at meetings, they were able to advise the technical people on the Board about what was needed and what was to be done. Today, this is in the reverse. People with no interest at all are placed on these Boards and, therefore, we are getting a backward position.

6.10 p.m.

The Minister also spoke of how much money they intend to spend on sea defence and river defence. The river and sea defences of this country were completely neglected. Thousands of dollars have been lost on the Essequibo Coast. Right here in the heart of the city, at Ruimveldt, the sea defence gave away and the blame was put on attempted sabotage.

The Parliamentary Secretary in the Office of the Prime Minister, Cde. Ackman, went on the air and appealed for help for those people who lost their belongings because of the flood. I would advise the Parliamentary Secretary to advise the P.N.C. Government and advise those people responsible for the proper maintenance of these works to do their work and they would not have to appeal for alms for the people. The people will produce.

I would like to look for one moment at food and food distribution in this country. The Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Trade and Consumer Protection did not say how food is being distributed in this country but I want to say that the Ministry of Trade is now in chaos. Corruption and discrimination are plaguing this Ministry. Even the senior civil servants who are put in position to see the proper distribution of goods cannot function. All the functions are being usurped by a political appointee. There are several Government outlets; there are several co-operative shops. Even at Guyana Stores one cannot get goods; there are long lines; there is a shortage of goods. As I said, because of corruption, because of discrimination people cannot find goods even in the Government outlets. Many of the co-operative shops are black-marketing and

yet they are not being brought to justice. They are hiding under the cloak of being Government agencies. They are hoarding the goods. I can prove this, Cde. Speaker. You check, and see the amount of goods given to the co-operative shops yet the people do not get any. Only special people with notes can get goods.

They talk about merchants getting goods. Which merchants are getting goods? The merchants who belong to the P.N.C. The merchants who share their profits. It is the P.N.C. that is encouraging black-marketing because the merchants who get the goods will have to give the P.N.C. a large sum of the profits. Goods that one cannot get at the Government outlets one can get at the W.R.S.M. shop. Why can't you get them at the Government outlets? Because the Government outlets make profits for the State. But the W.R.S.M. makes profits for the P.N.C. and that is why you are getting goods at the W.R.S.M outlets.

Despite the heavy spending by this Government on pure water supply and in spite of the Minister telling us how millions of dollars are spent on pure water, for every one new system created, five are neglected. Today, the pure water supply system is in shambles. Because of the negligence in the operation and maintenance of those systems, the population is suffering. I call upon the Government to do everything possible to carry out genuine development of the pure water system so that the population can benefit.

I would like now to speak on the electricity situation. The hon. Minister in his Budget Speech spoke of the breakdown in the electricity supply and how it demoralises the Government. If we examine the history of the Guyana Electricity Corporation, it would be seen that the P.P.P. Government was able in 1960 to eliminate blackouts. When the P.P.P. Government was put out of office in 1964, blackouts had been eliminated, we had a 35 per cent surplus power in the Georgetown area, because the initiative then was to use more power. Today, the initiative is to conserve power.

Let us examine some of the root causes of these shortages and blackouts. I would like to quote from this Report, page 3, that was laid earlier today in Parliament just to show you. The Kingston power station failed because of the deplorably poor and inadequate maintenance, and

the failure to employ elementary procedures for preventative maintenance of the equipment. Cde. Speaker that is one part of it. Let us see what page 41 says:

Destruction of machine at Sophia

“There are three converters at Sophia, all new. One of them costing £220,000, without being in service was completely destroyed during commissioning that is, the entire 50 cycles main machine was wrecked. The destruction is termed by Shawinigan as a major disaster. The bolts causing the disaster came from the pedestal bearing. This bearing is adjacent to the machine. The bolts cannot be dropped in”.

This is sabotage, I suggest.

“The only access would be through a horizontal hole where the three bolts could have been pushed in. The bolts were either carelessly left in after inspection or it was deliberate”.

This is what this part of the Report says. This is a report of the P.N.C. Government and P.N.C. appointed people.

The Speaker: Cde. Dalchand you have been speaking for 25 minutes. I am not stopping you but it means Cde. Sukhai will get no time.

Cde. Dalchand: On page 46 of this same Report, it is discouraging to see the G.E.C. operating on the 1st September, 1978 without a General Manager, a Deputy General Manager, the Financial Controller on leave the Chief Generation Engineer on leave, the Transmission Engineer on leave, and then to crown all of that , the Chairman, CDe. D. Thompson, has also gone on leave. All are the top people responsible for this important public service. When the investigation was going on, they knew where the hammer would have fallen and they were running like rats. This is the type of people; this is the root cause of blackouts and the fall in production in this country today.

6.20 p.m.

As I said last year, the Government said it had a war on waste. We do not want war on waster, we want war on corruption, fraud, and then we would move forward. If you sit in the Public Accounts Committee, you would hear all about the frauds. It is the big people in high

office who are responsible for these frauds. Since the P.N.C. Government cannot properly appropriate the finances of this country to stimulate greater production and productivity, it is essential that this P.N.C. Government should resign now and let a progressive P.P.P. Government lead this country to prosperity.

The Speaker: Hon Member, Mr Abraham.

Mr. Abraham: Mr. Speaker, in perusing the Budget Speech of the hon. Minister Hoyte, one detects a feverish attempt at salvaging a collapsing economy. What accounts for this progressive decline? It is natural for us to find excuses to exonerate ourselves from calamities wrought by our own hands. In Guyana it has become customary to lay the blame for the crisis on the weather, inflation in the capitalist world, the rise in oil prices. They blamed everything else but themselves. And here lies the source of our economic woes, the P.N.C. Government and its oversized bureaucracy. If the P.N.C. would change its policies, its priorities and stop its squander mania in areas like the G.D.F. and the National Service, we would be well on the road to economic recovery.

In this country, there is a general feeling of frustration. Frustration can easily degenerate into greed, envy and hatred, vices we can ill-afford in this stage of our crisis. This frustration stems from a general lack of democracy on the part of the Government. Witness, for example, that notorious Referendum to postpone General Elections. That was a grave denial of the Guyanese people's constitutional and human rights. Basic to the plan for economic recovery must be the paramount duty of the P.N.C. Government to ensure free and fair elections and thereby restore true democracy. The P.N.C. must get its hands off the Elections Commission. Leave the Commission alone and see what a difference it would make to this country.

