

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**

183th Sitting

2 p.m.

Friday, 23th 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- on leave)

Deputy Prime Minister (1)

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

(Absent)

Senior Ministers (12)

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

(Absent)

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 (Absent)
- *Cde. H.O. Jack,
Minister of Energy and Natural Resources (Absent)
- *Cde. F.E. Hope,
Minister of Finance (Absent)
- *Cde. G.B. Kennard, C.C.H.,
Minister of Agriculture (Absent)
- *Cde. M. Shahabuddeen, C.C.H.,
Attorney General and Minister of Justice (Absent)
- *Cde. V.R.Teekah,
Minister of Education, Social
Development and Culture
- *Cde. R.E. Jackson
Minister of Foreign Affairs (Absent)
- *Cde. J.A. Tyndall, A.A.,
Minister of Trade and Consumer Protection (Absent – on leave)

Ministers (2)

- Cde. O.E. Clarke
Minister – Regional
(East Berbice/ Corentyne) (Absent)
- Cde. C.A. Nascimento
Minister, Office of the Prime Minister (Absent – on leave)

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.,
Minister of State – Regional
(Mazaruni/ Potaro)

Cde. J.P. Chowritmootoo, J.P.,
Minister of State – Regional
(Esseguibo 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

(Absent)

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

(Absent)

Cde. W. Hussain

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

(Absent)

Cde. S.H. Sukhu, M.S.

Cde. C.A. Sukul, J.P.

Cde. H.A. Taylor

Cde. L.E. Willems

Cde. M. Zaheeruddeen

Members of the Opposition (16)

(i) People's Progressive Party (14)

Leader of the Opposition (1)

Cde. C. Jagan

Leader of the Opposition

(Absent)

Deputy Speaker (1)

Cde. Ram Karran,

Deputy Speaker

Other Members (12)

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

(ii) Liberator Party (2)

Mr. M.F. Singh, J.P	(Absent – on leave)
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 the Prime Minister, Cde. Clarke, and the hon. Member Mr. Feilden Singh for today's Sittings.

PUBLIC BUSINESS**MOTION****APPROVAL OF ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE 1979**

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply to resume consideration of the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 1979.

Assembly in Committee of Supply

The Chairman: We will resume consideration of the 1979 Estimate of Expenditure. Today we will commence with the Heads and Divisions for which the Minister of Works and Transport is responsible. May I also say this. Yesterday, because of the way questions were asked, answers were given. I hope we will have the same type of consideration in the way questions are to be asked and answers given.

Page 90 to 104.

HEAD 36 – MINISTRY OF WORKS AND TRANSPORT**(WORKS)**

Question proposed that the sum \$35,857,578 for Head 36, Ministry of Works and Transport (Works), stand part of the Estimates.

Cde. Nokta: Cde. Chairman, page 103, subhead 22, Surveys. I observe under the

heading, Surveys, the legend “Survey crafts in need of docking, general over-hauling and reconditioning Hydrographic Surveys –Guybridge”. I cannot fully understand this and I would like to ask the Minister simply to explain what it means by “reconditioning Hydrographic Surveys – Guybridge”.

Then I come now to subhead 29, Roads. I notice that there is an increase in Budget allocation from last year’s Revised Estimates of nearly \$1 million to now \$3 million. I am happy for this increase because I know that roads in Essequibo, especially in Wakenaam and Leguan, are in an atrocious condition and I would like to ask the Minister, seeing that the vote has increased three times, if he can consider giving priority for the immediate repairs to roads in Wakenaam and Leguan and the Essequibo road from Hampton Court to Charity. I was told this morning on the phone that traffic has actually ceased from Charity to Hampton Court because of the heavy rain and I am here asking the Minister to give consideration to this problem.

On the same page, subhead 34, Unallocated Stores the legend states: “Payment for Spares on Order”. We are aware of the problems of getting spares for many Government vehicles such as draglines, tractors. Equipment is left lying for the want of spares. Seeing that money is allocated, I want to draw the Minister’s attention to a great problem affecting residents in Wakenaam. About fifteen farmers, are at the moment suffering from terrible erosion of a sea defence at a place called Mon Ferme. Sometime last year these people suffered and at the moment, I understand at every high tide, they are suffering.

The Chairman: What that has to do with spares?

Cde. Nokta: These people are suffering because the two draglines owned by the Government, one at Leguan and one at Wakenaam, are left idle because they need spares. If I am to elaborate, the engineer at Leguan sometime ago promised the farmers to send a dragline from Leguan to Wakenaam to assist in the healing of a breach. The farmers hired a pontoon at a cost of \$500 and waited on the western side of Hog Island for three days. The dragline was started but it could not reach the pontoon. It broke down. As a result of that, the breach has not been

mended. In addition to that, there is another dragline now lying at a place called Meerzorg, for over a year, needing repairs, and no doubt, needing spares. At the moment Government has to spend money to have watchman watching it. So in view of that and in view of the problems of those farmers, it is about four hundred acres of coconut.---

The Chairman: That is the same type of thing I have been talking about. How is that relevant here under money allocated for spares. What has all this to do with the question? This is not a debate on the general Estimates.

Cde. Nokta: Mr. Chairman, if spares are provided for these draglines, I am certain they could be repaired and they could be put in use to help to heal the breach.

The Chairman: Isn't that the very thing being put here? Please continue

Cde. Nokta: Page 104, subhead 44, Maintenance of Demerara Harbour Bridge. I see here \$992,000 is being asked for. This is a steep increase from last year's \$370,041. It is approximately three times more. I notice on page 6 of this same Estimate that revenue to be collected would be \$2.5 million. If revenue is \$2.5 million and maintenance is not estimated to be nearly \$1 million, I just want to draw the Minister's attention to the fact that this bridge no doubt will run into a lot of problem in the long run. That is my observation on these subheads so far up to page 104.

Cde. Ally: Page 104, subhead 41, Contributions to Guyana Water Authority. I have noticed here in the Estimates that for last year, 1978, \$83,000,000 was given to the Guyana Water Authority as contribution and the Revised Estimate states that it went up to \$9,070,151. This year it will be \$6,500,000. I would like to ask the Minister, seeing that people are suffering in the country today because of the pure water situation, why in the Corriverton area on the Corentyne, Line Path, Section "g" and Prince Town, people are still without this necessary service. Most of these people living on these two settlements are sugar workers and they have to prepare their meals very early in the morning, at around 4 o'clock. Women have to walk about 800 yards away from their homes to the nearest stand-pipe. As a result of this, many women

have been assaulted in the mornings. Is the Minister aware the settlers of Line Path “g” and Prince Town are willing to do self-help work in laying the pipelines? Will the Minister indicate how soon a pure water supply will be made available to residents of these two settlements?

Will the Minister indicate how soon the proposed well for No. 79 Village on the Corentyne will be sunk? Is the Minister also aware that residents of the No. 76 area are paying water rates although they are not getting the necessary service for the past four years? Is the Minister also aware that the well at Limlair on the Corentyne was flowing muddy water and as a result Guywa had to abandon the well and harness the Bush Lot old well? As a result of this, the people in that area are not getting the necessary pressure. People had to dig holes in the ground and take off their hydrants in order to get drippings from the pipe lines. I would like the Minister to tell us how soon this situation will be remedied.

Is the Minister aware that most of the pumping situations of the Pure Water Department are there without batteries because of the shortage of batteries? One battery is being used to start five engines in the mornings – the Nos. – 74, 63, 57, 53, - and 47 wells. Will the Minister say how soon the necessary batteries will be made available to the pumping stations? Is the Minister further aware that the engines of most of the pure water pumping stations on the Upper Corentyne are badly in need of spare parts? Is the Minister also aware that owing the absence of the necessary spare parts, the system frequently breaks down? As a result, residents are left without the service for weeks. Will the Minister say how soon the necessary spare parts will be made available? Is the Minister aware of the fact that residents at Black Bush Polder are badly suffering because of a lack of this very essential pure water supply services? Would the Minister say how soon pipelines will be laid so that the residents will be supplied with the necessary water?

Cde. Ram Karran: (The Deputy Speaker): I would like to ask the hon. Minister if he will indicate to the House the number of vacancies on the Fixed Establishment as shown in these Estimates, commencing from Folio 90. That will give us an indication of the Ministry’s ability to function properly.

2:20pm

Following that, on the West Berbice one of the wells went out of action on Thursday. As a result of the discriminatory policy of distribution of water by hand, it resulted in a strike of sugar workers in that area. I spoke with the Minister and I must say that he was very co-operative. He immediately got in touch with the people, he said, and the thing was put right.

He does not admit that it was discriminatory distribution but that is the legend I have and the works, as a result, decided to come out.

We know that many of the wells are old. This one was, I think, installed in 1931. What is the Government's policy in so far as the pure water supply is concerned? Is it a continuation of this artesian supply which we understand is drying up or has the Government any programme in the new Development Programme to ensure ---

The Chairman: Cde. Ram Karran, which subhead or item are you speaking on?

Cde. Ram Karran: Contribution to Guyana Water Authority on page 104 subhead , constant break down in the water supply, even in the city of Georgetown where as a soon as the sun decides to shine a little we have a break down in the water supply. That is not good enough. It affects production and productivity which was the theme of the Budget. If this goes on the Government has no plans for a system of supplying water in the country, then we are all gone.

If I may ask specific question on the subhead1, items (183) and (184) on page 98. These relate to Pest Controller and Pest Controller Assistant respectively, Why do we have such persons and what pests do they control in the Ministry of Works and Transport (Works)? We have had recently loses from safes. Do we describe those people who broach safes as pest and are these the controllers?

The Chairman: Cde. Ram Karran, let us proceed.

Cde. Dalchand: Subheads 40 and 44 on page 104. Subhead 40, Grant to National Park Commission. I should like the Minister to say how soon will the Parks Commission complete the

works on the western side of the GUYBRIDGE area. That area is so desolate that it is serving as a ground of crime. A great deal of crime is committed in that area. Some work started last year but nothing has been done this year.

Subhead 41, Contribution to Guyana Water Authority. As I said, the pure water supply situation in this country is really deteriorating. I see that last year we voted the sum of \$3 million

The Chairman: Cde. Dalchand, we had all of that from Cde. Ram Karran.

Cde. Dalchand: I still feel that we do not have sufficient money allocated here for pure water. We quarrel when money is over-spent but this is a very essential service and we say that much more should have been allocated under this head in order to make the supply of pure water a reality.

For subhead 44, Maintenance of Demerara Harbour Bridge, I note we have a heavy allocation and I want to suggest to the Minister that with conservative spending and with good care taken of this administration, we can save money on this large allocation for maintenance. I know for a fact that a great deal of money is needed for this work but I cross the bridge every day and I am sorry to say that a lot of money is wasted. I think there should be more care and more pruning within the administration where expenditure is concerned.

The Minister of Works and Transport (Cde. Naraine): Cde. Chairman, with your permission I proposed to deal with the questions as they appear in the Estimates.

The first question in that order would be the one raised by Cde. Ram Karran in relation to the number of vacancies in the Ministry. They are vacancies in the Ministry and in the professional and the technical posts, they can be quite heavy. It is for this reason that the Government and this Ministry have had resort to the employment of contractors and consultants to assist in some of the work but, as we have heard earlier, the Government has been expending substantial sums of money for training, both locally and overseas, and it is hoped that gradually many of these vacancies will be filled permanently and we would be in a position to reduce on

the input of contractors and consultants coming from overseas.

Of course, everything cannot be done at once because when young staff have been recruited, just out of colleges and schools, they would have to be given some years of experience and training before we can tackle everything from our own resources. I would not be able at this time to give numbers but, if Cde. Ram Karran would like, I could ask the Permanent Secretary to give him that in writing.

But what I would like to mention is that in drafting the Budget and the Estimates, which are in front of us, the State Planning Commission took extreme pains to make enquiries of the type made by Cde. Ram Karran, that is, to look at the national capacity as well as the Ministry's capacity to perform, to absorb a volume of work which will be required to be done, and it was after very careful consideration of the absorptive capacity of the nation in terms of manpower, materials and fix finance that these estimates were finally determined.

2:30 p.m.

On the question of water, Cde. Seeram Prashad, in his intervention during the Budget Debates, stated the various things which are being done on the water supply. It is the Government's intention to give pure and adequate portable water supply to all communities in the country, but, obviously, it cannot all be done at the same time. And so year after year the Government, in addition to the maintenance of the existing water supply systems has been adding new systems and also has been improving on systems. We will find in the Estimates a little later where provision has been made for improving the water supply on the coastal area as well as at Linden where the supply, with an expanding population, and new housing areas, had become inadequate. Only this week discussions took place with the representatives of IDB in relation to another project which they are now considering and if this project finds a place then the water systems, not all of them but some of them between Buxton and John – Port Mourant, will undergo improvement.

But while we are looking for external sources of finance, Cde. Chairman, one would see

that there are many areas which have been benefiting from new wells constructed by Guywa year after year. The policy is to give an adequate supply to all communities and industries and that policy is supported by the policy of using the most economic systems and source of water supply and whether it is ground water or surface water the decision is made after very careful study. For instance, on the coastal area the well supply has been used extensively, and one will find that in places like Bartica and Linden, surface water is being utilized. So the decision is made after very careful examination.

Cde. Nokta raised on page 103 the question of surveys, subhead 22. This allocation is for land surveys and hydrographic surveys and the legend says here for emphasis, “Survey crafts in need of docking, general overhauling and reconditioning”. It is also for hydrographic surveys which would be needed at the Demerara Harbour Bridge because one has to keep on studying the effect of the bridge on the natural navigational channel and this note is intended for all the work which will be done under the head. We had put this note because these are important aspects of work which will be done during the coming year.

Roads: The road allocation as we can see has been increased quite substantially and I have noted the points raised in respect of suggested priorities and suggested areas that need urgent attention. All I can re-emphasise is that the monies available will be spent in the most effective manner taking into consideration the overall needs for the country but we certainly will note those particular areas mentioned and see what help can be given if such help is necessary now.

The Demerara Harbour Bridge ---

The Chairman: Are you are not dealing with 34?

