

**THE  
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

**OFFICIAL REPORT**

**[VOLUME 7]**

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

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**186<sup>th</sup> Sitting**

**2 p.m.**

**Wednesday, 28<sup>th</sup> March, 1979**

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**MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (63)**

**Speaker**

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

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

**Prime Minister (1)**

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

**(Absent)**

**Deputy Prime Minister (1)**

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

**Senior Ministers (12)**

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

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

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

Cde. C.V. Mingo,  
Minister of Home Affairs

\*Cde. H. Green **(Absent)**  
Minister of Health, Housing and Labour

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

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

\*Cde. G.B. Kennard, C.C.H.,  
Minister of Agriculture

\*Cde. M. Shahabuddeen, C.C.H.,  
Attorney General and Minister of Justice

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

\*Cde. R.E. Jackson **(Absent)**  
Minister of Foreign Affairs

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

### **Ministers (2)**

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

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

### **Ministers of State (10)**

Cde. F.U.A. Carmichael, **(Absent)**  
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, **(Absent)**  
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, **(Absent)**  
Minister of State for Information,  
Ministry of National Development

### **Parliamentary Secretaries (5)**

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

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

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

### **\*Non-elected Ministers**

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

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

### **Other Members (15)**

Cde. W.G. Carrington, C.C.H

Cde. S.M. Field-Ridley

**(Absent – on leave)**

Cde. E.H.A Fowler

Cde. J. Gill

**(Absent)**

Cde. W. Hussain

Cde. K.M.E Jones

Cde. J.G.Ramson

Cde. P.A. Rayman

Cde. A. Salim

**(Absent)**

Cde. E.M. Stoby, J.P

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

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

Cde. H.A. Taylor

Cde. L.E. Willems

Cde. M. Zaheeruddeen

### **Members of the Opposition (16)**

#### **(i) People's Progressive Party (14)**

#### **Leader of the Opposition (1)**

Cde. C. Jagan

Leader of the Opposition

**(Absent)**

#### **Deputy Speaker (1)**

Cde. Ram Karran,

Deputy Speaker

#### **Other Members (12)**

Cde. J. Jagan

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

Cde. Narbada Persaud

**(Absent)**

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

**(Absent)**  
**(Absent)**

**(ii) Liberator Party (2)**

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

**(Absent – on leave)**

**OFFICERS**

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

Acting Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly – A. Knight

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National Assembly

2 – 2.05 p.m.

**PRAYERS**  
**ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER**

**Leave to Members**

**The Speaker:** Leave has been granted to Cde. Salim from today until the end of the month.

**PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS**

The following paper was laid:

Consumption Tax (Amendment) Order 1979 (No. 25), made under section 4 of the Consumption Tax Act, Chapter 80:02, on 21<sup>st</sup> March, 1979, and published in the Gazette on the 24<sup>th</sup> of March, 1979. [**Minister of Finance**]

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

The following Bill was introduced and read the first time:

Customs (Amendment) Bill 1979 – Bill No. 5/1979. [**The Minister of Finance**]

**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:** Pages 58 and 59.

**HEAD 27 – MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE**

Question proposed that the sum of \$2,256,713 for Head 27, Ministry of Agriculture stand part of the Estimates.

**Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud:** Cde. Chairman, a short question on page 58. The information I have received is that this Ministry is badly understaffed both in administration and technical fields. I wonder if the Minister could let us know what is the position with respect to the administration section.

Page 59, subhead 7, Subsidy to Guyana Marketing Corporation: I remember some time ago it was mooted that the Guyana Marketing Corporation ought to become self-sufficient and that the time will be reached when that subsidy will be removed. I am not taking that position that it ought to be removed. The position I am taking up this afternoon is that it is an important segment between the producer and the consumer. My view is that the G.M.C. has not until this day asserted its full role to ensure that farmers who produce are assured of guaranteed prices so that there can be acceleration in production, and moreover, that those farmers are exposed to unscrupulous people who act as middle men. Unfortunately, however, this is the position today and I would like to feel that the Government is concerned as I expect it to be concerned over the fact that the producers are not getting the real benefit of their sweat and toil. In fact, those who function at the middle enjoy the greatest benefits.