The hon. Minister on page 56 of his speech speaks about wiseacres and aspirants to political office. There always will be such persons but a change of Government is what this country sorely needs now. Mr. Speaker, under which category does the P.N.C. fall? Maybe it has run the gamut, from being wiseacre, it became aspirant to political office to the stage where it is now the illegal holder of political office. A depressing factor on our economy is the ominous presence of the P.N.C. in our day to day and national life. A teacher in Katasabai told me she

was fed up with Karasabai. When I asked her why, she said “too much politics na!” I asked further what politics, and she said “P.N.C. politics”. Even in the school P.N.C. politics are infiltrating. How dreadful! This preoccupation with P.N.C. politics applies equally to Linden, Guyana Electricity Corporation and other Government Corporation, in the R.M.B. and even in sports. There is much too much by way of politics instead of getting on with the job in hand. That is why we continue to have blackouts and the Guylines persist.

The Minister exhorts us to greater production and productivity. This is very laudable if the P.N.C. has the entire nation behind it. But the stark fact is that the nation is not behind the P.N.C. simply because of its bad policies and its record of callous treatment of the Guyanese people. A pet term of the members of the P.N.C. is “Mobilisation”. Mobilisation of the masses, they say. But this is a pipe dream because very few Guyanese today are followers of the P.N.C. Fortunately, the reality is that Guyanese, more so now, are of varying shades of political opinion. This is a most healthy situation and the P.N.C. must take this into account. The alternative would be gross dictatorship. The people have made too many sacrifices, especially in recent times. Any further call to sacrifice must now be seen at the top with the Ministers of the Government and the big boys of the P.N.C. setting the pace.

Sir, we do not agree that the responsibility for growth in our economy lies solely with the Guyanese workers. A great lot depends on the system in which they work. The system must be radically reformed. Production will continue to lag until there is greater worker participation in industry. The Minister in his Budget Speech recognised this fact very clearly when he said that the 1979 Budget is an attempt to get the people fully involved in every aspect of national development by providing them with clear and ample information about the performance of the national economy. During the last year, Government made major decisions affecting our economy and our country. The people were not consulted and they got very little information, if any. The lack of involvement is precisely the reason for the stark and inescapable fact of no real growth in the economy in 1978. This reason when coupled with mismanagement of public sector resources, squander mania, corruption and the theft of large chunks of the people’s assets by

officials responsible for managing them, have been largely responsible for the economic crisis we are in.

The hon. Minister Chowritmootoo treated the House to a long diatribe on the P.N.C.'s ideology and about the virtues of that party. What the country has been experiencing under the P.N.C. is the expansion of State monopoly capitalism. They monkey-around as socialists but people easily see through this sham. Mr. Speaker, two new words have been coined over the course of this debate. The first was "Sovietology", the second was "vettage" and now I coin a third, "Capitalistic socialists".

Let us take a cursory glance into the economic depression as it affects the interior. In the Rupununi, the roads are in a mess. They are not being maintained and the rainy season takes its toll each year. Little wonder why so many vehicles after a few months on those roads are laid up. The Lethem garage workshop is a veritable graveyard for vehicles. The same goes for the malaria eradication programme garage. The problem is two-fold, bad roads resulting in damaged vehicles, and lack of spare parts.

6.30 p.m.

Malaria is on the upsurge, more personnel and vehicles will be needed to contain the crisis. The Lethem hospital lacks a vehicle. A hospital ought to have its own vehicle at all times. When there is an emergency call and a vehicle is needed, the Hospital Administrator has to seek help from outside, and precious minutes are lost in the procuring of such vehicles. There used to be four running trucks and as many tractors up to the time when Mr. Feilden Singh was Minister of Works. These vehicles were on the road. One does not see them on the road today, Mr. Speaker.

The Manari and Nappi bridges are falling apart, more so the Manari bridge. It was only after they became unfit for use that the Government saw fit to mend them. The principle of prevention is better than cure should have been applied. At this moment they are working feverishly to fix that Manari bridge before the rainy season begins and it has already started to rain in the Rupununi. A tragedy nearly occurred about a month ago. Because of the present state

of the bridge, all vehicles had to pass under it. A tractor, while manoeuvring a turn, leaned abruptly to one side and in a flash a mother and a baby were completely thrown out of the tractor. They escaped unhurt.

The hon. Member Nokta has dealt with the Wichabai airstrip. I will do no more than corroborate the fact. I would add, however, that things have since become worse. The Sand Creek airstrip, built by self help, is now closed. Hardly a plausible reason is given. Many villages stand to suffer. On behalf of those villagers, Mr, Speaker, I ask that at least the Wichabai airstrip, for years a tried and tested airstrip, be re-opened once more to air traffic. It lies at a very strategic point. The plane services to Bemichi and Mabaruma are inadequate. The situation has worsened since the steamer schedule has become so irregular. Once the Pomeroon schedule was cancelled three times in succession in three weeks. I know the wretched condition of that boat, Mr. Speaker; the condition below the hatch are nauseating, to put it mildly. People have termed it the cowboat. We hope that the Government will make good its promise of providing a new boat fit for human travel this year.

Then there is the question of Good Hope in the Rupununi. It is an airstrip of international proportions being laid there. I do not see any economic activity around it except in the months when they have to collect balata. But it is a main airstrip set in the middle of nowhere, in the middle of savannah wilderness. What exactly is the purpose of that airstrip? Could the Minister responsible kindly tell the House.

The bicycle is the small man's means of transportation, even in the Rupununi, Mr. Speaker. With the roads rough and terrible as they are, you need strong and rugged bicycles. Ideal for the interior terrain are the Humber and Raleigh bicycles. We do not get those good bicycles any longer. In their place we have the Chinese bicycles. My God, sir, these Chinese bikes cannot cope with the rigours of the interior. Once a wheel gets in a rut, or a hole, it is literally twisted out of shape. Chinese bicycles may be good for the streets of Georgetown but certainly not for the Rupununi. Bring back the faithful Raleigh and Humber bicycles.

In the field of agriculture, sir, in early 1977, a DC 6 four-engine aircraft with a cargo of cassava sticks, a full plane load of cassava sticks, landed in Lethem from Georgetown from the

Ministry of Agriculture. Those sticks were for distribution to farmers. Two villagers receiving such sticks were in the Karasabai and Nappi areas. Each village got one tractor load. When the sticks arrived, they were so dry that the people refused to accept them. Just imagine one big plane load of cassava sticks, a waste of scarce money, time, aeroplane fuel and gasoline for transportation. The agricultural experts explained that the sticks were probably held up for weeks at Timehri before transportation to the Rupununi.