Cde. Naraine: Yes, sorry, Cde. Speaker. Subhead 34, Unallocated Spares. What we are doing here is purchasing spares but one should not take this to mean that this sum of money provided will be for all the spares parts that will be purchased by the various Ministries for Government equipment. This is intended for spare parts and other items which will be purchased on the unallocated stores. In the case of projects, particularly projects on the capital estimates

and many projects on the current estimates utilizing equipment, those Ministries/Departments in addition to these spares, will be buying spares directly from the co-operations and the agents who bring down such spares. And this sum of money is intended to supplement and to bring things that may be readily available in the corporations or at the agents who represent various manufacturers of equipment. The equipment which has been mentioned has become broken down in many cases. **[Interruption.]** I am not in a position to confirm or otherwise because they do all relate, I do not know if they relate to the Ministry of Works and Transport. Some may be related to the other Ministries and, therefore, we have noted the comments made.

What I would like to point out is that it is no sense our saying that there is no problem in terms of mechanical repairs and the facilities for doing these repairs, because this would not be a statement of fact. There is the problem, and we know why it has been stated so many times in this House, what are the causes of some of the things which we are saying in relation to equipment. But what I think is important, Cde. Chairman, is to see or to point out that the Government is doing and I would like to point out many areas in which correction has already been made. For instance, on the Tapakuma project a large amount of equipment has been repaired and it is being used by the contractor on that project on a rental basis.

Let us take the U.M.R.P. project where there has also been, on the closure of that project, a large amount of equipment, some needing repairs. Today, some of that equipment, a large amount of that equipment, is being used on the Upper Demerara Forestry Project, a road project that is being financed by the Caribbean Development Bank, and the forestry project itself being financed by several sources including the E.E.C. As the project gets larger, more of that equipment will be put on that project, saving us the expenditure of importing additional equipment while making use of and repairing that which is available. However, many items of similar type equipment have been repaired and they are being rented to the private sector, people who are engaged in Forestry. Therefore, some of that equipment again is being put in the expansion of forestry development as well as in the public sector. G.T.L is also utilising that equipment.

2:40 p.m.

On the M.M.A. project now being constructed, twenty-two items of equipment of the Hymac type have been identified and will be repaired and utilized on that project to carry out the construction. These are just some examples. We can go on relating more and more but we cannot if someone wants not to see these points. I do not know whether it is in ignorance or whether he is trying to mislead this House and the Nation, but these are things that are taking place and these are things the comrades can go and see for themselves. **[Interruption]**

The Chairman: Subhead 40.

Cde. Naraine: The grant to the National Parks Commission – work started on the park on the West Bank last year and work will continue this year. But I would like to give this House or the country or the people on the West Demerara the idea that everything required on this park will be completed this year. If one took as the example the National Park in Georgetown, one would realize that a park takes many years to develop and year after year there will always be room for expansion, improvement and the provision of facilities in accordance with the demand and pressures for the use of the park.

The question in relation to people being attacked in that area, I have heard this also from other places and we have drawn it to the attention of the police. I understand that most of the time when such attacks can take place would be in the night after cinema showings, where people walk apparently from the cinema going towards the La Grange area. We have drawn this to the attention of the police and later on as the park progresses, it is our intention to put a few lights nearby.

Subhead 44, Maintenance of Demerara Harbour Bridge. The revenue collected at the present moment must not be taken as the final figures because the bridge has been put into use for less than a year and the bridge has an economic life of 35 years. I am using “economic life” in the economic sense, not in the physical sense but the real life would be substantially more than that. The economics of the bridge in terms of the repayment of all the costs, capital and

maintenance and operations is about 15 years. So over the period of time, with growth and with more traffic going over the bridge, then one obviously will anticipate that the revenue will increase. Also, the operation and maintenance costs will also increase. So we should look neither at the revenue being collected nor the operation and maintenance costs as being static. These figures have been worked out and projected based on historical information as well as projected development that is likely to take place. The amount of \$370,000 spent last year was with respect to the period of August to the end of the year. It was not for the entire year, while the figures of \$992,000 is for the entire year. I hope the comrade realised that when he made the comment.

One additional comment was made in terms of this expenditure, whether any curtailment can be made in respect of this expenditure. I am hoping, myself, that in time we would be able to reduce on this expenditure. I mean a relative reduction in the expenditure. But the position is that in the initial stage you have quite a lot of teething problems, many of them already removed. And at the beginning the security has to be very tight until people get accustomed to the conditions there. Also, one has to take care and put in some additional inputs, particularly in skilled manpower, as well as other things necessary for the running of the bridge. Therefore, I would not recommend at this particular time for us to go slashing expenses, for instance, removing all the security that we have on the bridge, or even half of it, because then, we may be exposing the public, who walk on the bridge particularly at night, to injury or other things that might occur. So I feel that this expenditure is necessary and we ought to keep it.

Cde. Chairman, with your permission, I made a little error on page 98, in relation to the item, Pest Controller. I would like to assure the Opposition that this item was not intended for them.

The Chairman: No, I would not have that.

Cde. Naraine: I withdraw that statement. It is intended to destroy termites since there are so many wooden buildings around. There are Pest Controllers who kill wood ants and other insects which attack wood and can shorten the life of the buildings.

Cde, Ally: I would like to ask a supplementary question. I want to ask the Minister if

these people on the Upper Corentyne, say for instance in the No. 67 area, who are not receiving the necessary Pure Water Service should continue paying rates and for what time. The Minister did not say what Guywa is doing with the rates it is collecting.

Cde. Naraine: On the question of water supply to private connections, this is done on a contractual basis, it is not a rate like a Local authority rate, therefore, it is an agreement between the Water Authority and the various individuals who pay as they are supplied with water.

2:50 p.m.

I have been assured by the Chairman of the Authority that if for any long period, since they pay by the month, there is no running water, then they can apply for relief for that period.

The Chairman: What Cde. Roshan Ally was saying is that for four years they have been paying and they have no water supply.

Cde. Naraine: My information is that that is not a statement of fact. In relation to the area which he has raised, a new well will be sunk there which will supplement the water supply already provided.

Head 36, Ministry of Works and Transport (Works) - \$35,857,578 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Page 218.

DIVISION XXII – MINISTRY OF WORKS AND TRANSPORT (WORKS)

Question proposed that the sum of \$36,727,600 for Division XXII, Ministry of Works and Transport, stand part of the Estimates.

Cde. Nokta: Subhead 1, page 218. I notice a sum of \$3,261,600 is being sought for this subhead. The legend says “See note below” and the note below states: “To provide for the purchase of miscellaneous equipment for the completion of the Demerara Harbour Bridge”. Are we to believe that the bridge is not completed yet? Then I ask the Minister why was it opened

last July? And, furthermore, I understand that from then to now there have been several stoppages of traffic. Is that due to an incomplete bridge being opened and some reason this sum of money has to be voted now?

If the Minister thinks that is so, will he not say that the bridge should not have been opened before the time to avoid all this unnecessary expenditure?

The Chairman: This is the same type of question which does not elicit any reply.

Cde. Nokta: Subhead 17, Coastal Feeder Roads. The legend says, “To provide for the Associated Institution Building. U.S.A.I.D. Loan”. I should like to know what is meant by this, because on one hand it speaks of “coastal feeder roads” and on the other hand it speaks of “Associated Institution Building”. I should like to have an explanation.

Cde. Ram Karran: Subhead 2, East Bank Berbice Road. The legend states: “To purchase equipment and materials for construction works. E.E.C Loan” I think the hon. Minister has almost persuaded us in this House that we ought not to buy any more equipment, having regard to the fact that we have equipment and we are making it available to private contractors. I want to make an observation: If a private contractor were to operate a piece of Government equipment he would run it down. Only this morning we heard a very logical discussion on the radio by Dr. Cummings on the form of lubricant we use. He is not an engineer but he was talking sense. They have no sense.

The Chairman: Cde. Ram Karran, when they talk about posts, I stop them. You accuse them of not having sense. That is how the debate degenerates into abuse on both sides. If you want to say that, I wouldn't stop you, but they call you a pest I shall not stop them.

Cde. Ram Karran: They call me “bald-head”.

The Chairman: You are bald in fact.

Cde. Ram Karran: I am saying that the people who operate the Government vehicles do not have any sense, that is why we have all this trouble. If I cannot tell them what I want to tell

.them, because it is not a parliamentary language, what must I do? They do not have sense. I have no better words to describe it than those. They are stupid and that is why the equipment in this country has gone to this extent and poor people have to pay for it.

The Minister must agree or disagree with me. They use the wrong grade of oil and they cannot deny that the private operators operating the Government vehicles, use the machines and at the end of the operation they hand back the machines saying “This is Yours”, even though it is a shell. That is why we go from corner to corner in this country and see machines scrapped. We see them in shells at the bus company, at the Public Works, at Drainage and Irrigation, we see them all over the place. It just does not need a great deal of imagination to recognise when something is happening.

I want to ask the Minister why he has to purchase more equipment. What equipment is he purchasing for the East Bank Berbice Road? I cannot see the reason for this after the Minister’s very lengthy explanation to this House that they have a lot of equipment.

Then we have money under subhead 5 which is designated “Access Roads” and this is for the East Berbice area. It seems to me, sir, that we are spending money under several heads for one item under the Development Programme. That sends us looking all over the place. What is the type of work you are going to do under subhead 5, knowing that subhead 2 is going to be used for equipment.

Then we see in the legend at subhead 6, “East Coast Demerara Roads”, “To complete works on the East Coast Demerara Roads”. I wonder if the hon. Minister is talking about the ramp on all the roads leading out from the public road from one road to the other road, that is the one going East and the one going West. Is that the work that is going to cost all this money or do you have work to undertake?

As I am on my feet, I want to draw the attention of the hon. Minister to the fact that in these days when there is difficulty in getting spare parts, in these days when petrol is so costly,

the completion of the ramp leading from one road to another road, especially in the area where you have to go into the villages on the East Coast road makes it difficult for owners of vehicles, even for the donkeys to pull the carts over the ramp.

In some areas you have to walk in mud. In some areas you have some very rough stones that can fly and hit you in the head. What is the Ministry, doing in respect of these ramps? Do you propose to complete them by the expenditure shown here or is it something that can be done with small work of minor improvement. Surely these things should not be allowed to remain or they deteriorate because the rain is washing away the sand here and it is a big problem for the users of those roads.

I wish to compliment the Minister, if I may, on subhead 9, Essequibo Roads, but the amount shown there is so small. Not even half a million dollars is being allocated for the Essequibo Roads and the legend states “To provide for the rehabilitation of the Riverstown Bridge”. That is a very old bridge. It had a strong foundation and it was repaired only about 4 or 5 years ago. I think it might have been a little longer than that. What does his Ministry propose to do now? Is the Ministry going to remove that superstructure and repair it or is it the foundation, the concrete?

3 p.m.

This amount is so small. And surely it is misleading if you are going to call the Riverstown Bridge “Essequibo Roads”. Is he not going to do any other work in the Essequibo except maintenance? The assurance we had here was that the roads would have been tackled at all the sections at the same time. In fact, they have already been tackled because this is a roads Government. It is not that we are opposed to building roads as such but the Government’s policy of building roads is not reflected in these estimates shown before us. But a very large sum of \$1 million is going on the Upper Mazaruni Road Project which, we understand, is a little overtaken with secondary forest. Are you going to weed the road again? The Minister might be in a position to advise us. The Minister might be willing to give us some gratuitous information. Is

this the one where we have invited people from Jamaica, and we had invited the Pandits' Council and everybody? Bookers gave all the cutlasses to build that road. I thought that that would have been finished by now.

Then we have subhead 18, Upper Demerara Forestry Project Road. We are spending \$6 million on that to continue construction works. This is a loan. Will the hon. Minister give us some details of the project? Do we need to build it now; do we need to complete it now? We started to build it in 1978. Is it going to bring immediate revenue? We don't know, perhaps he will tell us.

Sir, if I may go down to the bottom subhead 26, we have \$1,600,000 to provide equipment for the expansion of quarries, Teperu and Itabu quarries. Will the Minister tell us what has been the result of the expansion, the construction of that project where Government has gone into quarrying? Is that exhausted that we need to go into further quarrying in these areas?

Now, I wanted to deal with the water supply: this is Force Account on contracts but we seem to have exhausted that in the earlier head and I don't want to waste the time of the House. May I ask whether this workshop, the last item on the page, subhead 43, is the one at the corner of Non Pariel or whether it is at the place we know that is called Melanie Damishana, or are we extending the name of the entire area to Melanie Damishana? We seem to be renaming places with very quick rapidity. Or is it that the heading there is wrong? I have passed there and I haven't seen any mechanical workshop being completed or being built in Melanie Damishana. I see one built in the vicinity of Strathspey and Non Pariel. Maybe the Minister can explain to us.

The Chairman: Cde. Dalchand.

Cde. Dalchand: Cde. Chairman, I still want to ask the Minister whether the legend which speaks for subhead 1, Georgetown Approaches, is correct. I notice the legend says "To provide for the purchase of miscellaneous equipment for the completion of the Demerara Harbour Bridge". But then it falls here under the general heading, Roads, Georgetown. Approaches. I cannot understand.

Cde. Chairman, subhead 5 , Access Roads. I want to ask the Minister whether the access road on the western side of the approach to the Demerara Bridge is included in one of these access roads. As I said the last time, nothing at all has been done about the access road to the western side of the approach to the Demerara Harbour Bridge.

Item 12.

The Chairman: I am not allowing that. There is nothing on 12. Cde. Minister.

Cde. Narbada Persaud: On the particular item at subhead 20, Government Buildings, I would like to know whether the Customs building that was started some years ago at Main Street and some other street there, falls under this head. If it does, Cde. Chairman, I would like the Minister to state what the present position is as regards that building. Work was started some years ago but it also ceased some years ago and as far as my knowledge goes the Customs Department is housed in a number of buildings and because of this they find themselves in some problems in administration particularly. I would like the Minister to state what is the present position, whether from this amount of money, \$1.5 million, it is intended to start work again on that building. If so, how soon.

The Chairman: Cde. Roshan Ally.

Cde. Ally: Subhead 5, Access Roads. I wish the Minister to tell us whether he is aware that farmers at Dehoop. West Coast Demerara...