**2.05 p.m.**

The other advantage is that the consumers have to pay higher prices. I would like the Minister to tell us whether the G.M.C. is getting a clearly established policy in so far as fixed prices are concerned for farmers' produce.. Perhaps he could say if he doesn't think that the time has come when all the prices, I do not want to waste time itemising cassava or plantain or what have you, should be revised with a view to offering the farmers more remunerative prices to ensure that the produce goes to the G.M.C.

I am sure the Minister will concede that produce today, does not go to the G.M.C. as it ought to. The hucksters, they are the ones who go from place to place and buy the farmers'

produce. That is because the Government has not, over the years, established a regular number of buying centres. It is so easy to identify the areas that are producing. It is so easy to carry out an assessment to see on certain days like Fridays, the number of private vehicles that go to these areas and buy the produce and the G.M.C. remains there in isolation. The G.M.C. would have been able in view, if the Government had a very clear and sincere policy on agriculture, to offer the producers better prices but the hucksters or the middle man, call them what you wish, offer prices at the moment which are more attractive than the G.M.C.'s and this undoubtedly is one of the considerations which lead the farmers to sell them.

The second: this obviously is that the G.M.C. is not with the people and hence the farmers are out of touch and the G.M.C. is out of touch. I think it ought to be the role of the G.M.C. to be in touch. If it functions as it ought to, there could be no doubt that the G.M.C. can become a more viable institution.

The G.M.C. must also examine the whole question of season when certain produce is in abundance, when it will not be in circulation, when you just cannot get. If the G.M.C. is managed efficiently and if it provides the necessary storage facilities not only in Georgetown but at various significant centres, then when there is a shortage the storage facilities would have been able to ensure that there is a steady flow. The obvious benefit to be gained from that, sir, is that the consumer will be protected in so far as prices are concerned.

I don't know how I could convince the Minister that what I say does exist at the moment but I ask him this afternoon to visit the markets, to visit the areas of production, to look into the functioning of the G.M.C. and he will see that the time has come when there is need for a comprehensive investigation into the functions of the G.M.C. and I call, this afternoon, for a commission of inquiry, not the traditional commission of inquiry but a small and impartial commission that will investigate the G.M.C. in general, in its entirety. More so, there are areas of fraud in the G.M.C.

I am told, and reliably so, that the name of a new Manager was announced some time yesterday, and the name was given as Cde. Smith, I hope I have it right, and he is succeeding another man. I think in fairness to that comrade he ought to be given a clean slate. He must know



what he is taking over, what exists. I think he should ask in his own interest apart from the general interest of the nation and of this Parliament, for a clear balance sheet, not the traditional auditing; I am talking about something more than that, so that he will be able to address his mind to areas of clear weaknesses that are well known to so many people, with a view to correcting all those areas in which weaknesses exist and to move towards establishing better relations between the G.M.C., the farmers, the consumers and indeed, establishing better administration generally in the functioning of the Guyana Marketing Corporation. Now, my call for an inquiry into the operation of the G.M.C. is not founded on any political consideration. It is founded on the very premise that I make this afternoon, that is, that the G.M.C. is not playing its proper role, as a result production is stultified, farmers have become disenchanted, if not totally frustrated, the farmers lose, the middle men gain and the consumers pay high prices for things that we can get much cheaper and in abundance. I deliberately did not say greater abundance because nothing is really at the moment in abundance.

I did refer to one particular crop earlier in the major speech on agriculture and that was cabbage and I said people are paying much more than 46 cents a pound. We know the three areas that produce cabbage and I know these three areas can do better. And the Ministry knows and it should find out why there is such a constant shortage. Later on perhaps I can talk about seeds, whether we should germinate our own and that kind of consideration.