Then in the same Karasabai area, a request for peanut seeds was made long in advance of the planting season. Surely, the seeds arrived, but long after the planting season. In addition, two G.D.F. planes with loads of black-eye and corn arrived, some 2,500 pounds in all. Seeds that were not even requested. I am told that the corn and the black-eye seeds went to weevil, and yet we are told of a war on waste.

Farmers in the Karasabai area bought their onion seeds at \$1.50 per pound only to discover that they were not good. Guyanese taste for the English potato will always remain. It is inherent. Has the Kato potato project been abandoned? I am told that when the State farm at Kato was yielding embarrassingly tiny potatoes, Amerindian farms nearby, with top soil intact and with no fertiliser, were yielding potatoes of sizes that were the envy of the State farm. Maybe the potato experiment can be resuscitated, but this time allowing the farmers in Kato to do the planting and reaping, and then selling to the G.M.C. to sell to the public. As for onions, Mr. Speaker, I understand that the Mazaruni area is ideal for planting onions. There again, private farmers can go in full-time for the crop and so supply the country's needs.

6.40 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the most crying and pressing need among Rupununi farmers at the present time is for file for sharpening cutlasses. Without a file the farmer is nowhere. A farmer without a file is like an officer whose pen has no ink. Will the hon. Minister of Trade see that files in sufficient quantities are supplied to all Government outlets and co-operative stores, if there are still any around, so that the farmers could get down to the call of producing?

Turning to the field of education: Since the advent of the so-called “free education”, many, if not the majority, of the interior Rupununi schools are experiencing the greatest difficulty in obtaining their supplies of exercise books and textbooks. Would the Ministry of Education see that these far-flung schools in the interior are immediately relieved of their textbooks problems?

What has become of the school feeding programme that was a daily feature in the past, particularly in the Rupununi schools? Only favoured schools like Aishalton still get the service. I ask, Mr. Speaker, that this service be resumed. It will contribute substantially to a healthier nation.

Up to the time of the Coalition when there was that brake on squander mania – “uncomfortable harness” says the Declaration of Sophia – the Government saw to it that basic and adequate drugs and medical supplies were kept in each village. These services are no more. I call upon the Government to reintroduce these services as early as possible. We use to see much more of the Medical Ranger then. The medex in the Pakaraimas is more intent on peddling P.N.C. politics than in attending to his vocation of healing the sick.

I would like to turn my attention to the police and the army. There was the bitter story of Achiwuib where Amerindians were subject to exploitation and advantage by their stronger Afro-Guyanese brothers living in the same village. Achiwuib was previously a peaceful village, Achiwuib is the last village in the South Rupununi. Then the Thomas family grew up. We call them the “Smoke Boys”. Their thirst for wealth began to show itself by the rustling of their Wapishiana brothers’ cattle.

Trouble soon began to brew. The headmaster informed the police. The Regional Minister was informed. He dashed to Achiwuib to make peace. No sooner had he turned his back then these boys began to get more daring. Rustling increased unabated. There were several incidents of rape culminating in the rape of the Headmaster’s wife. The present Headmaster of Karaudanawa, Sutherland, was badly beaten. I saw him come off the plane in Lethem where he had to be treated by his sister, the first Amerindian woman dispenser in this country. His face was a gory mess. I saw him myself. The then Headmaster, Torres, was threatened. Torres called

the police again. The police sergeant in a high-handed manner asked if he wanted police protection.

Meanwhile in broad daylight, Wapishianas saw their farine and cassava seized from the backs of their pack bullocks. One poor Wapishiana had the tasso he was roasting for his family wrenched from his hand. This together with the rest of the tasso and farine which the man had. All were gone. People were afraid of the all powerful “Smokes”. Achiwuib was soon torn into a bitter racial strife. The hon. Desmond Hoyte came into the picture. From reports, I am told he chided the Amerindians of Achiwuib to live well with the “Smokes”, for they were a good people. Amerindians began to flee Achiwuib by the droves for Brazil to seek safety. Families that have ten or twelve cows ended up with one or none at all. The stolen cows were sold in Brazil. In the ensuing bitterness and hatred, a junior member of the “Smokes” was killed by way of retaliation. The perpetrator of the deed fled to Brazil.

These incidents need never have occurred in Achiwuib Mr. Speaker, had the police taken them firmly in hand. Rather, it was alleged that the police themselves were bribed by this particular family. The police were their best friends, I was told. At times the police came in for a leg to two of beef, sometimes Bacardi, free of cost. On the subject of bribery, I was reliably informed that policemen and Party officials are selling rum at exorbitant prices to Amerindians in the South Rupununi. I call upon the Minister of Home Affairs to look into this matter.

Let me say at this stage that in this family there are two upright and respectable brothers who themselves were subjected to beatings by their criminal brethren. One is a member of the G.D.F. and the other is a decent and peaceful citizen. Then in the middle of last year there was the fatal shooting of the son of the Captain of Monkey Mountain. The deceased is Humphrey Jonas. The captain and his wife were brought to town to be appeased by P.N.C. top brass. A hasty enquiry into the death was carried out in the absence of the parents. The result was that the dead man was at fault, naturally. Dead man tells no tales. Is that so, Mr. Speaker? Delving into the incident, I was told that the policeman in question had been openly threatening to kill Jonas for a long time. People heard him uttering these threats at the Police Station itself.

Finally, on the topic of abuse of Amerindians, a member of the G.D.F. assaulted and beat our Amerindian Medical Ranger, Tommy Raymond, in Lethem. The reason was that Raymond would not buy the soldier a drink. Mr. Speaker, Amerindians regard the police and the army as arms and the agencies of the P.N.C. When these take advantage of Amerindians, they do the P.N.C. no good. Whatever little faith Amerindians have in the P.N.C. is thereby diminished. The people of Monkey Mountain/ Achiwuib are now thoroughly disenchanted with the P.N.C.

6.50 p.m.

In conclusion, sir, let me make a few comments on the Investment Code. It is the firm conviction of the United Force that only a quick return to private sector activity in all spheres and specific encouragement from the Government will save the Guyana economy now, bearing in mind that the root cause of all our troubles is the lack of democracy in the whole fabric of our political and industrial life. It is in this light, sir, that we view the Investment Code as opening the way for foreign and private investment and the solution of our economic woes. Mr. Speaker, it is imperative that the people of this country be kept informed and always consulted. In this way our economic problems can be overcome by the concerned efforts of all our Guyanese citizens.

The Speaker: Hon. Member Mr. Abraham, may I take this opportunity of congratulating you on your maiden Budget Speech, and for the very useful contribution you have made. Cde. Naraine.