The Chairman: I am not allowing that, the legend says that he should deal with access roads in East Berbice.

Cde. Naraine: Cde. Chairman, subhead 1, Georgetown Approaches: the question asked by Cde. Dalchand, I think is quite good but to understand this, I ought to explain how the bridge was considered into this question of Georgetown Approaches. Originally when the Georgetown Approaches were being studied there was the question of building a bridge across the Demerara River and it was being considered at that time that such a bridge would be within the limits of the

boundaries of Greater Georgetown. However, when the final decision on the location of the bridge was determined, the bridge fell slightly out of Greater Georgetown. Now, this bridge has such a great influence on Georgetown, because most of the people who use this bridge come to Georgetown – I would think about 85 per cent of the persons who use the bridge are people who come to Georgetown or pass through Georgetown – that the approaches to Georgetown became very relevant in terms of this bridge. And up to today it is still considered as part of the approaches to Georgetown in that conceptual framework. This is the reason why it was put under this heading because if one wanted to find out the rationale for the bridge, the economics of the bridge, then one would look at the report on the approach roads to Georgetown and one would find it there.

3.10 p.m.

The bridge, of course, was completed and put into use but even though this was done it was realised that a number of things were necessary even though the bridge was use. The reason why these things were not done at the very beginning was because negotiations were taking place between the Guyana Government and the British Government to get these additional items of equipment for the bridge, for example lighting and additional generators for stand-by power, also navigational side which are necessary for the bridge and, of course, some spare parts. This negotiation went on up to about the middle of last year. Some of the materials were received last year and have been installed and the remainder will come in this year and some will come next year. So this item was not really necessary in order to open the bridge but these additional facilities are necessary to complete the bridge in the manner in which it was visualised and to add certain safety devices.

The East Bank Berbice Road, subhead 2, Cde. Ram Karran laboured very heavily on this question of purchase of equipment. I do not know whether it was deliberate. When we say that we are curtailing the purchase of equipment and we are going to use the equipment that is available in the country, we mean just that. For instance, if bitumen plants which will be necessary for the construction of this road are not available for this road because those that we

have are in use elsewhere, then the contractor or the Government will be required to bring in a bitumen plant to do this road. All we are doing here is we are trying to give information to the Opposition and to whoever study and read these Estimates. We are not trying to mesmerize people or trying to confuse them. We are just trying to give them what is a factual and truthful impression of what is likely to take place.

The question of Access Roads was raised. This road is to be done at Port Mourant on the Corentyne as was said by the Minister of Economic Development and it is not intended for the western Access Road for the Demerara Bridge. That road will be completed, but not under this head. With respect to subhead 6, obviously, any child would realise that \$1.2 million could not be intended to do those few approaches to the East Coast road. Anyone who has eyes and who passes the East Coast will see that there are a few sections of the road still to be completed. Even if you do not have very good eyes ---

The Chairman: Cde. Minister, I think Cde. Ram Karran's grave point was the approaches through the secondary roads to the main roads.

Cde. Naraine: Those could not, under any stretch of imagination absorb the sum of \$1.2 million. Cde. Chairman, if I am allowed to continue, obviously these approaches have to be done but they will cost a very small sum of money. The point is that there is a portion of this road by Plaisance/Better Hope which is not completed and anyone who passes there will see that. This is what is intended.

Essequibo roads, subhead 9: There is provision for the maintenance of the road and this sum will be spent principally on the Riverstown bridge. It is very bad, there has been a lot of erosion taking place around the bridge and it is presently very shaky and has to be completely reconstructed. This sum is to do that. There will be other sums of money that will be spent on the maintenance of the road. I would like to explain, since so much heavy weather has been made about the reconstruction of the road, that there is a construction project, the Tapakuma Project, taking place in that area and that drainage and irrigation project will require excessive transportation for the transportation of materials for that project. An additional and substantial

sum of money has to be found for the rehabilitation of sea defences again, along this road.

One has to look at two things, First, that these projects in themselves are using very substantial sums of money and secondly, the excessive construction load will be in excess of what one would design a road like that when there is normal traffic using the road. It would be better, therefore, to reconstruct this road after the heavy construction works have been completed. This is exactly what we intend to do. I have had some preliminary discussions with a World Bank official who is interested in the reconstruction of this road and such discussions will continue. In the mean while, we will keep the road maintained so that it can be used for the traffic that has to run over the road. I hope that this clarifies some of the difficulties in the minds of the Opposition.

With respect to the Upper Mazaruni Road Project, subhead 16, Cde. Chairman, this road includes the road from the Essequibo River, going to Teperu, crossing to Itaballi and going, as the Minister for this region said, right on to Kurupung Mouth. The earlier part of this road from Itaballi to Puruni is used extensively by private loggers and public loggers and therefore it is serving an economic use in terms of expansion of our forestry exploitation. The road is also used by the miners who work in the Puruni River, and some of them in the middle Mazaruni. It is necessary to maintain this road. I can assure Cde. Ram Karran that there is no question of bush and grass growing over it because the clearing of this road is so wide that if a tree from the side fell it would not be possible for it to cover the roadway. It is, in places, over 200 feet wide. This road has to be maintained because a substantial investment has been put into it. It needs to be maintained and up-graded in many parts where erosion is taking place, and the extensive use by loggers and miners in the area. The people who settled in some of these areas for some time have started to expand agriculture and the Regional Minister has made arrangements for their produce to be brought out to Bartica to find a market.

I hope that with this explanation we would all have a better understanding of this need for this expenditure and the benefit which will accrue to many people who use this road. I think the road was being confused with the self-help road, which has been taken over by the Engineer

23.3.79

National Assembly

3.10 – 3.20 p.m.

Corps of the G.D.F. That road is also being utilised. It is not a road to the standard of this, but too often comrades come to this House and try to give the impression that all self-help work done was wasted. This is far from the fact and if the comrades would leave Bel Air and go out a little they will find out that this is not so. That road is being used by the Army and the people in those areas, by the miners and by the people in forestry so that they can get in their inputs for development and they can get their produce out of that area.

3:20 p.m.

All these things that have been done have been done to benefit the country and we do have self-helpers and visitors coming from abroad as has been mentioned by the speakers from the other side, people from Jamaica, and people from England. The other day we had a visitor from England who went to our Training Centre at Blackwater Creek. I do not know if the comrade knows where Blackwater Creek is. This is a training school for operators of heavy mechanical equipment and there was someone from the United Kingdom who was sufficiently interested in what was taking place to go there to see what is going on in the area. It is a pity that the comrades here do not have the same interest in their country as visitors from overseas have. That is a very great pity.

On subhead 20, Government Buildings, I should like to explain that this is not intended to finish certain projects. In fairness to the speaker he has raised one, that is, the Customs Building. I want to give the facts to the House and to our people: That is not the only building in that condition. There is also a school that was started in the South Ruimveldt and there is the Court in New Amsterdam. They were started with every intention of having them finished. There was the crisis and money problem. We had to change our priorities and these three projects were closed temporarily.

This money is not intended to finish those. It is intended for other projects. We are looking at a package for financing the completion of these buildings that were stopped. I thought

that I would give the full answer and not try to say Yes or No to the question because it is good for people to know what is taking place.

Subhead 26, Teperu and Itabu Quarries: The Itabu quarry was constructed and the intention was that about a year after we would negotiate for the purchase of spare parts that would be required for the equipment in the quarry based on the experience of operation during that year and this is exactly what is being done. Now that we have the experience, now that we know the things that wear quickly with our type of stones, we are in a position to order the spare parts and we have done so. In doing this we have also ordered some additional screens which will give us a greater variety of stone products.

I would like to assure the comrade, as I said in the debate, that the supply of stone is adequate for all the work we are doing in the country and there is a surplus of stone in the country now. We have been exploring, and will continue to explore, export markets for this product.

Subhead 43, Melanie Damishana Mechanical Workshop Complex. I do not have much comment to make. It is true that this area has many names in the past – Enterprise, one section: Coldingen another section; Non Pareil, a third section. It was a vacant area of land. The Town Planner made a new development for the area. The entire area was renamed Melanie Damishana. The individual parts may continue to have the names they had in the past. It is like a city with many wards. If we put a workshop there we can call it the Malanie Damishana Workshop. It is like building something in Albouystown. **[Interruption]** I have great pride in the fact that I was born in Albouystown. Just as you can call a shop located in Albouystown the Albouystown workshop or you can also call it the Georgetown workshop. The Gouvernement has decided to call it Melanie Damishana Workshop.

Division XXII, Ministry of Works and Transport (Works) - \$36,727,600 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: page 219.

**DIVISION XXII – MINISTRY OF WORKS AND TRANSPORT (WORKS)
IBRD/IDA PROJECTS**

WEST COAST DEMERARA ROAD PROJECTS

Question proposed that the sum of \$6,786,000 for Division XXIII, Ministry of Works and Transport (Works) IBRD/IDA PROJECTS, West Coast Demerara Road Project, stand part of the Estimates.

Cde. Ram Karran: I have a question on subheads 2 and 3. I should like to enquire of the hon. Minister if he will give us some explanation on subhead 2, Weigh Bridges.

Many years ago this House was told that it was necessary to build Weigh Bridges on the roadside for two purposes: First to check weights of materials bought by the Government to ensure that at the point of delivery the weight check at the point of loading was the same and secondly – I think with some more emphasis to ensure that vehicles were not overloaded.

Although these Estimates show that year after year we have sums of money shown under subhead, the one or two Weigh Bridges we have alongside the road, to my mind and from the information I have, are hardly used. In fact, if you pass by the one on the East Coast Demerara you will find that the lock has rusted on it, whether it is on account of the salt air that causes that to happen or whether it is due to that fact that it is not used at all or hardly ever used.

It seems to me that if the Weigh Bridges are not used for the purposes for which they were built, it is useless for the Government to continue to spend money on them, especially since the vehicles passing on the East Coast, those belonging to the soft drinks people and some belonging to the Rice Marketing Board, are obviously so over-loaded that they do more damage and the Minister, who is an engineer, has often told us how much damage these over-laden vehicles can cause to the roads. One can see from the condition of the roads and the lethargy with which the Government approaches the repairs whether this bit of insurance against that sort of thing is actually being used. It is no use putting money in the Estimates year after year to find that these things are not used, and that is my information, and to see that nothing is done about it.

The hon. Minister was at pains to point out here, I am dealing with subhead 3, Consultants' Services, that the young engineers are taken on, they can't perform adequately until they have got the experience. And that is why we must pay consultants' fees. One takes the point that that is so, but there are many reasons why these young engineers like the majority of Guyanese vote with their feet. According to Lenin, that is they leave the country. The Government must solve that problem and not come and tell us that in this day and age, in a country where there are institutions teaching people technical subjects, including engineering up to a fairly high degree, and these trainees can have their training further to the point of a full engineer. Perhaps some engineers want to be politicians; they are playing politicians when they can be more useful to the country, that is why we have a situation like this. Instead of doing the job that you are trained to do and that you can do very well, you waste your time here. The Government ought to be ashamed to come and tell us it does not have petrol and with its eyes open sells the railway. Throw it down the drain.

Now, what I am saying, sir, is that it is unforgivable for the Government, with all these facilities to train engineers and to give them further training, to come here and tell us that we have to pay \$.5 million yearly for consultants' services. And, of course, other sums are paid under other Heads. It is a shame in my view, sir, and the Government should try to retain the services of these Guyanese whether or not they pay for their training, or it is done by the Government at the institutions which we have. It is a great loss to the country. Our human resources are the richest resources we have and it is useless for them to come and say, merely to write in the legend "To provide for services of consultants". We do not want that. We want to see the Guyanese – we are very proud of the Guyanese despite their shortcomings. We have all these imperialist agents coming down here contracting—

The Chairman: Cde. Ram Karran, let us deal with the subject matter, don't just wander now. I haven't seen anything only about engineers here and you are only concerning yourself about engineers. This is for consultants; they have got all sorts of consultants.

Cde. Ram Karran: The main consultants in these Estimates are engineering consultants. You bring your imperialist engineers and agents here, they go down to Tapakuma. I

feel that the Minister ought to declare the Government's policy in so far as the consultants' services are concerned. Why cannot the Government take consultants' services for fields that we need to develop.

Cde. Dalchand: Cde. Chairman, only a few days ago in Parliament the Minister who was telling us about improved roads –

The Chairman: You are talking about the West Coast Demerara Road.

Cde. Dalchand: Yes. It will cost approximately \$1 million per mile. Cde. Chairman, I wish to say this afternoon that there have been a lot of waste of money, mis-spending especially on the West Demerara Roads.

The Chairman: You never made that statement before in this House!

Cde. Dalchand: I want to know where we are going to end. We have already spent over \$45 million on the West Demerara roads and the mileage of road there is only 36 miles. That road programme commenced in 1973 April. Within another few days we are going to have the 6th anniversary. We have here this afternoon an allocation of \$6,100,000 but this is to continue construction, this is not saying that the question raised last year –

The Chairman: thanks for telling me. I can read as well.

Cde. Dalchand: This is saying that we are going to continue work on the road. I want the Minister to tell this House what will be the final cost of constructing the 36 miles of road.

The Chairman: How could you ask such a question? How could he tell you what is the final sum? You know what could be the cost of anything next week or next year?

Cde. Dalchand: It is that the cost would be a problem.

The Chairman: Cde. Minister, please answer the questions that have been asked.

Cde. Naraine: Cde. Chairman, I would like to correct a statement made by Cde. Dalchand that this year we have spent \$45 million on this road. I have been informed that the

revised estimated cost is \$34 million and it is about 34 miles of road. This is what is stated here. We hope that we will be able to finish the road later this year within that expenditure.

Weigh Bridges: I have tried to explain this before. The weigh bridges, it is true, are intended to carry out a study on the overloading of vehicles. Our difficulty is that we have to carry out this study and based on this study we will have to make amendments to the law because as the law presently stands, it is impossible to get any conviction on overloading. So this is what is intended. The weigh bridge that the comrade spoke about was in fact put down by the sea defence project on the East Coast, I believe, during his regime as a Minister and it was used and continues to be used primarily for works on the sea defence. Later on it was used for weighing sand that went on the East Coast road. The reason why it is not being used now is that there is no road construction going on in that area at the present time and there are no large sea defence works taking place, so the weigh bridge has been temporarily closed. It will be opened up again as this study progresses and will be put into full use when the recommendations of the study are known and the necessary amendments are made to the legislation.