Will the Minister then tell us what steps are being taken to have more buying centres? What steps are being taken to have better storage facilities, what consideration is being given to improve prices to farmers? As I said, our philosophy is a clear one, that if it is necessary in order to encourage production, which is so vital, the Government should come forth with a subsidy. We are not opposed to that kind of thing because we feel in the long run with accelerated production, with the farmers being motivated and inspired, even the subsidy would be removed. The consideration ought to be different in a country where agriculture is the backbone of that country.

If the G.M.C. is losing, it is losing for reasons of clear negligence, incompetence, and, as I said, areas of fraud because our information is you can buy a quantity of stock but then you pay

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**National Assembly**

**2.15 – 2.25 p.m.**

for more than you buy. There is a clear weakness here. The new Manager can be watchful over these areas of blatant fraud that have been existing in the G.M.C. to ensure that whatever produce is sold, is recorded, and not that one amount is sold and a greater amount is recorded. The Government, I hope, has got information of that type. Things like produce remaining on the wharf and similar things have been responsible for the economic state of Guyana Marketing Corporation.

**2.15 p.m.**

I see \$500,000 is provided but I have discovered that though we passed that on the last occasion it was increased by supplementary estimate by another \$139,647. One does not know what the position will be during this year 1979. The farmers have been making representations with respect to prices. They have been crying that the G.M.C. should pay them better and they have been obviously complaining that they who are producing are not really getting the benefits. The man who operates with the capital in the middle, who is able to buy in large quantities is the person who makes the money. He enjoys a good life with socks, shoes and shirt-jack, and all the recreational facilities of urban Guyana, but is never associated with the soil and the hard rural life. He gets a tremendous and fantastic life out of the blood and sweat of the farmers. If this is allowed to continue, then the Ministry will stand indicted for this.

**Cde. Nokta:** Page 59, subhead 7, Subsidy to Guyana Marketing Corporation. I would like to bring to the Minister's attention what is happening at Wauna Scheme and this is definitely related to the G.M.C. and the subsidy. The Government is offering at the G.M.C. \$1.50 per pound for nuts while the huckster is paying at \$3.50 per pound.

**The Chairman:** You made that same statement in your general debate.

**Cde. Nokta:** I have to repeat certain things in order to make the point.

**The Chairman:** The Rules say you must not repeat yourself.

**Cde. Nokta:** I want to let the Minister know that this vote of \$500,000 is very ridiculous. In 1976, it was \$1 million and in 1977, it was \$1.2 million. The whole of last year the G.M.C. bought the people's produce in the North West District and all other places on credit. I was there last month and farmers showed me slips showing that the Government owed them money. The Government is asking for \$250,000 for telephone and subsidising the G.M.C with \$500,000. I feel that this amount should have been doubled so that the farmers in the riverain areas would be able to get cash payment for their produce so that they would not suffer this terrible hardship which is facing them at the moment.

**The Minister of Agriculture (Cde. Kennard):** Cde. Chairman, the first question raised by Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud relates to the shortage of technical and administrative staff within the Ministry. I would admit that with respect to the administrative staff there are vacancies which are to be filled. I am assured by the secretariat of the Public Service Commission that these vacancies, in which people are acting at the moment, such as Principal Assistant Secretary, Administrative Assistant, Assistant Secretary, Chief Accountant and Accountant, will be filled this year; that they are competent officers presently acting in these posts.

With respect to the technical staff, the position is not as it might appear in the Estimates and later in the proceedings, Cde. Chairman, it is my intention to move that the vote for Personal Emoluments should be readjusted to reflect posts, which are now paid from Open Votes, under Personal Emoluments. They relate to posts such as economists and posts such as engineers in the Hydraulics Division of the Ministry. There are people at work but they are being paid from general open vote heads. Some of these would be regularised when I move that this should be done by suspending the Standing Orders and moving for the amendments of the general vote of the Ministry.