The Minister of Works and Transport (Cde. Naraine): Cde. Speaker, I have been listening to Budget Speeches and Budget Debates since 1957, in the beginning as a public officer advising and later as a Minister of the P.N.C. Government. It is my opinion that this Budget presented on this occasion is one of the few that strikes at the hearts of the people and touch the intellect of the masses. It seeks their understanding, co-operation and unity of purpose to overcome the adverse economic circumstances facing our country. It gives the unadulterated proof devoid of arrogance and it was presented with simplicity and humility. It can be the foundation of a new era, an era of seriousness, harmony and courageous effort towards

improving the general circumstances in Guyana and mobilising our people into a cohesive, powerful force of development.

This is not a time for individual or group popularity. This is a time for dedicated national effort even at the expense of popularity. The cause of national progress must be greater than popularity. What is popularity without progress but dissatisfaction and not contentment?

I recall just a few days ago someone was telling me of an incident where an elderly person who had a very good and popular regime. He was retired and did not have much in terms of material wealth. His attention was directed to a particular issue and he was so sold with the issue - and that action was the correct thing to do- that he immediately said:

“I have no money to give you towards this cause but I have my popularity which I will put at stake because I know that many will misunderstand your action and the chances are that I will become unpopular in doing this”.

Nevertheless, he was prepared to put his popularity at stake for a cause in which he believed. Cde. Speaker, we have heard so many leaders in this country talking of the interest and the well-being of the people and of national unity. I feel that such things can be realised as early as we would wish them if we put our popularity at stake and start acting for the good of the masses.

These Budget proposals were presented after careful examination of the circumstances of the country. They outline the realities of the circumstances and give reasonable approaches to counter difficulties facing the nation and to produce economic growth, additional employment opportunities, and foreign exchange earnings so necessary for development. In my intervention I propose informing this honourable Assembly as to the purpose and details of the programme and expenditure under this Ministry of Works and Transport and some of the services which fall under this Ministry. I hope that in my presentation I will be able to show that by practical demonstration some of the things, of which this Government is being accused, would be contradicted.

In transport, the Government has pursued a policy of improving the existing services, for the extension of services and for the maintenances of standards within the limitations and the constraints which we are faced with in the country, and since the Ministry of Transport is of

rather new vintage in terms of a Ministry *per se* the past year was spent in many organisational and administrative matters. At the present moment, a committee is being set up to review the general policy in respect of transportation.

What is being proposed is that there should be a rationalization of the various means of transportation, that is, by land, by water and air, so that the various communities of the country can be served in an efficient and economic manner, so that we can give the necessary service and at the same time have it done in the most economic manner.

It is being proposed also that there should be an inter-relationship between the services of land, water and air, although they may act as individual Corporations, nevertheless they must be supportive of one another in terms of the final destination.

7 p.m.

At the same time the Government will continue to have discussions on the rationalisation of regional services, particularly in respect of shipping and, as you know, Cde. Speaker, we are a shareholder and partner in the West Indies Shipping Company. We are also looking at the question of rationalising air services in the Region. That does not mean that there would be a single airline for the region, but what it does mean is that even if there are several air services, they should work in a manner whereby we would eliminate duplication of services and in efficiencies which are consequent on such duplication.

In the area of certificates of airworthiness, and of training of pilots and engineers, a common place for training has been established in Trinidad where this kind of training is already being provided at certain levels. It will be useful at this point, since so much has been said about the G.A.C services in the hinterland, to point out that during last year the Guyana Airways Corporation transported twelve million pounds of cargo to the hinterland and its passenger service moved forty-five thousand passengers. This, of course, does not mean that all the areas have been serviced in the same manner and that some areas may not have received a better service than others. At this point in time I would not like to commit myself to the expansion or the improvement of one airstrip or another. I would prefer to be advised by the people who are

carrying out the exercise of the rationalisation of the services to see how best we can deal with main services to particular points, shuttle services to others, and land services supportive of air services, in order that cargo could be moved to all its destination. But the Government sees the need for the improvement of the hinterland airstrips and a sum of \$945,000 has been provided in the Capital Estimates to improve some of the hinterland airstrips.

It may be useful to remind Members of the House that the G.A.C., in addition to its cargo service to Miami, has introduced three flights to Trinidad and one flight to Barbados every week. These services have been very helpful to passengers who in the past were stranded in Trinidad and Barbados. In addition, it is proposed to spend \$850,000 at the Timehri Airport which again has been the subject of numerous criticisms some, I believe, justified. Therefore, it is proposed to improve the facilities there so that we can provide a better service. The sum of \$3.5 million has been provided for the purchase of an aircraft, a Skyvan which will be utilised for the servicing of the airstrips and the beacons in the hinterland. It will also be used to assist in the general shuttling of cargoes and for making mercy flights in the hinterland. So much for air transport.

Let us move to water transport. I would say immediately that some of the criticisms in relation to the standard of maintenance of some of the vessels and in relation to the losses are justified. I do not think that was mentioned here, but losses on the ships have reached an alarming state where people's cargoes are shipped and when the destination is reached many things are missing. I would go so far as to mention even the bad treatment sometimes meted out to the users of these services. It is our intention – and this has been demonstrated by the sum of money provided in the Estimates – to improve on these services, first, by providing additional boats so that the pressures on the existing boats, some of them very old, can be relieved and the boats can be dry-docked at times when they are due to be dry-docked. For this purpose, for ships, pilot launches, dredging equipment for the harbour, a sum of \$11,930,000 has been provided in the Estimates.

7.10 p.m.

I cannot at this time say whether all these vessels will be forthcoming during this year. I know that the pilot launches, at least two of them, will be here by September/October and it is

hoped that one of the ferry boats will be available towards the end of the year or early next year. The vessel for the North West, which is being constructed by GUYNEC, will be completed this year. I can say no more at this time, but it all shows that the improvement of the services and the increase in the number of ships are very important factors operating in the mind of the Government. When these things happen, automatically, the pressures on the boats will be relieved and better maintenance can be done. For this purpose the sum of \$200,000 in the Capital Estimates is being provided so that at least a start can be made on the improvement and maintenance of those ships. I cannot promise that there will not still be delays in the Pomeroon service or any other service. What I can say at this time is that we will do our best to make sure that as reliable a service as possible will be provided in the very trying circumstances under which we are working.