Consultants' Services, subhead 3: Cde. Chairman, as I mentioned, it is necessary to bring in consultants' services wherever there is not an adequacy of staff locally. I think that in some of these older projects, and it does happen even in more recent projects, it is a condition of the lending agencies that consultants not normally resident in the country and certainly people in direct employment with the Government should not be used as consultants on these projects where foreign financing is involved.

3:40 p.m.

This, Cde. Chairman, is not peculiar to the Western bloc countries. Cde. Ram Karran will hear me on this. I have just come from the U.S.S.R. and we were discussing a gold project, exploration for gold; we were discussing a project for the expansion of alumina production, and in both cases they insist that we must have feasibility studies and we must have their consultants to come in to look at them if there is to be any chance of attracting financing from their country. I do not blame them because what they want to do is to make sure that the funds which they make available are spent satisfactorily. So I do not see any big noise about having consultants if

these are conditions of the loan and it is the only way that we can get the loan. It happens in the West and it happens in the East. Again he is trying to misguide this House and the people that the imperialists and the Western countries ask for consultants't services but if you went to the Communist Bloc, they would not. I am saying for a fact that in discussions with me on the gold project and on the hydro project and on the alumina expansion project, they are asking that consultants should be engaged from their country and they should do over all the feasibility studies and everything that had been done already by consultants from the West.

I hope that this shows that it is a pattern followed by most countries. I hope that these comrades who are aligned to a side, would not try to misguide people. People who are lending money want to see how the money is being spent and therefore they ask for these studies.

The Chairman: You are very kind. I would not have answered. The people who asked you the question have left, they do not want to hear the answer. I would not have even replied.

Division XXIII, Ministry of Works and Transport (Works) IBRD/IDA Projects – West Coast Demerara Road Project - \$6,786,000 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Pages 105 and 106.

HEAD 37 – MINISTRY OF WORKS AND TRANSPORT

TRANSPORT

Question proposed that the sum of \$989,017 for Head 37, Ministry of Works and Transport (Transport) stand part of the Estimates.

Cde. Ram Karran: Cde. Chairman, I should like to deal with subhead 13, Contribution to West Indies Shipping Corporation, and subhead 19, Maintenance and Operation of Vehicle. I am to enquire of the hon. Minister how often the West Indian Shipping Corporation's vessel come to Georgetown, if they come at all. This is a subject that was debated in this House when a certain decision was taken some time ago. But I think it is rather unusual for such a large sum of money, which seems to have been increasing over the years, to be spent with the inadequate

explanation “increased contribution”. Why increased contributions? Is it based on the cargo that leaves Guyana? Is it based on the operation of the vessel? Is it based on the operation involved if it does come to Guyana and the expenses in Guyana or outside of Guyana? Or, is it just a little subsidy given to our friends merely to retain our friendship? Surely, that needs some proper explanation rather than this, also whether the vessels come here.

Under subhead 19, I want to ask the Minister about this sum of \$14,000 for the maintenance and operation of vehicle. What type of vehicle is this, and is it that this vehicle is supplied with petrol from the pool or is it that the cost of the petrol and oil and that sort of running expense is borne by a special vote that causes this amount to be so high. It is a new item and I think it is a bad thing for the Estimates to be filled up with new items without proper explanation. I think that the Minister takes the House for granted by putting “New Subhead”. And the people in Parliament, including yourself--- Aren’t you going to treat us with some sort of courtesy? Why is there this new subhead. Why is there this new vehicle? What is its purpose? What is it going to be used for? Why is it going to cost so much?

Cde. Nokta: I have just one question on page 106, subhead 7, Ferry Service – Barima North West District Subsidy. I notice a subsidy of \$3,300. This was given last year and this year. I would like to ask the Minister to say, by virtue of this subsidy, if the Government has any control on this service. If the answer is yes, could he tell us whether the Government is ensuring that the vessel which is used is river worthy, if it operates on a regular schedule, whether this vessel has appropriate seating accommodation and life jackets, etc? Does the Government have any control on the fees that are being charged and, if so, how much revenue comes out of that ferry? The last question concerns the landing of the ferry on the eastern side of the Barima. The Morawhanna Stelling is there, so it facilitates landing, but on the left bank of the Barima River no proper landing place is provided and this is a hazard for the very many people who use this ferry especially on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. I would like to ask the Minister if this \$3,000 is inclusive of a landing place and also to ask him to look into this matter to see that all the questions I have asked are investigated by the persons who run this ferry.

Cde. Dalchand: Subhead 19, Maintenance and Operation of Vehicle. I notice that in 1977 and 1978 there was no provision for this vehicle. I tried to check on the capital head of the Estimates ---

The Chairman: You heard your colleague, Cde. Ram Karran, say it is a new subhead.

Cde. Dalchand: On the capital side of the Estimates no new vehicle was bought.

Cde. Naraine: Cde. Chairman, WISCO call in Guyana four times a month and the contribution that is being made covers two main items. The Governments, who are shareholders, annually pay a sum as share capital, and that accounts for a part. The other part is a subsidy which the Shipping Company gets from individual Government.

The ferry service at Barima North West District: here a subsidy is paid by the Government for this service. The boat is inspected by officials of the Transport and Harbours Department and its sea-worthiness and safety facilities are checked on. This sum does not include the cost of stelling facilities and we will certainly look at this in terms of whether it is a hazard. The fares are controlled by the Transport and Harbours Department.

3:50 p.m.

I should mention that this supervision is not a day-to-day supervision. It is done once or twice per year. We depend a lot on the intelligence that we received from people who use the ferry. But, our information, there is no overcharging.

A question was raised on subhead 19, maintenance and operation of vehicle. This is a new vehicle to be purchased. It is to be used in the Transport Planning Unit and the money is to pay for the maintenance of the vehicle, that is, for the operation, the supplying of fuel, oil, spare parts, tyres, batteries and whatever else is needed, as well as payment of the driver of the vehicle. That is what the sum is for.

The Chairman: Cde. Naraine, do you think that if one had adopted what Cde. Ram Karran has suggested all of that would have been obviated, if the legend had stated that they

would purchase a new vehicle and so on? Year after year they copy from the legend and this continues all the time.

Cde. Belgrave: In relation to subhead 13, Contribution to West Indies Shipping Corporation, may I speak in response to the Minister's reply? He said that four ships come to Guyana four times a month for WISCO. Seeing that Government makes a contribution of \$400,000 to WISCO, will the Minister say that the vessels which come four times a month will be placed in the hands of a Government corporation and not in the hands of a private body which handles the same? To my mind this would benefit the Government and we would not have to pay out sums of money in relation to the service.

We view with some concern the fact that Government is contributing to this body and control of discharging and loading the vessels is in the hands of a private body instead of being in the hands of a corporation.

The Chairman: You have made your point. Cde. Naraine.

Cde. Naraine: Cde. Chairman, as we all know, there was another company before WISCO came into the company in 1976 when there was an arrangement for using John Fernandes as its agent.

What we are now doing really is to look at the entire waterfront because, as you know, even in the public sector we have the Guyana National Shipping, GUYNEC and G.N.T.C. What we are looking at is the rationalising of the entire waterfront in terms of cargo handling. I know that this question will be seriously considered.

Head 37, Ministry of Works and Transport (Transport) - \$989,017 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Pages 107 and 108.

23.3.79
p.m.

National Assembly

3.50 – 4

HEAD 38, MINISTRY OF WORKS AND TRANSPORT (TRANSPORT)

POST OFFICE

Question proposed that the sum of \$29 for Head 38, Ministry of Works and Transport (Transport) Post Office, stand part of the Estimates.

Head 38, Ministry of Works and Transport (Transport) – Post Office - \$29 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Page 109.

HEAD 39 – MINISTRY OF WORKS AND TRANSPORT (TRANSPORT)

TRANSPORT AND BARBOURS

Question proposed that the sum of \$3,500,000 for Head 39, Ministry of Works and Transport (Transport) – Transport and Harbours, stand part of the Estimates.

Cde. Ram Karran: May I speak on this? This is a question that has been asked in this House over the years without satisfactory reply and while it is true that the Minister is new so far as this particular problem is concerned, I should like to know what is the position with respect to the vessel the “Ambrosia” and what happened to the “R.H. Carr”. What happened to the “S.S. Berbice” and how early will the Government be in a position to provide adequate transportation, reasonable transportation for the people in the Pomeroon district, in the North West, in the Berbice River district and in the Canje River district.

We all know the story and I do not wish to burden the House with it. The “Ambrosia” –

The Chairman: Please do not burden the House with it.

Cde. Ram Karran: I am a very reasonable man. A question was asked and tabled and has not been answered. Will the hon. Minister give us some indication of the schedule for the

construction of vessels for the proper transportation of cargo and of passengers, with the emphasis on passengers, so that we might be able to have some idea of the programme?

Depending on the hon. Minister's reply, I should be very grateful if you would allow me to elicit more information, if necessary, for the proper information of the hon. Members of the Opposition.

Cde. Naraine: First of all I would mention, as I said in the debate, some of those services, we would admit are not what we would like them to be because of the very old age of some of the vessels. As a matter of fact, some of the vessels have to be put out of commission. We are getting a few more of the vessels reconditioned and brought back into use. The "Lukanani" should be back in use very shortly as well as "Parakeet". These will improve the service in the Canje and Berbice Rivers.

In the case of the North West and Pomereroon, again I would like to repeat that a vessel is right now being constructed at GUYNEC and the programme for the completion of that vessel is September this year.

We have discussed and got virtual agreement with the British on a sum of money to be spent on two other vessels and what we are now doing – and I have spoken to the Crown Agents about this – is identifying the shipyard that will build these two vessels, but the delivery for these two vessels will not be this year. It may be next year. We may however be able to get one because we have been able to identify a boat which was partially completed and if it is agreed that that boat would, after surveying it and so forth, be suitable for our conditions then that boat could be here towards the end of this year or early next year. Those are the important issues raised by Cd. Ram Karran.

4 p.m.

Cde. Ram Karran: I wanted to make the observation but I would prefer to get it out the Minister himself. I saw in these estimates, and the Minister has confirmed it, that the Crown Agents are looking around in the shipyards in England for suitable vessels to operate in these waters. I must congratulate him when he said that at GUYNEC some construction is going on.

Can you imagine in this country where we have got so much of skill for ship building that the Government is shopping around in England in shipyards where they have half-finished vessels? Why did we not or why don't we now prepare a programme for construction at GUYNEC to continue? It is no use saying that the people are leaving the country, that they do not have the skills. We have all the skills here, we have all the know-how and everything; all we need is possibly a naval architect and we need the materials, and there we will be providing employment for the people all the year round. But like the fishing trawlers, we went to Mexico and we went to the United States of America when we have got so much of experience in this country in ship building, very good skills. Now that is to create deliberately unemployment in the country.

If you are going to buy from the Crown Agents and you have got your money to buy from them, well, I am saying that it would be 10 per cent of 20 per cent cheaper, but it is not attractive to the country, because if the job is done here, there is a saving of foreign exchange except for these two services we have talked about; the money will have to be spent. The people will be paid the same deflated Guyana dollars and we will have work going around in the country. The hon. Minister and the people who make these decision need their heads examined and I mean that literally, sir, when they are able to take money out of this country and spend it in England or spend it in America or spend it in Mexico, as I said, and have the Guyanese people remaining unemployed.

We have all the knowledge, we know everything about shipbuilding, we have done it already, why don't we adopt such policy, when are we going to adopt such a policy for the betterment of this country and for the improvement of the Guyanese people? I hope that the Minister will tell us.

The Chairman: Cde. Minister, do you have anything to say to that?

Cde. Naraine: Cde. Chairman, I would like to point out that we have adopted this policy but there is a limitation in facilities for the construction of new ships. We have explored the full capacity of GUYNEC and T. & H. D. shipyard at Mazaruni in relation to what they could do. The only way they could expand is by expanding their facilities and one would have to take into consideration that the Government took over Sprostons only a very short time ago and it will

take time for us to expand the facilities there. But there is no question, Cde. Chairman, that we are not using the facilities available and we are not using the manpower available from these ships. They are being utilised to the maximum capacity.

Also we are getting on the capital side; but I want to explain. Contrary to what the comrade said, we are not taking Guyanese money and making it into foreign exchange to purchase abroad. This is being done from a loan by the British Government. It is a one hundred per cent loan, with 25 years for repayment, interest at 4.5 per cent, and a moratorium of 5 years. Check it with your friends.

Head 39, Ministry of Works and Transport (Transport) - \$3,500,000 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Pages 110 and 111.

HEAD 40 – MINISTRY OF WORKS AND TRANSPORT (TRANSPORT)

CIVIL AVIATION

Question proposed that the sum of \$2,199,923 for Head 40, Ministry of Works and Transport (Transport) – Civil Aviation, stand part of the Estimates.

Cde. Belgrave: Cde. Chairman, page 111, subhead 17, Maintenance of Timehri International Airport: At the time of the last Estimates I raised with the Minister a question in relation to the facilities at the Timehri International Airport for visitors and passengers who may be entering or leaving or going to the airport to see their relatives off and to receive their relatives. The canteen services present an eyesore and a shame. Cde. Chairman, let me give you an idea.

I went to see somebody off and I used one of the canteen's services there, the one outside, to purchase a drink. I was told that I must pay first 50c for the drink and I must also lodge 50c for the bottle before I could get that bottle of drink to consume. At a particular time, the canteen is closed and if a plane is delayed for reasons best known to the airports

internationally, commuters in that area have absolutely nothing to consume during the time that they have to be at the airport. We suggested some time ago that the Government should be able to take over that service and run it in the best interest of the country. The Government continues to contract out that canteen's services. I would like to say, most likely for the information of this House and for the Minister, that it is deplorable. I am hopeful, because he said that there is supposed to be some committee, some advisory body that went in to investigate and to report. This was during the 1978 discussions. I am wondering if this year 1979 would see the report of that committee and that canteen's services would be changing hands so that it can be properly upgraded and run in the interest of the people in this country.