There are some additional technical posts in the Ministry which are unfilled, but these represent positions that have been set aside for students who will be graduating this year. We expect graduates to be coming out from Veterinary Schools to fill the posts of Veterinary Surgeons and also posts of Agricultural Officers. We expect the posts of Field Assistants to be filled by graduates from the Guyana School of Agriculture. As indicated in the debate, there are

some 167 students at the G.S.A. and at the moment there are twenty-three students doing the degree course at the University of Guyana, so these posts that are vacant will shortly be filled upon the graduation of our students from our own university and from overseas universities.

With respect to the Guyana Marketing Corporation, page 59, which is a hardy annual in Parliament, I wish to say that with respect to the request that there should be a commission of inquiry, such a commission is not necessary because within the governmental system inquiries have recently been held into the operation of the Guyana Marketing Corporation. The most notable of these inquiries was done by a committee headed by Cde. W.G. Stoll who inquired into the finances and general operations of the G.M.C. Their report was submitted at the end of 1977 and was reviewed by the Government during last year. The report recommended that the management staff of the G.M.C. should be strengthened and there should be an improvement in the accounting procedures. The report recommended that the accounting section, in particular, should be further strengthened by the appointment of additional qualified accountants. Upon having examined the report of that committee of inquiry, the Government has taken certain steps with respect to the management of the G.M.C. There is a new manager who is a qualified Agricultural Marketing Expert. He has the B.Sc. degree in Agricultural Marketing. He is Cde. Smith.

In addition to this, we have improved the accounting staff. We have, in addition, approached the Inter American Development Bank for assistance with respect to the general operations and management of the G.M.C. and there is before the International Development Bank an application for a loan of \$15 million (Guyana). I am sure that that loan will shortly be approved. Included in that loan will be technical assistance to the G.M.C. in the field of financial management. Technical assistance also in the field of marketing to improve not merely the financial management of the organisation but to improve as well the whole marketing procedures and systems so that members may look forward to substantial improvement in the efficiency, managerial, financial, and operational, of the Guyana Marketing Corporation.

Included in the new proposal would be a co-ordinating committee which has already been established to be presided over by the Minister of Agriculture and upon which the Ministry of

Agriculture extension service, the service that deals closely with the farmers, will be represented. The Agricultural Bank will be represented and the G.M.C. itself. That group will ensure that farmers produce efficiently, that they have the right varieties and are taught proper marketing. That group will ensure that farmers receive loans from the Agricultural Bank, will ensure that farmers receive proper prices and proper marketing services from the G.M.C. That group is already meeting under the Chairmanship of the Minister of Agriculture.

The G.M.C. will be provided with silos for storage of grain such as, corn and black-eye peas. As requested by the Opposition, silos will be provided. **[Interruption]** This is for better storage. But there will be cool storage as well for green leafy vegetables and fruits, and better transport vehicles for distribution of the produce to the consumers.

These improvements are on the way and I wish to announce also that during this year the G.M.C. will be moving from its headquarters in Lombard Street to new headquarters at Pln. Farm where there is tighter security, there is a large area; there will be provision for adequate storage. In that area there will be better facilities for farmers to dispose of their produce, better facilities for farmers to store their produce and to dealt with by the Marketing Corporation. The present site at Lot 1 Lombard Street is terribly congested and that represents old premises which are entirely unsatisfactory for the storage of perishable produce. It is too hot, with very limited ventilation. There is tremendous congestion – the saw-mills and other industries surround that area. It is a step in the right direction to give the farmers greater space and freedom of movement just a stone's throw from the La Penitence market and from Georgetown generally.

**2.25 p.m.**

With respect to prices for farmers' produce, the G.M.C. has a free hand in fixing prices to farmers. The bulk of the produce bought from farmers is not subject to price control so that farmers can receive prices from the G.M.C. without the damper of price control even though G.M.C. fixes its prices at a reasonable level, reasonable in terms of giving the farmers a fair return for his effort, to recover his cost of production and to ensure that consumers receive produce at reasonable prices.