In respect of land transport, criticism has been made that we have not been adding to the fleet of the Guyana Transport Services. Now it is true for the whole of 1978 we have not added to that fleet and it is equally true that because of age, 38 of these buses, being as old as 10 years, are in need of complete overhauling. What is proposed this year is for us to make a two-pronged project of this problem: one is to take out of service the 38 buses and have them reconditioned and put back into services and to import, not completely- built buses but chasis and to have bodies of the buses built and assembled in the country. In this way we will be able to increase the fleet of buses and where we have a present percentage availability of between 60 -70 per cent, it is hoped that that percentage will be increased beyond 70 per cent. But even with those constraints, Cde. Speaker, the service, and maybe this might be a blessing in disguise, to the people has been greater during 1978 and I quote these figures from the Report of the Guyana Transport Service Ltd.

In 1977 there were 15.596 million passengers using the services. In 1978 when no additional buses were brought in, that figure increased to 24,475,000. The mileage in 1977 was 6.23 million miles with more buses and that was 31 per cent over the previous year. In 1978 with fewer buses on the road the Company did 7.5 million miles which was a 20 per cent increase over 1977. New services were brought in on the East Bank area and the services on the West

Coast and West Bank, with the construction and opening of the Demerara Harbour Bridge, have been extended to Georgetown.

And so, Cde. Speaker, substantial investment is being proposed in the public transport sector, air, water and land. It is proposed to improve existing facilities and to build new ones, for example, depots for the buses, as well as to have more effective maintenance carried out because we have reached the point of saturation at Kingston where it would be virtually silly to bring in new buses which will need to be repaired when the facilities are not there to have the necessary repairs done.

While this expenditure is taking place, the transport planning unit in the Ministry of Transport, which has been strengthened over the year, will be carrying out an in-depth study of all the modes of transportation so that we can provide a more efficient and reliable service than has so far been provided for the people.

In the field of communications, we all know that the earth station was officially put into operation on the 23rd February this year. The earth station and the tropo station are both operating and for the time being the earth station is used for carrying messages, telephone and telex, to the faraway places of North America and the United Kingdom while the tropo station continues to operate regionally. If anything happens to one, the other one is able to take over.

7.20 p.m.

We are also looking at the question whether greater use cannot be made of the tropo station so that new work on a sub-station can be carried out in order to give a better telephone communication system to the hinterland of this country. I do not know if this would work but it is being studied. But if it works, and after some additional equipment has been installed in relation to the earth station, in a couple of years it will be possible for someone at Lethem to dial directly to London or New York or to any other place which he may wish to contact. While this is going on, the internal telephone system is also being expanded and work is continuing on this right now. Later this year, this expansion will provide for 1,200 additional lines and between 1980 and 1982 this will be expanded to about 9,000 lines.

Also on the question of telephone services, I do not wish to build up the hopes of anyone at this particular time, but there is provision in the earth station that whenever television comes to Guyana, we would be able to see programmes from other places. There is great modernisation taking place in the expansion of these services for the people of this country.

It is useful for me to mention here what is taking place in the Post Office Corporation. Although there is no provision in the Estimates for any expansion of this service, what we are attempting to do in the Post Office is to make greater use of the facilities provided by the post offices throughout the country. Already, the post offices in some areas serve as agents for the Co-op Bank and for the sale of N.I.S. stamps. We feel that there is capacity for other similar services to be provided and we are presently examining whether such things as the sale of licences, maybe for shops, cars and other things, and whether the collection of monies for organisations like the insurance companies, the Mortgage Finance Bank and so forth, could not be handled in a regional manner by this institution. I remember when I was a boy, the Post Office was used for selling quinine to people in their particular areas. Who knows, it may even be used for the distribution of drugs. But all of these things are being looked at and they are being looked at in relation to cutting expenses by utilising facilities that already exist. This is the kind of message we would like to give to the comrades on the other side and also to the nation.

I would now like to say what our programme is and what we are doing in the field of road transport in terms of providing road facilities. When this Government took office at the end of 1964, it made a solemn promise that it would improve, reconstruct and build new roads in the country. It has been pursuing that programme over the years and many of the primary roads have been completely reconstructed. But as you build roads, the need for expansion of even those roads which you have built becomes essential in terms of increased traffic. So we find that on the East Coast, where part of that road going to Plaisance/Better Hope, was reconstructed many years ago, there was need to expand it from a two-lane highway to a four-lane highway and this work will be completed around September and that will be a tremendous improvement to that environment.

The programme for the continuation of this process of road rehabilitation and construction of new-roads will be further extended this year by a capital expenditure of \$18,558

19.3.79

National Assembly

7.20 – 7.30 p.m.

million. In addition to the two roads I have mentioned, some additional facilities in terms of lighting and safety devices will be put on the Demerara Harbour Bridge. Later this year, work will begin on the East Bank Berbice road. Work will be done on feeder roads and I think Cde. Prashad will be talking more about this. So we find that the road programme is not isolated to a particular area. The road programme spreads across the entire country and you find that people in all the various communities are benefiting from this programme.

The U.M.R.P. road was being constructed between Sand Landing and Iterballi, linking to the road between Teperu and Sherima the part between Linden and Surabanna. These roads are of sufficiently good standard to allow for vehicles, even motor cars, but more so for trucks, land rovers, vans and , more importantly, the heavy trucks that transport timber. Already, areas of forest which were not exploited in the past are now being exploited both by the public and private sector and so the availability of timber for our saw mills and for the export is improving.

7.30 p.m.

Work on the road going to Sand Landing has been temporarily suspended because for the time being it will not be in the best interest of the country to put additional expenditure on that section of the road until we are sure that the hydro-power project will be financed. So a sum of \$1 million has been voted for the improvement and maintenance of the road to provide the necessary services for the users of that road. The organisation which was used for the construction of the UMRP road is presently engaged on the construction of the Upper Demerara Forestry road which is approximately 70 miles in length. A portion of about 38 miles of that road was partially constructed some years ago. A sum of \$60 million will be spent during this year. Construction is being financed from a loan by the Caribbean Development Bank. I should mention that the East Coast road is being done with USAID assistance. The East Bank Berbice road is being done with E.E.C. financial assistance including a grant of \$8 million.

Before moving from roads, I need to mention that sometimes in our maintenance we become frustrated in our efforts because of the heavy overloading on the roads; vehicles are being overloaded and therefore the pressures on the roads increase. We are presently carrying out a study to find out the levels of overloading of vehicles and the limitations on which

overloading can be allowed. And since the cost of road construction is escalating so rapidly, this kind of exercise becomes very relevant. Also, we are having advice on how to use our local materials, materials which will give us a cheaper road and reduce the foreign exchange which comes with the use of imported materials. Comrades will have read quite a lot about experiments being carried out with clay-brick roads and one experiment can be seen on part of the road leading to the Demerara Harbour Bridge. We have to make sure that the roads that are constructed last for the longest time possible.