Cde. Nokta: Cde. Chairman, page 111, subhead 7. Maintenance of Interior Airfields: I am told that the airstrip at Sand Creek in the South Rupununi is not in proper condition and that flights to that village are now going once per month when they used to go once per week. I would like to know whether any part of the Government's vote of \$60,000 for maintenance will be used to maintain the airstrip and, if so, when the maintenance work is finished whether there will be a resumption of flights going to Sand Creek once a week.

4:10 p.m.

Cde. Naraine: Because it is uneconomic for any of the aircrafts which operate now to take in very small cargoes to Sand Creek, we are looking at a shuttle service or, alternatively a road link. But I can assure Cde. Nokta that we will do something to improve the services there.

In addition to maintenance this year, funds are provided under the Capital Estimates so that, if there is any major work to be done, we could do it from that vote.

Timehri International Airport: We have got the reports of the people who have been looking at the facilities there and, as comrades will see later on, there is a sum of money provided in the Capital Estimates which will be used to make certain modifications and rectifications at the airport building as well as at the adjoining facilities. New tenders have been invited for the catering services also. I am not in a position at this point to say who will run the

service. Perhaps the comrade can meet me, or the Director of Civil Aviation, to give a more intimate opinion on this matter.

Head 40, Ministry of Works and Transport (Transport) – Civil Aviation - \$2,199,923 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Page 220

DIVISION XXIV – MINISTRY OF WORKS AND TRANSPORT

(TRANSPORT)

Question proposed that the sum of \$17,425,000 for Division XXIV, Ministry of Works and Transport (Transport), stand part of the Estimates.

Cde. Nokta: Subhead 28, Hinterland Airstrips. I notice that a sum of \$945,000 is voted here for capital works and I am happy about this. I just heard the Minister, when I asked the question about Sand Creek, confess that it is uneconomical to maintain a service to Sand Creek. This reminds me of the question I asked him last year, the proposal to re-establish the Wichabai Airstrip in the South Savannah ---

The Chairman: You said all of that in your general debate. Please ask a question on this matter.

Cde. Nokta: I want to let him see the need for it because he is telling us that it is uneconomical to maintain Sand Creek airstrip and I want to educate him now.

The Chairman: You will not educate him now; you will do that in a general debate or on a Motion.

Cde. Nokta: I want to ask the Minister if proposals are made under this head to have the Wichabai airstrip resurfaced, and if so, when.

Cde. Ram Karran: We have covered in the discussion just now the principle involved here. But I would like some more details. The Minister has under subhead 13, Cargo Vessels, to

provide for the purchase of two cargo vessels and then below that he has to complete payment for the construction of passenger vessels. He did not tell us how many passenger vessels. Is this the vessel that is being built here at GUYNEC, the one in which you have \$2 million? What sort of vessel is it? Is it something like the Kurupukari which broke down mid-stream, or is it a vessel to be depended on like those built in the time of the P.P.P., although they are not properly maintained? Are these cargo vessels to replace the Mazaruni and the Berbice or are they going to be used –

The Chairman: If you were here you would have heard his reply. You walked out so you did not hear the reply when he was giving all the details.

Cde. Naraine: Cde. Chairman, I am reliably informed by the naval architects and GUYNEC, that the boats would be substantially better than those built during the P.P.P. regime. The hinterland airstrip: I can only tell Cde. Nokta to bear in mind that Sand Creek is not a forgotten area. We are looking at it very carefully and a solution will be found so that we can serve that area in the most economic manner. I cannot add anything further to that.

Division XXIV, Ministry of Works and Transport (Transport) - \$17,425,000 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Pages 22 and 23.

HEAD 4 – PARLIAMENT OFFICE

Question proposed that the sum of \$218,914 for Head 4, Parliament Office, stand part of the Estimates.

Cde. Ram Karran: I want to make this observation, in fact, I would suggest that the entire Head from the Permanent Establishment – Pensionable, ought to be deleted having regard to the fact that Members of this House are unable to obtain any record of the proceeding of this House. We have all the paraphernalia, we have the personnel –

The Chairman: That is not accurate. We do not have all the personnel. The Establishment provides for six reporters, we have three. Two have resigned, we have two.

Cde. Ram Karran: You ought to make representation to the highest before it can happen. I know for a fact.

The Chairman: Would you help us to fill the vacancies?

Cde. Ram Karran: They have to walk with their own tape recorder. They have to borrow tapes all over the place like little beggars. The whole thing ought to be deleted. You can not embarrass people to that extent.

The Chairman: Do you have any other question?

Cde. Ram Karran: The other question I want to ask is, if everything else has gone up, does the Government expect that the Leader of the Opposition to run an office, maintain the wages and salaries based – **[Interruption]**. No. I do not want any more money. The office of the Leader of the Opposition has remained as it is from the time of the hon. Member Mr. Feilden Singh. There have been no increases even though all the other estimates have gone up. Is the Government maintaining the office of the Leader of the Opposition as a show piece or is it intended to maintain that office with the dignity this Government expects it to appear in.

4:20 p.m.

It is, in my view and I am sure that you yourself, Cde. Chairman, are of the view – that the Government treats the Leader of the Opposition with contempt when it asks him to run his office with the same peltry amount. No building has been found for the Leader even though the Minister himself has been involved. **[Cde. Naraine: “He says it is satisfactory”]. [Interruption.]**

The Chairman: Cde. Ram Karran, please go head. If you answer every time they speak from their seats I will be in confusion.

Cde. Ram Karran: You are always in confusion.

The Chairman: If I have to deal with people like you, what do you expect?

Cde. Ram Karran: The position is that the Government ought to tell us today whether it is the intention to give the same low key that it has been giving to the Office of the Leader of the

Opposition. And Government ought to say whether it is going to provide the equipment and make efforts to fill the vacancies so that members of this House will be able, to use their own words, to prove to the people of Guyana that they are not Guyanese nationals; they are Guyanese socialists: they are not Guyanese at all because it is all recorded in Hansard and we cannot get the Hansard.

The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House Cde. Ramsaroop: Cde. Chairman, I must say that the Cde. Deputy Leader of the Opposition whose mind is normally very sharp has suffered a slight dullness of mind this afternoon, but I think I owe him an explanation, not on the matter to which I think you ably replied, on the question of the Office of the Leader of the Opposition. Efforts are being made and I have the assurance of my colleague the Minister of Works and Transport that efforts will be intensified with a view to ensuring that the Leader of the Opposition gets a good office.

It does strike me, however, as an attempt – as you know as a lawyer – to approbate and reprobate at the same time, to ask for an increase in the grant to the Leader of the Opposition which will be seeing the bureaucracy swollen. I would have thought that the Leader of the Opposition would have set the example. This is the type of blowing hot and cold that has prevailed in this House throughout the debate.

Cde. Ram Karran: In reply to the hon. Minister, it is not that the Leader of the Opposition asks for an increase in the bureaucracy. I am saying that the employees who are there are entitled to an increase in salaries for 1977 and 1978 but the hon. Minister is trying to distort my statement.

The Chairman: Cde. Ramsaroop, do you have anything to say?

Cde. Ramsaroop: No, sir.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: rose –

The Chairman: I am not allowing anything more.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: You sat and fixed the time and you violated your own procedure.

The Chairman: I shall put the question.

Head 4, Parliament Office - \$218,914 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Page 34.

HEAD 13 – MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS

Question proposed that the sum of \$29,483 for Head 13, Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs stand part of the Estimates.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: I have one short question on subhead 5, Remuneration of Ministerial Private Secretaries. I notice that this Ministry has a vote for Remuneration of Ministerial Private Secretaries. This Ministry is a small one. I am asking because the Minister spoke about extending the bureaucracy of the Opposition. Our request is a simple one. We want an office. That is all we are asking for and that is an office that is part of the Constitution so that the democracy that is left can be in operation. We want to know why there is need for all these people in this Ministry which is so small.

Cde. Ram Karran: I want to say that in 1928 when there was a crisis in this country, Governor Guggisbery retrenched a lot of people in production.

Cde. Ram Karran: I am saying that there is no need for this Ministry.

Cde. Ramsaroop: I have nothing to say except that the Private secretaries are needed for the work if this Ministry.

Head 13, Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs - \$29,483 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Pages 48 and 49.

HEAD 21 – MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS

Question proposed that the sum of \$1,353,655 for Head 21, Ministry of Home Affairs stand part of the Estimates.

Cde. Collymore: Subheads 7, 9, and 19 on page 49. Dealing with subhead 7, Telephones: We note that in 1978 the telephone bill came up to \$915,878 and this year the Ministry is estimating to spend \$900,000 on telephone calls. We on this side of the House are of the view that this is a very large amount to spend on telephone calls and we ask the Minister whether it is not possible to have a drastic economy made in this particular subhead.

Subhead 9, Repatriation: We note from a previous explanation by the Minister that certain kinds of people are brought back to Guyana in certain specific circumstances. We are therefore asking the Minister whether he is not aware that currently there are nine Guyanese in Trinidad who are incarcerated at a place called Golden Grove by Trinidad Authorities and they are anxious to get back to Guyana. Some of them have passports, some of them have tickets but they are in custody. I would ask the Minister to probe this and to see whether he cannot expedite the repatriation of these Guyanese.

Subhead 19, Grant to National Road Safety Council: On previous occasions I asked the Minister about this and he gave some answers but the answers were not very convincing. We note that in 1967 the actual sum given to this very necessary institution was \$8,000. The actual sum in 1977 was \$5,000. In 1978 there was only a token dollar. In 1979 there is again a token dollar. Our point is that the National Road Safety Council is very important. It can play a very dynamic role in keeping death and carnage off the roads and we do not know exactly why there is no allocation to this body.

In fact, when we examine the figure dealing with road carnage we see that they have been rising at an alarming rate over the years. We have here a list of road deaths. Road deaths now form a very major point of debate in the country. In 1964 there were 77 road deaths; in 1978, 231. In 1973, the number was 224. I would not go so far as to add up all the deaths from 1964 to 1978 but the fact that the figure rose from 77 in 1964 to 231 in 1978 shows that something is

radically wrong. I would ask the Minister to reconsider that matter and to provide this National Road Safety Council with a grant.

4:30 p.m.

The Chairman: Cde. Minister of Home Affairs.

The Minister of Home Affairs (Cde. Mingo): Cde. Chairman, on the question of telephone, may I inform this House that the Head Office pays the telephone bills for all the departments in the Ministry, for instance, telephone used in the police department and throughout the entire country by the Fire Service, throughout the entire country by the Prisons Service, by the Department of Registration, General Registration and also the National Registration Centre. If you think of it you will see how much is involved, how many persons are involved. We have in the past tried our utmost to cut down on our telephone bills. Last year we took certain definite measures to try to find ways to cut down but with the sort business done in the various departments of this Ministry it is impossible to cut it beyond the stage that it has been cut. If you notice, last year we even spent more than we are allocated this year. It means it would be a tremendous job to keep it within the limit that we have been given this year.

Then on the question of repatriation, the Comrade did say that there are nine Guyanese who are held in custody in Trinidad. I know that there are three Guyanese who are not held in that detention camp in Trinidad and at the moment we are making every effort to get them back Guyana. I would be very willing and very anxious, very ready if the Comrade can give me the names of the other six and we can work together towards bringing back the Guyanese to our country.

On the question of the National Road Safety Council: This is a very sore point, Cde. Chairman. I myself feel very strongly about it but it is a question of national priorities. We would like to assist the National Road Safety Council especially in the context of the road safety situation in Guyana today and we do assist the Road Safety Council. When it was formed, I personally attended the annual meeting about two Sundays ago, the treasurer presented a report

and one would have seen from the report that the Council is trying to be as self-reliant as possible and had been sponsoring events to raise funds. I think its financial position is fairly good. It isn't that we feel that this is enough. For instance, the members use part of the traffic department as their head office, we assist them tremendously with transportation and lately we have been doing more than this. We put personnel of the police traffic department at their disposal from time to time.

It doesn't necessarily mean that because we have not been able to give them a grant that we haven't sort of stepped up whatever assistance we could give to the National Road Safety Council. I think that it is a vital organization in Guyana and we will continue to support it and continue to expand it. At the moment efforts are being made to expand the Council and we expect that it will play a tremendous part in helping us to stop the carnage on our roads.

Now with respect to road carnage, Cde. Chairman, the traffic department itself has planned to improve the situation. We are concerned about the situation, it isn't that we are not doing anything, that we are sitting idly by allowing things to get out of hand. There are several measures which are contemplated, some of them already have been put into execution with respect to traffic education, with respect to law enforcement, with respect to seeing to it that everything is done to stop the terrible carnage which goes on our roads.

Head 21, Ministry of Home Affairs - \$1,353,655 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

The Chairman: Pages 50 and 51.

HEAD 22 – MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS

POLICE

Question proposed that the sum of \$23,655,907 for Head 22, Ministry of Home Affairs – Police, stand part of the Estimates.

Cde. Collymore: Cde. Chairman, on page 50, I should like to speak on subhead 1, items (1) to (29) inclusive.

The Chairman: Not item (1). You can go down from item (2).

Cde. Collymore: Item (2) to (29) inclusive. Page 51, subheads 7, 9, 14, 21, 26, 28, 35, 40, 42. On page 50 from items (2) to (29), I just want to make some comments about the police establishment. We have been saying over and over again – and our friends on the opposite side have been misconstruing our arguments saying that we are opposed to the police – they are a necessary institution and we would like to see the police function more efficiently. But we are getting regular complaints from senior police officers saying that things are not going correctly in that department.

We note also, as I mentioned in the general debate, that as the social situation deteriorates, there will be more strains and stresses being directed at the police force. We have said that the way to tackle crimes is not primarily to increase the police force but increase the economic situation and increase the efficiency of the police force. Right now, Cde. Chairman, the nation of Guyana is engulfed in a wave of crime. We have reports that some policeman, in fact many policemen are not satisfied with their promotional expectations. In fact, we have a letter from a police officer speaking on behalf –

The Chairman: No, no, Cde. Collymore, this deals with the establishment. If you are going to criticise the question of the number that have been employed, there are enough, or too many, or too few, okay, but we are not going into that aspect. That was the general debate.