More than that: If a huckster or trader wishes to pay a better price, there is no law restricting from doing that. By and large, therefore, the farmer is getting the better of two worlds, the world of Government in supporting him and paying for his produce at a reasonable price and the world of free enterprise and competition where traders pay as high as the traffic can bear for that matter. So, farmers are benefiting under this system.

I take the criticism about hucksters: that they do charge the consumers, excessively and may not be paying the farmers economic prices. They are charging the consumers unreasonable prices having regard to the acquisition prices, the prices at which the items produced are acquired from the farmers. They are penalising the consumers. The G.M.C. is approaching this in a number of ways: first, by ensuring that items produced move through the Government outlets. There are outlets at Sophia, there are outlets in the city; there are outlets in the countryside. The G.M.C. also has mobile outlets by virtue of trucks that go into the areas, mainly the sugar areas, to dispose of the produce.

The G.M.C. will make a further movement this year. It will be selecting fair traders to whom it will channel produce for disposal to the public, fair traders in the municipal markets and fair shopkeepers, for that matter, who can stock the produce from the G.M.C. and sell to the consumers at reasonable prices. By these mechanisms we believe that the general price level to the consumers will come in line. These proposals are fully supported by the Guyana Consumers Association and we have had very recent conversations with them. So we are meeting this criticism.

On the level of subsidy itself, I think members somewhat contradicted themselves in their presentations a while ago, particularly Cde. Nokta. On the one hand, we are criticised for having a subsidy for the G.M.C. And at the same time they are saying that the subsidy should be increased, that they would be prepared to support a larger subsidy for the G.M.C. This is a contradiction. A subsidy to the G.M.C. does not represent working capital. It represents provision for the State paying the losses incurred by the G.M.C. when it purchases produce from farmers which it is unable to dispose of for one reason or another, either because the items are too perishable or that at the time of glut, perhaps, the general market prices fall so low that they

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**2.35 – 2.45 p.m.**

become lower than the buying prices from farmers and that there is a loss suffered by the G.M.C. That is what the subsidy is for and we feel some pride in showing on the Estimates that that subsidy, because of increasing efficiency in the G.M.C, has been declining. In 1976, it was \$1 million. In 1977, \$1.2 million; in 1978, \$649,000 and in 1979 we are asking for half a million dollars. So that the G.M.C. is becoming increasingly efficient and the subsidy is declining all the time. We hope that eventually the subsidy will disappear as a reflection of the efficiency of the G.M.C.

That, therefore, Cde. Chairman, would encompass the various observations made under that Head.

*Head 27, Ministry of Agriculture – \$2,256,713 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**2.35 p.m.**

**The Chairman:** Pages 60 to 65

## **HEAD 28 – MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE**

### **AGRICULTURE**

Question proposed that the sum of \$7,785,721 for Head 28, Ministry of Agriculture – Agriculture, stand part of the Estimates.

**The Chairman:** Cde. Minister of Agriculture.

**Cde. Kennard:** Cde Chairman, I would like to move some amendments to this Head, which are not controversial. The Paper has been circulated and it reflects the criticism just made by Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud.

I am seeking your leave, Cde. Chairman, under Standing Order 83 to move the suspension of Standing Order 66 (1) to dispense with the notice required so that the amendments could be considered at this time.

**The Chairman:** Leave is granted.

**Cde. Kennard:** I now move that Standing Order 66 (1) be suspended.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Standing Order 66 (1) suspended.*

**Cde. Kennard:** I now move the amendment which I signify has received Cabinet's approval and recommendation.

Subhead 1 Personal Emoluments:

Insertion of the following after Item (9):

“2 Specialist Agriculture Economist ... A31 - \$23,280.

Subhead 1 (11) Personal Emoluments:

Substitution of “4 Agriculture Economist ... A26 - \$29,424” for “1 Agriculture Economist ... A26 - \$10,272”.

Subhead 1 (14) Personal Emoluments:

Substitution of “2 Statistical Officer ... A18 - \$10,270” for “1 Statistical Officer ... A18 - \$5,135”.