I would like to give some figures to show the rate of increase of cost of road construction.

During 1972, the cost for the construction of a mile of road was \$250,000. In 1979, the cost for the construction of that same mile of road rose to \$1 million. Let us examine why this has happened. We find that the cost of cement rose during the period 1972 and 1979 from \$1.92 to somewhere between \$8.50 and \$10. The cost of bitumen rose from 37 cents to \$3 per gallon and the cost of a lorry which at the time cost \$17,000 to \$20,000. Today, it costs about \$90,000. Stone delivered to site rose from \$11 per ton to \$75 per ton and tractor tyres which in 1972 were sold for \$120, now cost as high as \$1,000. And so the story goes. Therefore, we have to make sure that roads are not abused.

When we say that this Budget is like a conversation with the people of this country this is what we mean because these facilities belong to the nation; they do not belong to a political party. At some point in time we, as individuals, will have to move aside and make place for others who will come. These things belong to the people of the country and therefore, the people and even the Opposition must assist us in taking care of these facilities.

The road maintenance vote for last year was reduced to a fairly low level of just about \$1 million. This year, that sum has increased to \$3 million, a substantial increase. The policy of the Government is to build new roads, improve existing roads, provide roads for the farming community, and build roads in the interior areas where people in the past were reluctant to go.

7.40 p.m.

We read of many visitors to the country, school children and other people, who are anxious to use the roads in the hinterland to see new discovery and the opportunities which it will afford the nation. While these facilities are being constructed, there are certain services which are essential and are sometimes kept in the background, and people rarely hear about them. I refer to such a division as the soils and materials laboratories, so essential for the structural design of roads and for the selection of materials to be used for these roads. Additionally, they provide tests and information for the construction of factories and large buildings which would otherwise not be economically designed in terms of foundation. Such places like the Textile Mill, the Glass Factory have used the services of the soils and materials laboratories in their design and construction.

We have the Survey Division depleted in staff as the rate of training cannot keep pace with the expansion of projects. In recent times we have seen a pileup of projects, as I have mentioned, the irrigation projects like Tapacuma, Black Bush Polder, M.M.A., all requiring this most important service.

A service like hydro-meteorological service has gained its own popularity, a service where every citizen turns on the radio to find out what the weather is expected to be. But knowing what the weather is like for you to plan your day is but a marginal benefit of this service because, more importantly, this service is required to give the necessary information on which the analyses are carried out for the efficient design of such projects as drainage and irrigation projects, hydropower projects and for the planning of construction works which is being expended.

The Hydro-meteorological Department presently has 181 rainfall stations, 23 stations giving information on the climate, and 55 hydrological stations, and in this year its work will be extended in order to study solar radiation. This is very important in terms of planning for the use of solar energy in addition to the many facilities which we may have for the generation of energy and electricity in the country. In addition to this, this service will provide for Guyana a climate Atlas and a hydrological map of Guyana. These two things will be most useful not only for

teaching at such places as the University of Guyana and the Hydrometeorological Institute in Barbados but for teaching at the Faculty of Engineering of U.W.I and other Universities. Sometimes the importance and relevance of these services are not readily understood or realised. Bu they are nevertheless important and essential in the planning of projects, the execution of projects and the maintenance and operation of projects. So its significance must be understood by the nation.

With the quarry completed, we are moving from a position of shortage of stone to a position of a surplus of stone. Right now we are exploring the export market possibilities in other countries where this commodity can be sold. We are also looking during this year at the possibility of producing concrete products –

The Speaker: Cde. Naraine, we have two other Members to speak before 8.00 p.m.

Cde. Naraine: In five minutes I will wind up. Much has been said about the mechanical equipment in the country, spare parts and things like that. Here again, if we look at the Estimates, we will find that it is proposed to increase our capacity for the maintenance of these items of equipment. We have made arrangements with agencies, the British and U.S.A.I.D., for bringing into the country certain spare parts. Also, with a workshop being constructed with the help of the G.D.R. and the rehabilitation of other workshops, we hope to improve our capacity in the mechanical section whereby we would not only have the capacity for repairing and keeping equipment in better repair, but at the German workshop we would actually be manufacturing parts. The Germans have been very helpful in that they have supplied us with commodities which are being sold locally and the proceeds of that sale are being utilised to offset the local cost of the erection of the workshop. These facilities will include a training centre. Under the U.S.A.I.D. programme, we hope to train 1500 persons, from supervisors right on to operators.

I would have liked to say a little more but time is pressing. But I would like to close by saying that we are not insensitive to criticism and to useful suggestions. Many times when members of the Opposition make criticism, I write them down. The purpose of that is to check on what they are saying and to have defects corrected. We propose this year to introduce in the

public sector a system whereby the management of organisations and the Government can be closer to the people and their criticism. We, therefore, will extend within the Ministry, the development communication system working in very close collaboration with the Ministry of Communications.

7.50 p.m.

We feel that all this talk about national unity is a lot of wind, a lot of paper, a lot of ink. The only way that national unity will come is when we change our outlook. Otherwise we would get nowhere. All the work that we have been doing is a practical example of the foundation of national unity. We do not discriminate in one area or another. The roads are there for everyone; the buses are there for everyone to use. The air transport facilities are there for everybody to use and everything I have talked about was done without discrimination and this is a practical demonstration of part of the foundation of national unity.

The talk of Mr. Abraham is the kind of thing that will never bring national unity in this country – to come in this honourable Assembly and make accusations against the Government, the Police, the Army and everybody. I would suggest that he should go outside and call the names that he called. If we are to have national unity let us show the people that we have the will and the determination, and act in a way that is in consonance with national unity. Accusing people of things while they cannot be here to defend themselves will not get us any place. There are many ways of remedying those things if they are true.

I would like to conclude my presentation and I appeal to my comrades and hon. Friends of this House – I might have been too caustic in my closing remarks but I feel strongly. If we are going to have national unity and solidarity, we must show it by outlook and actions.

The Speaker: Cde. Sukhai.

Cde. Sukhai: Cde. Speaker, I have listened to the 1979 Budget Speech made by the Minister of Economic Development and Co-operatives. I have spent some time examining this document to see if I can find something important, something new or something dynamic which

can move the economy of this country on the road to recovery, but there is nothing of such a nature and having gone through all the points I am convinced that as the Government failed in the past so shall it fail again in 1979.

The Minister must admit that the economy failed last year and from my examination of some of the points I will show some of the weaknesses of the P.N.C. But before go on to that, I want to make one clarification in respect of what the Minister of Education said in relation to the employment of Socialist-trained persons. He read a letter to show that some students were employed but not all the students who come from Soviet Union or other Socialist countries are employed. I must tell you that before those comrades were employed, the Government refused to employ them. The P.P.P. had to put pressure on the Government before those persons were employed.