Cde. Collymore: I want to talk about promotions.

The Chairman: That has nothing to do with promotions here.

Cde. Collymore: I want to say that the efficiency of the police force is being hindered because of the way the force is being run and I speak on the general head here, all the officers, because they are concerned.

The Chairman: I would suggest that you move on to the other page.

Cde. Collymore: Cde. Chairman, I don't agree with you.

The Chairman: That is your democratic right. However, you know there was a man named Sparrow? If I say so, is so.

Cde. Collymore: I didn't know you were a bird, too. Cde. Chairman, I don't see why I cannot speak on a police establishment when the head says that I can speak.

The Chairman: You can speak as to the number. These things deal with the Deputy Commissioner of Police, his salary, why you shouldn't have more than one Deputy Commissioner, or two Deputy Commissioners.

4:40 p.m.

Cde. Collymore: We are saying on this side of the House that the police need many things to make them function efficiently and just increasing the establishment is not going to solve the problem.

The Chairman: Look for another subhead to speak on it.

Cde. Collymore: I do not agree with your Ruling but I will abide. Page 51, subhead 7, Ammunition, Arms & Equipment. We have received reliable reports that many police weapons are finding themselves in the hands of criminals and are being used against people, therefore, we are asking the Minister to look into this situation and to find out how police service revolvers are getting into the hands of criminals who are using them to rob people all over the country.

Subhead 9, Uniforms: Policemen have complained to us that they are not satisfied with the way uniforms are being distributed. They do not like it and they are saying that there should be more just in the manner of distributing uniforms, so, we are going to ask the Minister to look into this situation, particularly in view of the fact that we note the Revised Estimates pertaining to uniforms state the amount of \$376,000, and that for this year it is going to be \$1.5 million. We

would like the Minister to assure us that these complaints of the policemen will be looked into, taking into consideration this heavy increase in the bill for uniforms.

Subhead 14, Maintenance & Operation of Land & Water Transport: The policemen are immobile. There are not enough vehicles. Only this morning a very senior police officer told me that there is one squad car in the whole of Georgetown. This is the reason why we are engulfed up our cars in crime. The Minister on previous occasions told us, and we took his word because we saw no reason for not taking his word, that vehicles will be purchased, and vehicles which are in a state of disrepair, repaired. We note that many police squad cars and other vehicles, if they are not dumped, are in the process of being dumped, and the others are being cannibalized to find parts for other vehicles elsewhere. We are therefore asking for the police to be mobiled. If the Government wants them to tackle crime, give them the tools. We have been told that each police commander has a vehicle and our sources have told us that if these vehicles could be used for general crime prevention, etc, it would go a far way towards easing the situation.

On the West Bank of Demerara, the La Grange police were unable to respond to a call from the Bridge Police. This is terrible and there is smuggling going across the borders. They haven't got boats.

Subhead 21, Prevention & Detection of Crime: We note that we are engulfed in a crime wave. We have rustling going on. Although the Police Commissioner had given standing instructions that certain vehicles going across the Demerara River Bridge must be searched between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m., no such search was being done until recently when bystanders called upon the bridge police to look. We note from the Government that search is being instituted. We want it to be a systematic routine to stamp out this kind of practice.

We have called on various occasions for a probe into Government Departments where corruption, fraud, and so on, exist. We note that the Government has indeed taken our call seriously and we have done a lot, and some very important people are now before the court, including a former Minister on the opposite side. We are asking the Minister to consider setting

into motion the machinery to have a probe now into the G.R.B. We have reports of vast areas of malpractice and fraud at the Guyana Rice Board and we feel that it is incumbent on the Government and the police to start an investigation immediately. People get car allowance and do not use their cars ---

The Chairman: That is a Public Corporation. The police cannot intervene in that unless they are called in. I have been allowing you to talk, but you can try and bring it in somehow but not that way. The Minister cannot initiate an enquiry and investigation into the Guyana Rice Board.

Cde. Collymore: Who will initiate it? If you will permit me I will to make my speech. You can ask the Minister.

The Chairman: That is not the relevant Minister.

Cde. Collymore: Armed Robberies: We have here reports that there has been an increase in the spate of armed robberies and some of the more important ones pertain to what transpired in Prashad Nagar. Four bandits armed with police revolvers invaded a house, where there was also a bakery, and made off with \$2,000 in cash. They gun whipped the baker, choked his wife and went away with jewellery also. On the previous night, armed bandits fired off revolver shots but failed to gain entry into other premises in Prashad Nagar. Two weeks ago, eight armed bandits invaded a house at Bachelor's Adventure; they took jewellery and cash, and according to our reliable reports, they raped the wife and also raped the husband. Then there was a \$6,000 snatch at the G.P.O. building from a woman.

But one of the more startling development which I would like to ask the Minister to look into immediately, is the aspect of gangs now being formed. The police are currently investigating the case of a gang shoot-out. It is just like in the United States, the Mafia. We have said over and over that a Mafia is being created in this country and the police must move swiftly, but the Government must give the police all necessary assistance, advice and aid to tackle this new menace.

4:50 p.m.

There was a shoot-out in Campbellville and, believe it or not, two of the weapons used in the shoot-out were weapons from the Guyana Defence Force, Camp Ayanganna, the headquarters. One of the persons who fired the fatal shot is a soldier. He is now underground; he cannot be found and the most interesting part of it is that the police are looking for him and the members of the other gang are also looking for him. It is like the Mafia in the United States of America and we are asking the Minister to take a very firm hand in this before it gets out of hand. We have been informed that if it had not been for the fact that one revolver failed to go off there would have been two fatalities to deal with.

On the question of the Police not being able to deal with crime, we have a report that there has been a corpse in the Princess Street canal for three days now and the Police have been making efforts to have this corpse removed and nothing has been done because there is no vehicle to remove the corpse. It is deteriorating. I do not know if the Minister hears about these things. For three days a stinking corpse has been in the trench in a residential area and then our friends come in here and talk a lot of nonsense. They spend a lot of money on guns and people's lives are in danger.

What about another aspect of crime? They are dealing with the detection and prevention of crime. Narcotic! All the police in various areas and divisions in the country are saying there is an increase in the consumption of dope, marijuana. Many people are high on it. We do not know what is happening. We want to believe that the police are working but not enough effort is being made to stamp out the consumption of dope. If they allow marijuana to take a grip of the country, hard drugs are going to come in following on the heels of marijuana. We are going to get heroin. Whenever you find heavy consumption of drugs, you find also that the crime rate increases by leaps and bounds.

I have been informed that one marijuana cigarette cost \$10. How can a person buy it if he does not engage in unsavoury practices? That is why in the general debate I asked the Minister to indicate if we are getting our money's worth out of Interpol because we have here a report from the United States.

The Chairman: Subhead 42, Fees for Membership of Interpol, deals specifically with that. Probably you can leave your remarks for that subhead.

Cde. Collymore: I have a report here by a person in the United States, the United States Assistant Secretary of State, dealing with the consumption of narcotics, to the House-Subcommittee, and he identified that there is a vast amount of narcotics in the United States. He said:

“Moreover the --

Which is the department pertaining to narcotics –

“estimate that 70 per cent of the narcotics entering this country come from Colombia and”

He said that

“the route is through the Caribbean”

Because three-quarters of the cargo move through the Caribbean agency. I ask the Minister if he can assure this House that the maximum use is being made of Interpol facilities to tackle these international dope smugglers.

We now have gang warfare and gang organisation. If gangs are united and the dope people come in, we will have a well-identified and well-established Mafia in Guyana. You must nip things in the bud. We ask the Minister to be very careful about it and to ensure that dope consumption does not get a very firm grip in Guyana.

Subhead 26, Revenue Protection: This is our shame. What do we have here? Do you know, Cde. Chairman, how much was allocated to Revenue Protection in 1978? A sum of \$160. What can such a small sum protect? Perhaps this is the reason why we lost \$92,000 from the Ministry of Housing. Our revenue is not being protected. We are very perturbed about this very small sum. In 1978, the Approved Estimates column showed \$22,000 but only \$160 was spent.

This is the reason why so many of the departments failed to guarantee the security of taxpayers' money.

We note that this year the Government has again put down an allocation of \$22,000 but if the only \$160 was spent last year we have pessimistic view of the matters. We, therefore, ask the Minister to assure this House that there will be maximum protection for taxpayers' money in this form under Revenue Protection.

The Chairman: Subhead 28.

Cde. Collymore: Cde. Chairman, the point under that subhead has already been dealt with. It is subhead 35, Road Traffic Education. The Minister has already answered that point. There is no need to ask that question.

Subhead 40, Control of Explosives. We are perturbed over the laxity which appears to pertain to the control of explosives devices in the country and particularly arms and ammunition.

We are also very worried about what transpired at Jonestown where so many weapons were. The Government seemed to be blissfully unaware that such a very large cache was at Jonestown. We are very concerned about this and we would like to ask the Minister to assure us that this state of affairs will not reoccur where a foreign-based entity, or entity controlled by overseas sources, was in a position to have so many weapons – 50,000 rounds of ammunition and 300 guns. Probably they were preparing to be mercenaries because military exercises were going on there and seeing there are so many examples of mercenary activities in the world we are perturbed over this state of affairs. Anything could have transpired at Jonestown. We have received no report. What is happening? They say we are going to set up a Commission. We are awaiting with bated breath for a Commission. We are therefore urging that there be strict control of explosives.

Cde. Ram Karran: I merely want to ask a short question. It has been asked before in this House: Is the hon. Minister aware of the inconveniences and the trouble which Guyanese citizens encounter when they go to obtain passports? Aside from the physical inconvenience –

The Chairman: Which subhead is this?

5 p.m.

Cde. Ram Karran: Subhead 24, Passports. Aside from the physical inconvenience of standing in the rain and in the sun, members of the public who go there are usually treated as if they are suspects. And I am wondering if the time is not right for this service to be provided by another agency. But it doesn't seem to me as if policemen, with their training and their meeting with and dealing with criminal elements in the community, tend to have that sort of feeling that everyone, perhaps some of them who go there can qualify to be treated in that manner but others who go there ought to be treated like citizens.

This question has been asked time and again. I would like to ask the hon. Minister if any efforts are being made for the office to be expanded and extended so that citizens who go there and who pay for these services can be given at least accommodation to sit and wait until the services can be provided, and if proper explanations can be given to them when they are in the line as to what they can expect. If a man goes there at sunrise and he stands in the line, when he gets to the other end, then he is told: you have to go and bring passport pictures, description of the pictures and so on and so forth. People go there merely to buy a form and they have to go through the entire line. Somebody comes in the morning early, makes some explanation and opens the door, and if a man comes late, then he is not provided with that information and he has to go all the way through.

I can understand people being treated in that manner in the American Embassy or the British High Commission and so on because they are seeking to go outside. It is in our own country, in Guyana. We ought to have some decent sort of arrangement if they are going to sit down and wait their turn of something, or told in advance: we can only accommodate 50 people or 100 people but the number of people is increasing; 250 people apply there every day for a passport. As I said, this thing has been raised so many times before. Is the Minister in a position to tell us what new accommodations are being provided? Members of the public go and ask to meet officers to appeal. People go there and are able to get to the counter and tell the officer in charge look, "I cannot wait for the date you have fixed because I have to travel in advance, may I

see the officer”. The officer is a sort of stone god and he sits there but he doesn’t see anybody at all. A subordinate might be able to see you but then the subordinate cannot make a decision. I think that the time has come when these tin gods are to be told that they are servants of the people and that they ought to meet the people and treat them with some sort of courtesy and respect if Guyanese are going to have respect for those people attached to the passport office.

Cde. Collymore: I ask very graciously- I know you have to be gracious. I wanted to bring up this matter under the establishment and I forgot. I would like to raise it under the same Prevention and Detection of Crime; those two brief aspects, because I know that some action has been taken by the Minister already. One deals with the respect of ... in Mabaruma and this is where one finds certain policemen exceeding their authority and they are giving the force a very bad name. In the general debate I mentioned it and I said that we will take action. We note that the Minister or the Police Commissioner has taken measures to transfer the three guilty person.

The Chairman: No, no, The three persons.

Cde. Collymore: Transferred the three persons. We are therefore asking the Minister to pursue those enquiries with the greatest vigour at his disposal and if the persons are found guilty to prosecute them with all the vigour obtainable in the court. Cde. Chairman, just another matter. This matter pertains to what goes on at the toll station at No. 62 on the Corentyne.

We are having reports that the policemen there are engaged in certain practices which do not bear the light of the day. I would like to ask the Minister to check to see that the police investigate what is transpiring there because we have been told that when people come from across the river, Suriname, they are stopped at the toll gate, taken into a building nearby and they are searched and we have information that male policemen search women. On one occasion when this searching was going on, there was a tremendous screaming in the building and the policemen ordered the other male persons – they were taken out of their vehicle – to proceed or else they would be charged and that they must not say anything or else the next time when they should pass, it was going to be rough for them. We have been informed that many of the items on these persons have been taken away improperly. Then you have a case of manhandling of

female persons taken into custody at that toll gate. I would like to ask the Minister if he could look at this particular aspect.

The Chairman: It is now after five. The Sittings of the House is suspended and when the Minister returns, he will reply.

Sitting suspended at 5:03 p.m.

5:23 p.m.

On resumption

Cde. Mingo: Cde Chairman, in response to the questions which have been posed by the members of the Opposition, Comrades Collymore and Ram Karran, I wish to say that we are very grateful for some of the information that has been given this afternoon. I hope that all of it is genuine information.

On the question of arms in the hands of criminals, it is true that we are having some arms raids here of late, but I should say that it has not developed to the proportion of crisis as Cde. Collymore tries to make. He also said that some of the arms which are being used are police weapons. I wish to say that the Commissioner has informed me that this is not so. As far as I know about the system of the issue of arms to policemen, I agree with him. There is a very strict system in the issue of arms to policemen. Whenever arms are being issued, there is a system by which they must be returned – all arms and ammunition – as soon as the rank returns to the station, so it does not seem possible that some of the arms, which he claims are being used by some of these criminals, are arms which come from the police section. As I said, we are grateful that they are bringing some of these things to our attention. We are going to step up, for instance, in the Prashad Nagar area where Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud lives. Already, the police have taken steps to do their utmost to try to solve the situation of crime which is developing in that area. We admit, that since the police have been so active in stamping out street crimes, there is a sort of diversion to crimes around the homes. The police are taking every step to move swiftly to wipe this out.