Total Personal Emoluments:

Substitution of “\$4,543,708” for “\$4,496,141”.

Total Head:

Substitution of “\$7,833,288” for “\$7,785,721”.

*Amendment proposed, put, and agreed to.*

**The Chairman:** Cde. Persaud.



**Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud:** In these pages, particularly in the technical field there are a number of administrative positions that I am not interested in. The Minister spoke generally when he said that they are training people in the particular field and that they will soon take over. My information, however, is that because these are the positions, these are the people who will have to give service to the farmers; it is when these offices are filled that we could have effective extension services.

My information is – and probably the Minister will try to correct me – that in this technical field there is a great shortage. You will remember the implications – I referred to some of them in the other areas. People have left and people are not returning. If in areas like crop science, resource development, development and planning and so many other extensions of education we have a shortage of people. I am sure the whole processes of dynamic agricultural development will suffer. I think the Minister must search his mind. He himself is a technically qualified man.

I remember several years ago in this very Parliament I was posing the question, why is it we are losing our technical personnel. If the welfare and well-being of this nation and the people are dependent on agricultural growth and expansion and real development, wouldn't the Minister concede that 14 years after P.N.C. rule that it is more than time that an immediate assessment be made with a view to retaining our technical men particularly in the Ministry of Agriculture? If we continue to suffer the losses that we have been suffering year after year, even if the Government entertains its change of heart with respect to agricultural development, we will not have the men to push it. And that is what I am fearful of.

In the major debate I made the point about the people who produce, that if you do not encourage them, if you frustrate them and they become totally depressed, they will migrate whether to Georgetown or somewhere else. You would have had tremendous problems in both the technical field as well as the physical manpower field. I would credit the Minister with the capacity and with the vision to see exactly where we are going in this area, and I am fearful that if something is not done early we will lose all the men that we need to better economic conditions of this country. Every five persons you talk to, four are going away and I would ask

the Minister to state specifically what is the position with respect to his technical staffing in the Ministry of Agriculture.

I move, sir, right over to page 64, subhead 9, Purchase, Protection, Distribution of Seeds and Plants. I am told that people cannot get either seeds or plants in all areas of the country. I wonder what step is being taken to ensure that we have a regular supply. Our nurseries are not what they were or what they should be; all of them have been run down to nothingness. Even if you think of Mon Repos or you think of Timehri, or the one that was shifted from Charity to Suddie, Cde. Chairman, we are not seeing the facilities, we are not seeing the plant requirements of the people throughout Guyana.

The Minister, probably, would like to tell us this afternoon why he has shifted the nursery from Charity to Suddie. I am told that the soil there is sandy, it is not suitable and, indeed, it has not been a wise decision. He probably would say there was flooding at Charity but even if there was flooding at Charity and the Minister was satisfied that there was need to shift that nursery, obviously, Suddie is not the correct place. He has to be practical. I do not know who made this decision. It will involve farmers from the Pomeroon coming out right on to Suddie – we know what transport facilities are like on the Essequibo Coast – to be serviced by the Government extension nursery station there.

I am told one of the reasons for the drop in the production of cabbage was lack of seeds and the Minister would not deny it. I am told that while no seeds were being distributed, seeds were in the bond since September. I refer to that mainly because it was consigned to a company called the Cosmopolitan Company. Why is it the Minister of Agriculture did not intervene?

When one looks at agricultural development, we have not advanced as we ought to have advanced technologically. It looks as though 80 per cent of our input into agriculture is imported. There is need to device means, there is need to be innovative so that we can be productive in things like seeds and plants in a more dynamic and magnificent way. Nobody would deny that. What the Minister cannot honestly tell this House is that there is any serious drive in that direction. Unless something is done, we are going to be pinned down to importation of all the inputs into agricultural process in this country.

2.45 p.m.