Last year those students came back, five of them from the Leningrad Technical Institute. They have made application to the Teachers Training College. Some of them were interviewed, yet they have not been employed. We see this as a change of the position of the Government, particularly since last year, in respect of Socialist countries. This is the record I want to mention in passing.

Looking at the Budget Speech on page 29, the Minister says:

“Co-operativism as a way of life remains the cardinal principle of our development strategy and the dynamic for social and economic transformation”.

Some of the members who tried to defend the Government said: “We were the first to bring Co-operative Republic” and things of that sort. But nowhere in the world where genuine socialism is practised have we heard that the co-operative movement was midwife to bring forth such system called the socialist system.

We just want to look at the state of some of the co-operatives in our country. Looking at the 1969 Report of the Chief Co-operatives Officer we see that there were 101 agricultural Thrift and Credit Societies with a membership of about 9,966, almost 10,000 members. I must say that most of those societies were developed when the P.P.P. was in Government and they had

acquired a certain level of skilled administrative management. They were working on a voluntary basis to provide service to the farmers. But looking at the record, I saw that on the West Demerara we had ten such Societies with about 730 members. I made a personal check of those societies and not one is functioning there. The largest one was at Windsor Forest with 184 members. That has also collapsed. That is supposed to be the hometown of a member of the hierarchy of the P.N.C., a regional Minister. But the people have no confidence in them, that is why it collapsed. I made another check at the Upper East Coast Demerara where there were supposed to be twelve societies. Having made that check we found that only two of them were working. If you go down the line throughout the country, you will find that almost all ten societies which are on the books are defunct. They are on the books to show that they still exist, just as dead persons' names remain on the voters' list.

8 p.m.

Why have these societies failed? I just want to give you some reasons. In 1969, the G.R.B. gave a loan of \$368,000 to the Guyana Co-operative Credit Society. I got this information from this same report, on page 16. When I look at the 1970 price Review, January/March, I see that that society in turn gave loans to various co-op societies at the rate of 7 per cent. Those societies then went back to give the farmers loans at the rate of 9 and 10 per cent. In the same period of time the Government gave the Rice Action Committee, through the very Rice Board \$2 million, and the Rice Action Committee in turn gave out loans to farmers at the rate of 3 per cent. The point I want to make here is that while this Government was trying to promote the co-operative movement, the very Government created the Rice Action Committee which devoured all the co-ops which were built during a number of years. At the same time, it used the Rice Action Committee to do another –

[Interruption]

The Speaker: This is Cde. Sukhai's first intervention in a Budget, please give him a chance.

Cde. Sukhai: You know, Cde. Speaker, the Rice Action Committee consists of all hand-picked people, boys from the P.N.C., getting jobs; they are put in administrative positions. They are being rewarded in that way for what they have done for the Party. In another category of co-ops, that is the machinery co-ops, in 1969, fifteen societies were registered but only four are functioning. Making a check again and looking at the book, we saw that three of them were supposed to be on the Essequibo Coast. Today they have all collapsed. On the Upper East Coast Demerara there are supposed to be seven co-ops but all of them seem to have disappeared. At the end of 1969 we had two rice mill co-operative societies but now there is only one.

In the West Demerara there was a Cassava Producers' Co-operative. It was very strong, it had twelve members, no share capital, cash in hand was \$10 and this society was going to have a cassava mill to produce cassava starch and so on. What we find here is that the Government pushed some people into co-operatives. The Government gave this society a U.S.A.I.D. grant of \$4,631.00 to purchase machinery and so on. Twelve members got together to do this. This is the way they squander the taxpayers' money and they are fooling us about co-ops.

There is also discrimination. People who are genuinely interested in forming co-ops for production are getting sledge hammers on their heads. They do not have P.N.C. cards and so they cannot get land in order that they could register as a society. At Windsor Forest, immediately after the Referendum, the people in control of the society turned back people who went to buy goods because they did not vote. This is the type of thing that is happening in this country. This is how the co-ops are functioning. They are putting pressure on people.

Recently I looked at the **Official Gazette** and I saw that the Matthew's Ridge Consumers' Co-op has been scrapped. I don't have enough time left to go into others but you can believe me, there can be no transformation of the economic system in this country through the co-operative system. It has happened nowhere else in the world and it will not happen here. People are feeling the pains already. The Minister gave a kind of eight point prescription on pages 40 and 42.

The Speaker: Five minutes more.

8.10 p.m.

Cde. Sukhai: He talked about making better use of assets. Another point he made was that we must reduce drastically spoilage and other post-harvest losses in the agricultural sector. What about the pre-harvest protection of agricultural crops? They are talking about post-harvest. What about the pre-harvest?

I have had the opportunity of going around Guyana and the great rivers and creeks where I have met farmers. We found that the wild animals declare a perpetual war against these farmers. The attack comes from the air, land and water. From the water you get the watrus, from the land you get the agouti and the wild animals, from the air you get the bugs.

Cde. Roshan Ally and I made a sample check and we found that more than one half of the food crop is lost in this way. Now, the Minister in his Budget Speech did not say how we are going to put on this cure or this prescription to protect more than half of the food crop we are producing, and having omitted that the statement is relatively anti-national because it prevents the farmers from producing and it prevents the consumers from having sufficient of this local food to eat. In view of that, costs must go up. We are saying that something must be done to protect the large amount of foodstuff that is being lost.

Not only this. What about the bush fires? In view of inadequate drainage and irrigation, where there is pegasse soil, during dry weather there can be fires. I watched two losses like that in 1976 between September and October, one in the No. 1 Canal Good Hope area where 43 farmers suffered damage. An area of 90 acres of land was burnt to between two and three feet deep. I understand from some people who know about soil that they cannot produce anything there for the next fifteen years to come. Do you know that those people were not given help? The matter was taken to the Local Government authority, to the Agriculture Department, to the Regional Department, but no help was given. We asked them to go and help fight the fire. Comrades are praising the regional system but this regional system is really impotent. It cannot do anything.

The Speaker: You have got only two minutes more.

Cde. Sukhai: What about the milk situation? Recently they have had so much propaganda. They said, “Well, now the flood will come, because milk will flood the whole country”. But having gone into it, we found that whatever they are producing, the milk plant is receiving only 1,500 gallons per day. And according to information which we have here from the same Government paper, the milk that comes into the City of Georgetown totals 10,000 gallons per day.