On the question of uniforms, Cde. Collymore seems to have a source of information in the Police Force. I do not know how reliable his source is. I do not think it is reliable.

The Chairman: It looks reliable. He said a senior officer.

Cde. Mingo: He did say a senior officer. May be he could give me the name of the senior officer. But there was a little difficulty with uniforms last year and this ties up with the whole economic situation where many indents with uniforms for the police were not dispatched in time and there was a little delay. But there was no discrimination. I do not know if he directly used that term. He said they were not properly distributed. There was no question of improper distribution.

On the question of vehicles, this is a situation one finds in every corner of Guyana at the moment. It is difficult to get spare parts and the police have an added difficulty with respect to the use of the vehicles. This difficulty is that several persons use a vehicle, and we know what can happen when several persons use one vehicle. At one stage a rule was set that no more than two persons should use a vehicle. The Commissioner tells me that it is not true that there is only one squad car in Georgetown; at least, there are three squad cars in Georgetown.

On the question of the situation on the West Bank Demerara, for instance, when I came to the House on Monday at least three Members of this House spoke to me about the situation with respect to crime on the West Demerara. Here we see there is one development for the betterment which leads, perhaps, to a case where the bridge is erected and you have criminals crossing easily. I think Cde. Collymore did very well to admit that some plan was really proposed to stop this situation whereby patrols were set up and whereby searches were made. We are going to see that this is done on a more regular basis and perhaps there will be need for greater checks.

The Chairman: I think Cde. Collymore went further than that. He was saying that although police are there they are not looking, people have to draw their attention. They are not vigilant, they are lackadaisical, unconcerned.

Cde. Mingo: He did say this, by my information is that this was not so, that the thing was detected by a policeman and action was taken by the police immediately.

5:35 p.m.

There was also some mention of the situation with respect to dope peddling and Cde. Collymore tied this up with the assistance we can get from Interpol. Dope peddling is an international crime and we have received from Interpol from time to time. More than one officer in the Police Force has attended courses and seminars on dope peddling. These courses were sponsored by Interpol.

I should say that this is one of the things we would not like to have spread in this country and the Police Force is doing its utmost to ensure that it is stamped out. Every effort is being made to see that action is taken and that this does not spread in the country. I quite agree with the comrade when he said that the whole question of consumption should be nipped in the bud and we are making every effort to try to do this.

Cde. Collymore use the question of Revenue Protection to talk about some other things. Really this subhead is to give rewards to policemen who have shown vigilance in detecting crimes pertaining to customs breaches, especially bush rum. I should say that the Police have been working in greater co-operation with the Customs Department especially and, with the co-operation of the Police and Customs, several cases, especially in dope peddling and cases of currency, have been detected and persons have been prosecuted. It means that the Police are assisting with revenue protection but this is mainly with respect to bush-rum.

On the question of explosives, I would wish to inform the comrade on the other side that every effort is being made to control explosives at Makouria and the quarry at Teperu, Essequibo. This is really for protection. This subhead deals with control of explosives used at these places.

Cde. Ram Karran raised the question of passports and the treatment of comrades at this office. I would wish to inform him that every effort will be made as quickly as possible to have this investigated properly and to see if what he alleges is correct.

There was another question raised by Cde. Ram Karran too. I want to say some things about the passport office. We are sympathetic sometimes. Those people handle a very far greater

volume of work today than they handled several years ago. Last year they handled something like 30,000 issues of passports. It means, therefore, that one has to be patient and hope that the situation improves from time to time.

Cde. Collymore referred to the incident at Mabaruma where it is alleged some Amerindians were tortured. I think that this morning's newspaper carried something on this. The point is that as soon as a report was made an investigating team from Georgetown went up. They have investigated. The report was handed to the Commissioner of Police; the men were brought down to Georgetown. This morning I saw a report from the Office of the Director of Public Prosecution and certainly further action will be taken on the matter.

Head 22, Ministry of Home Affairs – Police - \$23,655,907 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Pages 52 and 53.

HEAD 23 – MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS

PRISONS

Question proposed that the sum of \$2,789,606 for Head 23, Ministry of Home Affairs – Prisons, stand part of the Estimates.

Cde. Collymore: ON page 52, subhead 1 (33) and subhead 12 and on page 53 subheads 19, 23 and 25.

Subhead 1 (33), Expenses in connection with Executions, Retainer to the Executioner: We are always carrying this item. We want to respect our call to the Government to get rid of the executioner once and for all. We are not executing anybody. Pay the man off.

Subhead 12, Welfare Expenses: We note under the column “1978 Revised Estimates” the sum of \$690. In 1979 the sum of \$800 is to be spent. We on this side of the House are contending that these sums are very meager and appear to be totally inadequate to deal with the volume for which they are intended. We are therefore urging that the sum be increased.

On page 53 I want to deal with the same system. Subhead 19, Dental Plates etc. and Spectacles for Prisoners: We are going to spend \$300 this year. Last year we spent the very princely sum of \$10.

Subhead 23, Payment of Gratuities to Discharged Prisoners: We see a very small amount in the 1978 Revised Estimates column, namely \$928. The sum of \$2,500 was approved in the 1978 Estimates but we only spent \$928. This year we are going to vote the same amount of \$2,500 and, heaven knows, we are perhaps going to spend \$10.

Subhead 25, Earning Scheme: The sum of \$4,000 is being voted this year. Last year we approved \$4,000 and we spent only \$2,607. We on this side of the House are asking for these sums to be substantially increased so as to put the scheme in line with the expectations.

Cde. Mingo: I do not have very much to answer on this occasion. The Government has not yet decided to abolish capital punishment but we have not had any execution since 1970. Since the policy has not been changed we have to make provision to do the work.

I was not certain that the comrade understood what really is subhead 12, Welfare Expenses. This is really welfare expenses for Prison Officers.

On the question of subhead 19, Dental Plates etc. Spectacles for Prisoners, subhead 23, Payment of gratuities to Discharge Prisoners and subhead 25 Earning Scheme, I would say that there is a system set up whereby payments are made. In these areas there is a special system, a special provision, a special procedure and this sort of thing, and if you do not have requests how are you going to pay? If you do not have requests for spectacles how are you going to spend the money on spectacles? If you do have this situation where you have to spend more money on gratuities you do not need a vote. The comrade might have had a case if the money was over spent last year and then we put back the same amount. It is a case where the provision was under-spent. So there is no need to spend the money. We are hoping this year to have the same amount provided again.

Head 23, Ministry of Home Affairs – Prisons - \$2,789,606 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

5:45 p.m.

The Chairman: Page 54.

HEAD 24 – MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS

FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES

Question proposed that the sum of \$2,251,682 for Head 24, Ministry of Home Affairs – Fire Protection Services, stand part of the Estimates.

Cde. Collymore: Cde. Chairman, the same syndrome that is plaguing the Police Force is plaguing the Fire Service.

The Chairman: Say under what number you are talking.

Cde. Collymore: Subheads 7 and 13, page 54, Maintenance and Operation of Land and Water Transport and Purchase of Fire Fighting Equipment: We have been informed that the fire service is woefully short of essential equipment, fire boats and tenders, and we note here that the Government is putting aside \$51,500 for the purchase of fire-fighting equipment. We would like the Minister to say what is being bought here because this does not seem to be enough or adequate to purchase a fire tender. We make these observations in the light of very disastrous fires taking place when the fire service ought to be mobile and to be quite alert in order to contain these disastrous conflagrations. We ask the Minister to say what the \$51,500 is meant for and if he intends to purchase more fire tenders and proceed with the sale of the fire boat **Forbes**

B.

Cde. Belgrave: Item 10: On the last occasion, the Minister told me that this matter is to be studied. I had posed to him a question for the separation of the ambulance service from the fire service and he was supposed to investigate that particular query.

The second question I had posed to him, he has so far given some reply during the last estimates, and I ask it again. When will the ambulance service be updated with a proper communication system so that as from the fire station to the hospital, there can be effective

communication. Some have not got the system where there can be a recall or a redirection of the services from one point to the other and I am asking the Minister again if he can tell this House, whether this has been done, and if not, when will it be done so as to give effective ambulance service to the people in the community.

The Chairman: Cde. Minister.

Cde. Mingo: Cde. Chairman, I do not think I have to spend very much time again. In the case of the fire boat, may I inform the comrade that the fire boat is now being repaired at GUYNEC and we hope very shortly to have it back in service. The question: purchase of fire Fighting equipment, I have been informed that the facilities which we have at the moment are quite adequate in the circumstances of Guyana.

On the question of the separation of the ambulance service from the fire service, investigations have been made and it is felt it is not desirable to do this. On the question of the communication, the ambulance service is provided with communication equipment and we are expecting some additional equipment coming very shortly to strengthen the system.

Head 24, Ministry of Home Affairs - \$2,251,682, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Pages 55 and 56.

HEAD 25 – MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS

REGISTRATION AND ELECTIONS

Question proposed that the sum of \$3,658,044 for Head 25, Ministry of Home Affairs stand part of the Estimates.

Cde. Collymore: Cde. Chairman, page 56, subheads 10, 11, 12, 13, dealing with the burning question of the day, National Elections –

The Chairman: Are you dealing with them as one? Are you dealing with them in totality or do you want to take them individually?

Cde. Collymore: National Elections, National Registration, National and Local Authority Elections: Cde. Chairman, we made the comment during our contribution in the general debate pointing out that this House was treated with supreme contempt. I am not blaming the Minister as a person because I know he is a very humble person and very co-operative but where the Minister is concerned as an institution he is contemptuous of this House.

For instance, dealing with National Registration, we have here a Motion No. 194, and a Notice by the Leader of the Opposition to the Minister of Home Affairs calling on the Minister to say how soon Motions and Notice Papers No. 103 calling for abolition of overseas voting, No. 104 calling for counting of ballots at the place of polling, and No. 105 calling for abolition of postal votes, all published on 15th June, 1977, will be debated. It was directed to this particular Minister as an institution not as a person and instead of having this Motion debated since 1977 what do we have, the same Minister coming to this honourable House and placing an Order proceeding with one of the most controversial aspects of the Motion, overseas voting. We have here National Registration Order and it says persons to whom this order applies shall be registered with reference to 12th September, 1979 and the registration of those person shall begin on the 16th March, 1979 and end on 16th July, 1979. It seems that he has already proceeded with registering persons overseas.

This is in violation and contempt of this nation, of this honourable House, and he says that this Order applies to all persons who are citizens of Guyana or women married to citizens of Guyana as at 30th September, 1979, and who attained the age of 14 years and are not resident in Guyana. Cde. Chairman, we repeat that this Order is contemptuous of this House. If the Government wanted to proceed with this overseas voting, it should have had the decency to bring our Motion and vote against it. It is as simple as that. We hold the Minister as an institution to be contemptuous of this House.

We have to point out that as far as registration is proceeding internally, it is supposed to be concluded on the 31st March. It is going at a snail's pace and vast areas of the country both on the coast and the rural areas, and hinterland in fact, are still without registration. They have not seen a registrar. Some other areas are half completed and in other areas we find that registrars

23.3.79

National Assembly

5.45– 5.55 p.m.

have been there but they have left, and still other people are in the areas without having been registered. We would like to ask the Minister if he can say what is going to happen to those persons who are in an area where the registrar have been, because they are not going back there as far as our knowledge goes. We are subject to correction. As far as the Minister and his registration commissioner have said, the district registrars, there are 38 of them, are not supposed to be registering persons. What is going to happen to these people who have been put on the registration list. We are also asking the Minister to extend the period of registration by thirty days because this would be ample time to enable all Guyanese to be registered. There would be no objection that the period of registration was not adequate.

5:55 p.m.

Dealing with content in the House, we note here that there is another Motion tabled by the Leader of the Opposition and pertaining to the Referendum. This Motion asks “that this National Assembly agrees to the setting up of a Committee to be made up of an equal number of Government and Opposition Members of Parliament with the Ombudsman as Chairman, together with observers from the United Nations Human Rights Committee, the Organisation of American States, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the Secretariat of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Caribbean Community, to carry out an investigation into the conduct of the Referendum held on July 10, including the role of the Elections Commission, and to make recommendations. This is also not being tabled. We are very concerned about these things and we feel that this is not the way to go about cementing unity and creating concord among the people of Guyana.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Cde. Chairman, I want to very briefly deal with subhead 10, National Elections; subhead 11, National Registration and subhead 13, Local Authority Elections.

We see that they are inter-related. When Section 6 of Chapter 19:08 of the National Registration Act is looked at, one sees that the Order for registration is made under that section

and the period specified is 31st March, 1979. Our position on it is that the exercise cannot be completed. That would simply mean that thousands will remain unregistered.

The Chairman: Your colleague has made that point already. I am not stopping you if you want to ask questions.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: If you give me a chance I will pose my question. It expires on the 31st March. My point is to pose my question so that the Minister will appreciate that we have already passed the middle of March. We want to ask the Minister that the period be extended –

The Chairman: Cde. Collymore asked that it be extended for a month.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Section 14 of this Act requires the Minister to publish a list after the exercise is completed. Will the Minister state if this list will be published after the exercise is completed? Secondly, can the Minister inform the House if the Elections Commission was involved in the process of registration? That point is founded on article 69 of the Constitution which says that the Elections Commission must be involved. In fact, the Commission must supervise, direct and control the process of registration. We would like to know if it was involved, if meetings of the Commission were held and if the machinery of registration is under its control and supervision.

The other point is under Section 11 of Chapter 19:08 which states:

“No person shall be registered in more than one divisional register or more than one in any register established under section 9”.