When one thinks of the technical staff in the Ministry of Agriculture – that is one consideration – when one looks at the vote, all those things have to be borne in mind because the Agriculture Ministry has to be treated in totality. Many of the services are intertwined, you cannot separate them. Perhaps the Minister would like to tell us where they are advertising for tenders for fertilizers. Just a little bit cannot serve the purpose. We have had consistent complaints. It is not that people do not want to produce; it is lack of motivation. In their own personal interest they have to produce to survive. Despite that fact, they are not getting what is required in fertilizers. Now they are advertising and we know in the month of July people will be ready to shy. If you are advertising for tenders now at the end of March, one asks oneself whether the Government will be able to get the fertilizers and have them in time for the autumn crop. I thought of referring to it right here under this subhead.

Will the Minister, therefore, under subhead 9 tell us what the Ministry is doing so far as producing so that we can lessen the import input into the Agricultural process? We are not producing enough. I cannot see any work in that direction to change the situation. I support the increase from \$75,400 to \$298,000. We want development in this area. We want the sum utilised properly to ensure that farmers are properly serviced.

The Minister spoke of people being trained in the veterinary field. My information is that farmers are complaining that those officers who are sent to them are more inexperienced than the farmers. I hope we will move to that point where we can have better trained men, more experienced men to give service in this area. I always feel, and I still say it, that the coastal belt can continue to give great service in the production of milk. We have already spoken about Moblissa but my view is that that cannot answer the milk requirements of the country, therefore, all the people who are involved in dairy farming must be encourage and the Ministry must ensure that the necessary scientific services are provided.

Subhead 18, Fisheries Extension Services. I remember some time ago the Minister was talking about cheap fish, 35 cents per pound. I hope he has not said that that is so. It is not so. The price has been more than doubled. My figure was \$1.25 and the comrade says 90 cents. The

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**2.45 – 2.55 p.m.**

Minister will come with his figures and tell me we have been producing. My information is that we have fallen in production. If you look at your figures for the year 1978, you will see what those figures are. They are far below previous years and this year we know of our potential in seafood. We know those species that can probably escape but the greater amount of our fish will have to remain in the sea.

**2.55 p.m.**

On thing bothers me very much and I would like to ask the Minister how many trawlers Government own, if it owns any, and how many are in the hands of private people. I am told that there are reasons like the lack of parts and engines for boats, fuel prices and the lack of ice through blackouts. The boats are not obtaining enough ice and they have been going out with a short supply of ice. The result is that production by fishermen is affected.

I have been talking to people about trawling and I have asked myself whether, with the trawlers picking up everything from the shrimp right up year after year, they would not, after some time, be killing the potential that exists in the sea and whether the Government – I am not technical – is not looking from now to ensure that that does not happen.

In fact, our fishermen with boats have given great service in the past and they are not without the capacity to continue that service. Is the Minister aware – I am sure he is aware and that he has to take the interest of the fishermen into account – that many of them have lost their boats and equipment when these were seized by the Suriname Government? Many of them had to go and buy. Some of them had to have money to re-buy their boats. I know of one case where a man paid nearly \$21,000 to get back his boat. These are hardships that fishermen have experienced in recent times and these things have contributed to the reduction in fish. The markets, therefore, do not have enough and there is no reason why we should not have an adequate supply of fish and cheap fish.

I read. When the Minister speaks I listen to him. When he is broadcasting he places great emphasis on our potential particularly in fishing and probably canning and all these things, but we have not been seeing any serious progress in this area.

You ban. We say when you have substitutes – we believe in food substitution – then you ban, but you make a lot of speeches that you are going to have something to replace sardines and several years pass and there is no replacement. Thus the people are starved and are made to pay high prices for the limited supplies in all of these areas.

The food corporation, Guyana Food Processing Ltd., which Fred Peterkin operates is on the East Bank. The fishermen are complaining that they have to go there. I heard the Minister talking about farmers having to go to Farm, which is about six miles from Georgetown. I wonder, I admit that we do not have the facilities for the expansion that is obviously required, but I hope that the Minister is taking into confidence those who are going to be involved in the buying and selling process in so far as the G.M.C.'s operation is concerned.