When the plant has only 1,500 gallons, only 15 per cent of the milk produced is allocated around the city of Georgetown. Cde. Basir was speaking yesterday that there was no milk distribution on the Essequibo. But from this we can see that the Government has not milk to supply to any of the rural areas, only to the City of Georgetown. I can say that the Government has been wasting time with respect to this particular business.

There was talk about Moblissa. They spent there over \$3,300,000 over the past four years. We have got figures for that. Now they are producing 150 gallons per day. When one looks at the administrative cost and other things and the balance is totalled against production, one gallon of milk there will cost \$5.39 as against the price to the farmers who are getting \$2.00, and \$2.40 per gallon for those who collect the milk.

Moblissa has failed and more attention should be given to farmers and what they produce. We made a spot check on the West Demerara between April 1975 and July 1976 in the area of Goed Fortuin. We found that 37 head of cattle were stolen during that period of time valued at \$30,000. If one goes around Guyana one will find that thousands and thousands of head of cattle belonging to poor farmers are being stolen. Up to this morning a car was held up with carcasses.

The Speaker: Cde. Sukhai, I am sorry, I cannot give you much more time.

Cde. Sukhai: I wish to conclude by saying that this Budget cannot succeed as I have seen it. It is better for the Government to go and tell the people that it has failed because the people would like to hear an announcement from the Government when it is going to resign.

The Speaker: I am sorry I had to stop you on your first speech in respect of the Budget but nevertheless I wish to congratulate you for your intervention. I hope you will have better luck next time. Cde. Clarke.

The Minister – Regional (East Berbice/ Corentyne) (Cde. Clarke): Cde. Speaker, the Annual Budget debate provides us with an opportunity to have a wide-ranging debate which sometimes serves to widen the people's consciousness as to the state of the national economy and what the nation expects of us as we attempt to make the economy progressively stronger.

The 1979 Budget is not exception. It has been remarked already in this House that this Budget lays before the nation stark realities of our situation. The Minister of Economic Development and Co-operatives reminded the nation at the very outset that this Budget is the fifteenth Budget of the People's National Congress led Government. Cde. Speaker, during the course of this debate, so far, many speakers, one after another, from the Government side have been able to convince this House and the nation that the People's National Congress Government has been able to improve the living conditions of the people of this country far above and beyond the expectations of many of our friends on the other side.

8.20 p.m.

One listened, for instance, to the catalogue of achievements which have been alluded to by speakers on this side of the House, ending up with Cde. Naraine who told us that this People's National Congress Government has improved the physical conditions of the countryside beyond recognition. When this People's National Congress came to power in 1964/1965, we had no roads in this country. Today, members of the Opposition and all the people of this country can move around this country as quickly as they would like, yet some criticise us for not improving the conditions in Guyana. But when one listens to what Cde. Naraine had to say about road building alone, one recognises that we were able in ten years to build a network of roads on the coast which, in their wildest dreams, they could not have even thought about. What is worse, Cde. Speaker, is that they come here to criticise us for so doing. Having done so, the P.P.P. says that is squander mania because the expenditure was not on the right thing. But if you spend

money to produce and you have no infrastructure, no road, no water, and so on, in order to move whatever you have to the centres, then certainly you are wasting time to produce.

A comrade spoke about post harvest losses. You are going to get more losses unless you have the infrastructure. It is this wise P.N.C. Government which has planned carefully to ensure that the development of this country can take place in an orderly fashion. What we need to ensure is that we have a proper transportation system. We have heard from the Minister of Works and Transport about all the important communication linkages which have been established; air transport, a new airstrip in the hinterland and we heard about the telephone systems. Today in Guyana one can pick up a telephone and by the Direct Distance Dialling system, dial his counterpart or friend in any part of this country. Who was responsible for that? It is the P.N.C. I want members to know that it is the P.N.C. that has been responsible for these things.

I do not have to chronicle the successes which this Government has had in improving the quality of life of the people in this country. You will recognise from the contributions of those who are responsible for housing, education, health, etc. that in every field of endeavour this Government has improved the conditions of people. This is because this Government has the interest of the Guyanese people at heart.

But what about our friends on the other side? My contention here this evening is that the People's Progressive Party does not have the interest of the Guyanese people at heart and I am going to prove that contention in the five minutes available to me by mentioning a few things. First of all, the Leader of the Opposition says that he is a Moscow puppet. If you are a Moscow puppet, then you are concerned with serving the interest of the Moscovite, they will pull the string. The Guyanese people who should be your first concern are not your first concern.

Cde. Speaker, the members of the P.P.P. have let the Guyanese people down. One only has to reflect on the number of occasions on which the People's Progressive Party has let down its supposed constituents. One will find that over the years, even before Independence – but if you start from the time of Independence you will see how they boycotted the Independence Conference. Then they boycotted the Parliament and when they were finished boycotting the

19.3.79

National Assembly

8.20 – 8.30 p.m.

Parliament for two years, after going to the people and telling them that they must be irresponsible and not to produce to feed the Guyanese people, when they disregarded them, they returned to this Parliament and they decided they will give critical support. But critical support as we have come to recognise, has been more critical than supportive. Then, we found that these socialists who do not have the interest of the Guyanese people at heart have been very busy calling political strikes. They have been very busy encouraging people in non-productive activities. They have been telling people not to produce. Let me just refer to one instance where this has been done – and they are barefacedly going about it.

On Sunday, 11th March, there was held a meeting in Black Bush Poldder at 8 p.m. and twenty-six persons were present. It was in a house and the house is owned by a certain gentleman who will remain unnamed for the moment. But the speaker one Doodnauth Kanhai. Cde. Speaker, do you know what he was telling the people there? He was telling them they must not worry with this Burnham Government's call for production. He told them that they are working with the Government and they must go and sit down at work and they must not produce. He also told them they must not be antagonistic to the supervisors. That is what was going on at that meeting.

8.30 p.m.

Now, the particular gentleman claimed that he was delivering a message. Of course, little did he know that that information would have come back to me from those people who were there. Let me warn the P.P.P. that when it indulges in that kind of behaviour, it cannot come back to any forum, including this one, and speak about behaviour because when those people, following the instructions they get from the P.P.P. behave in the manner suggested and when they are dealt with, let there be no weeping; let there be no one coming and shouting discrimination.

The Speaker: Cde Clarke, tomorrow you will continue.

19.3.79

National Assembly

8.30 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, “That this Assembly do now adjourn until tomorrow, Tuesday, 20th March, 1979, at 2 p.m.” [**The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House**]

Adjourned accordingly at 8.32 p.m.