If a person was registered under section 9 at any stage at a previous registration, doesn't this mean that person is already registered? And if he is registered, would he have to register again? I pose that question based on the fact that everybody is called upon to be registered. If that person is called upon to re-register, it is a new registration. In the case of all new registrations, they were given a document to support the fact that they were visited and registered. Those who already hold identification cards and are said to be registered already are not given anything to show that

they were registered. If their names are not found on the list there are provisions both under the Act and subsidiary legislation where they will have to pay sums of money if they are placing claims for registration. All these factors are interlinked and I think it is very timely that these questions be posed. I would like very sincerely to call upon the Minister to answer these questions so that we can know where we are going.

I also want to ask the Cde. Minister to bear in mind that the amendment to the Constitution to extend the life of Parliament allows it to function until the end of October. If that is so, then elections have to be held in the year 1979. Will the Minister indicate to this House, which is the supreme body, so that the nation can be informed and so that we can be informed, if the Ministry is being geared so that we can have our elections in keeping with the extension of the life of Parliament. I have already called upon the Minister under section 14 to tell us about the publication of this list.

We have not waited until today to come to Parliament to raise these matters. These matters were raised with the Commissioner of Registration. In certain areas he was able to clarify certain points. In certain areas, the law does not give him the power to answer the questions, hence, it does appear that this is the place where we would have to get those questions answered and it looks to me that this is the time the questions have to be answered. Motions that are relevant are not brought so that we are not given the opportunity to debate them. In view of the fact that Motions are not brought and this side is calling for a debate on the abolition of overseas voting, we would like to know whether the Government will still pursue registration for overseas voting.

The last point deals with subhead 13, Local Authority Elections. The Estimates has a nominal provision of \$1. Does it mean that no Local Authority Elections will be held despite they were not held for nine years? Will the Minister indicate whether this normal provision of \$1 is merely to keep the subhead in the Estimates and that the Government has no intention of holding local authority election?

Cde. Mingo: Cde. Chairman, both comrades seem to be interested in the same points. With respect to the question of registration and complaints that some registrars are making one

visit and not returning, as far as the instructions which registrars have been given go and as far as the law goes, the registrar is supposed to return to have a complete registration of every person. For the information of members, there are also penalties for this. There are penalties for registrars who do not work properly and there are penalties against people who do not give information.

6:05 p.m.

On the question of publication of lists, the law is clear on this. We are not to go back on the law. We have to observe the law. The law has not been changed yet.

On the question of the involvement of the Elections Commission, I noted all the complaints, I would say, about the functioning of the Elections Commission. The Opposition has named a member to serve on that Commission. Before registration began, a statement was actually issued by the Elections Commission to the effect that registration is going to be held and that the Minister of Home Affairs has been authorised to publish an Order. The Secretary of the Elections Commission is here. He can verify this.

We have initiated this registration exercise because we would like everybody to be registered and we do everything to ensure that everybody is registered.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Cde. Chairman, I am sure you will agree with me and permit me to ask the Minister a very pertinent question: Whether, in view of the fact that he has not said so, the time will be extended for registration bearing in mind that registration has started and it has not been extended as yet.

The Chairman: You asked the question and he has not answered.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: It was probably not wilfully omitted.

The Chairman: Cde. Minister, do you wish to make any response?

Cde. Mingo: I said that it is our desire to have everybody registered and we do everything in our power to ensure that this is done.

Head 25, Ministry of Home Affairs, Registration and Elections - \$3,658,044 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Page 57.

HEAD 26 – MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS

REGISTRATION, IMMIGRATION, BIRTHS, ETC.

Question proposed that the sum of \$220,365 for Head 26, Ministry of Home Affairs – Registration, immigration, Births, etc. stand part of the Estimates.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: I have always heard in this House that this Department ought to be looked at as a very significant and important one, a department which serves –

The Chairman: Please tell me what subhead you are speaking under, if you don't mind.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: I am speaking under the Fixed Establishment. If you want me to deal with them one by one, I can.

The Chairman: Please deal with them one by one.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Subhead (2), Deputy Registrar General. I know as a fact that the Deputy Registrar General is on pre-retirement leave and for several years no Senior Clerk (General) as shown at item (3) has been appointed. Will the Minister indicate how old is this position? I think it dates back to 1975, that is, four years. Why is this position of Senior Clerk not being filled?

Dealing with the Fixed Establishment, the people who have to serve the public, I am saying that the Department is grossly and ridiculously understaffed. That point is founded on the fact that applications for births and certificates, death certificates, marriage certificates, over the years have increased by over 200 per cent and it will be more. The result is that people have to wait as long as a year for birth certificates. If anyone were to visit the Registrar General's Office he would find people coming – the Minister met a man only the day before yesterday – he was presented to him here and he saw three receipts he has paid for birth certificates and he has not

obtained his birth certificates up to now. He explained to the Minister that he saw the Registrar. It was endorsed. Priority was given to him because it was for the Common Entrance Examination. He still has to wait a little bit.

Because of the fact that people cannot get birth certificates easily there are many unscrupulous people in the field who are using devices. I know as a fact that the Police had to be summoned to investigate people who had set themselves up as registrar in their own right, collecting from people who came from various parts of the country to obtain certificates. You must not only call the Police to talk, you must of necessity in a developing country find out why this is so. This is because the Department cannot cope with the demand which has increased considerably over the years.

You will recall, sir, that I made a very strong plea last year in this Parliament for this department. I remember exactly what the Minister said, that an evaluation exercise had just been completed, that the Public Service Ministry was in possession of the recommendations to the effect that the staff would be increased. In fact I know that a recommendation was clearly made for the staff to be increased. We have reached another Budget and not one other person has been added to that staff.

Because of that fact members of the public suffer and unscrupulous people exploit the situation and rob the public. Do you know, Cde. Chairman, that people have been paying \$255 and \$30 for birth certificates to a man who is not connected with the Department? He is not connected and he collects people's money. We have had all kinds of reports, positive reports.'

I want very strongly, on behalf of this Opposition, to urge the Minister to do something. I do not know whom he has to persuade. That department needs more people. I do not think I can speak more strongly than I have spoken for an increase in a staff.

Let me make another very pertinent point. Some time ago in this very Assembly I raised the question that the Minister has power under the Registration of Births and Deaths Ordinance to make regulations to permit the Registrar General to do minor corrections to birth certificates such as incorrect spelling. As a lawyer, sir, you are conversant with erroneous entries – the fact

that you have to go and prepare an affidavit, file it in court, and give the magistrates more work. When they should have been expediting cases, they have to sit down and sign applications relating to erroneous entries. These regulations were made. The Minister made the regulations but they are not in operation. How can they be in operation? You need people to operate them, you need someone to sit down. There are a number of applications relating to erroneous entries.

I know this not purely because of the department but i was involved in the legal profession myself for some time as a clerk. Imagine, a man has to go, when just his name is incorrectly spelt, to a lawyer and has to pay \$60, \$75, sometimes more for a simple thing that can be corrected.

I want to call on the Minister to see to it very positively; I do not wish just to score a debating point, if that is possible, by criticising this afternoon – but I want to call on him. I know he is a Minister who will act sincerely and I hope he will on this occasion see that something is done immediately to remedy the suffering and hardship that some people have to face.

6.15 p.m.

Cde. Chairman, you know that I have urged that our birth certificate is cumbersome, so many things have to be done, name of child, father's name, mother's name. let me give you one example. People who are not legally married –

The Chairman: Where does all this come under?

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: I am showing you what the Clerk has to deal with so that you can appreciate my call and very sincere one for an increased staff. If the House is not apprised of the volume of the work, the appreciation cannot be felt. I was giving you the example to show that we need to have a different type of birth certificate, a smaller one, a simple one, where you will remove from the birth certificate, name of mother, name of father and just put name of child and date of birth. The reason is this. If you want to adopt the child of people who are not legally married, but for some reason the mother's name and father's name are stated on the birth certificates, even if that father cannot be found, the interpretation is that both the mother

and father must consent. Now, that will require an affidavit to say that they were not legally married. **[Interruption]**

So the point I make, Cde. Chairman, is a simple point and is a point in the interest of the department and the public, that if the birth certificate carries only the name of the child, so many other things can be avoided. And in cases where people are not legally married the mother can simply give consent as the law permits and that *prime facie* evidence will not be there on the birth certificate to show that this person might have legally married and that is why the father's name appears on the birth certificate.

I want to conclude by appealing very strongly for positive responses from the Minister this afternoon so that we can have a change in this department so that the public can get better service. Those people who are in the department try but they have to meet demands which undoubtedly many of them cannot cope with.

Cde. Belgrave: Cde Chairman, subhead 6. I would like to congratulate the staff of the Registrar General for the task that they have to carry out with the problems they have to encounter. It is a department not only understaffed but it needs to be broadened. You will go there and you will find the place is so small -

The Chairman: Cde. Belgrave, all of that Cde. Persaud just said. Ask him if he didn't ask the staff to be increased.

Cde. Belgrave: Cde. Chairman, I am talking about the department itself. I would like to suggest to the Minister that the entire top flat -

The Chairman: under which head the department is. 6 deals with Clerical Establishment.

Cde Belgrave: A big problem exists in that the office staff cannot effectively carry out their duties in a small area with a highly developed area of work. For instance, the officers in that department have to go all the way down to the eastern part of the building to the vault to collect records, and then move from that department right down to the income tax section to collect record from a vault. On the way going and coming, these officers are being continuously

molested by individuals who would like to have their area serviced. It delays work; it interferes with the production of the officers.

Secondly, I can see that where the cashier's cage is situated is too small – 20 feet by 4 feet – the area where people have to congregate to make enquiries as well as to pay money. I was reliably informed, Cde. Chairman, that a man lost \$700 in February. He went to make enquiries and to pay for a birth certificate and that area being so small and cramped it was open to vandalism, and some pick-pocket robbed the man of \$700. I am suggesting that wherever that cashier's cage had to be, it must be completely isolated from the enquiries area. As long as persons are cramped in one area, there can be created, great losses. So I want to suggest to the Minister to accept this proposal, that the department that houses the Registry for Income Tax can be resited and that whole top flat, the western section, can be utilized for the purpose of the General Registrar Office. There is a vault I understand in the Elections Commission office.

The Chairman: What is the question up to now you are asking?

Cde. Belgrave: I am suggesting to the Minister that the whole office should be broadened in the interest of his department so that there can be greater production and to accommodate a greater number of employees. They can give efficient service. This is what I am suggesting.

The Chairman: This is no question, this is a time to ask question to interrogate.

Cde. Belgrave: I am saying will the Minister tell this House if he accept the proposal or if there is the possibility of carrying out the proposals in the interest of the department.

Cde. Chairman: Cde. Minister.

Cde. Mingo: Cde Chairman, I am much concerned, or perhaps more concerned about the situation at the General Registrar Office than my friends on the other side. I understand their concern. What I have observed is they seem to have an intimate knowledge of what goes on there. I hope I would not have to call the Commissioner of Police in on them because some of the practices that goes on around that office are not always very regular. We are concerned about the

situation. We know what are the problems and we are faced with the problem of more staff. We have requested more staff, we have requested more space. Cde. Belgrave suggested that we should seek to have the Elections Commission office re-housed and also even to try to see if we can get the registry section re-housed. We have attempted to do that, but for instance, the Post

Office Corporation would say that if any person leaves, they want the space. So, if we cause the office of the Elections Commission to be removed to another place, we would not get it. So this is one of the difficulties. We are trying to get more space.

6:25 p.m.

We have tried to get more staff and we are now working on the decentralisation of the Office. Just as the Regional Officers are Superintendents of Marriages, we are now working to get the Regional Officers to become Superintendents in this area, so it would mean that a person does not have to leave Berbice to come to Georgetown. That is the reason it is taking some time to be implemented. The whole question is that the volume of work at that office has increased tremendously, perhaps 500 per cent, if not more, over the years and we would definitely have to do something about the whole situation. It is not that we are not working on it, but sometimes these things take time to arrive at.

Head 26, Ministry of Home Affairs – Registration, Immigration, Births, etc. - \$220,365 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Page 206.

DIVISION XII – MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS

Question proposed that the sum of \$1,230,000 for Division XII, Ministry of Home Affairs, stand part of the Estimates.

Cde. Collymore: Cde. Chairman, speaking generally on the police side, subheads 2, 3, 4, 5,6, 7, I just have some general comments. We were talking a while ago about the stricture on police preparedness where the combating of crime is concerned. When we look at these Capital

Estimates we see that they are going to be even more restricted in 1979 and we note that very little money has been spent on capital expenditure for the Force. We are concluding from the figures, that this is the main contributory factor that the police are immobile and are unable to move with the elasticity with which they are supposed to move.

In 1976, we spent \$1,678,186. In 1977, we spent \$400,000. In 1978, \$.3 million was approved but actually we spent \$.2 million. For this year we are going to spend \$.5 million. We on this side of the House do not see what the sum of \$500,000 can buy in terms of crime fighting equipment, taking into consideration the gargantuan size of the crime syndrome with which we are confronted. We feel that out of this money the police are supposed to be equipped with vehicles. Therefore, we criticise this small sum as totally inadequate and ask the Minister to see if a greater sum can be put here in a supplementary budget. We take into consideration the \$.5 million and we also note that altogether the police are getting about \$3 million more. It means that this very, very small sum has to be compared with an increase in the bureaucracy and this is what we do not like. We are therefore suggesting that a bigger sum be earmarked for capital.

Cde. Nokta: Just one short question: Subhead 5, Purchase of Horses, etc. The legend states: "To provide for the purchase of horses, etc." I just want to ask the Minister how many horses he intends to buy with \$5,000.

Cde. Mingo: Cde. Chairman, to answer Cde. Nokta's question, with respect to the information I have here, the amount is to purchase five horses. On the question raised by Cde. Collymore, in a way we understand that there would have to be national priorities and we feel quite satisfied, when we take into account the national priorities that this will suffice to give us what we want in the context of Guyana today.

Division XII, Ministry of Home Affairs - \$1,230,000 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Assembly resumed.

The Speaker: Comrades, after the adjournment is taken, within five minutes the Constituent Assembly will be required to meet in this Chamber.

23.3.79

National Assembly

6.25– 6.30 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, “That this Assembly do now adjourn until Monday, 26th March, 1979 at 2p.m.

[Cde. Ramsaroop]

Adjournment accordingly at 6:28 p.m.