Will the Minister admit that Guyana Processing Ltd. has not been getting supplies and it has facilities. It has refrigeration facilities for storage and I went so far during the major debate to say that you should use it for other things. My information is that the food corporation is already using the facilities in another field. I was talking about agricultural produce. I hope that some consideration will be given to our local fishermen – incentives, duty free concessions. I was told only a month ago, that is almost right, that at least one co-op got a licence and have not been getting. That information I am sure the Minister is in possession of.

I want to move to grant to Guyana School of Agriculture Corporation, subhead 24. I want to make a very short contribution here. In fact, we feel that this institution can play an important role. It is dependent on the type of training that the people get, the exposure to practical agriculture as distinct from academic agriculture. I think they are locked up too much. I know that they go out a little bit. They are locked up too much and are not exposed enough. As a result of that they cannot give the type of services that are required in the agricultural field.

I also want to make an important suggestion. I am told that many people do not get admission. I do not want to charge discrimination. I leave that to the Minister and those concerned to search their conscience. What I do want to say is that if you are going to encourage the farmers to keep them there and to inspire them to produce, I think the time has been reached when the farmers ought to be given greater encouragement by assuring them, by creating some

type of scheme where their children can be offered scholarships to come to that same Guyana School of Agriculture so that the farmers' children are brought and admitted to the Guyana School of Agriculture. They would have been entering that school with certain experiences even before they started tuition in the academic sense and they would be able to go back to their respective areas to make an important contribution to agricultural development and, indeed, to the extension services of the Government.

This Minister will not deny it. I have not heard him saying, "You fellows who are agricultural officers believe that after you have been trained in the Guyana School of Agriculture you will wear long boots and drive around in a big car and ask, 'What is the problem here?' then put your hands in your pockets". We do not want that kind of service.

I think that Cde. Pawar is a good example of the barefoot agriculturalist who gave tremendous service in the field of rice. His recommendations have been rejected. He left here a frustrated man. I saw him in India and spoke with him at length. I want to urge a new approach to entrance to the Guyana School of Agriculture emphasising that farmers' children ought to be encouraged, if not given scholarships, to the Guyana School of Agriculture.

On page 66, Lands and Surveys, probably the Minister –

**The Chairman:** We have not reached there. We are only discussing up to page 65.

**Cde. Ally:** Page 64, subhead 2. Transport and Travelling. I should like to ask the Minister if he is aware of the fact that exorbitant sums of many are being spent for travelling Unnecessarily. For instance, houses are built for officers within their areas of work but they have refused to live there and special vehicles and chauffeurs have been provided for these officers to keep travelling long distances. The Manager of G.R.B at Black Bush Polder travels every day from Spring-lands to Black Bush and back. A special vehicle has been provided and a driver for that vehicle. A house has been provided for this particular officer at Black Bush Polder and for many other officers in that scheme but they continue to travel and travelling expenses are paid for them.

I also wish to refer to subhead 7, Operation and Maintenance of Chemistry and Soils Laboratories and Soil Surveys. I should like to ask the Minister if he would not agree with me that if proper soil tests are carried out and farmers are advised what type of provisions or plants would best grow on such land, what type of fertiliser would give best results, it would assist. At the moment farmers are guessing their way through because they simply do not know what the best products for the soil are and what fertilisers they should use. Sometimes they guess and add to the land something which is already there in abundance. Some are using sulphate of ammonia, some use urea.

My colleague, Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud, spoke of plants and seeds but I should like to touch on it. Farmers on the Corentyne River placed orders for plants, citrus plants in particular, over two years ago and cannot get any. The Field Agricultural Officer in that area, instead of telling the farmers in plain words that there are no plants available, are advising farmers to prepare the land first and prepare it properly before he can entertain their orders. The people have prepared the land but they cannot get the plants two years after they placed the orders. Bush overtakes the land again. It is an unnecessary exercise.

I spoke to the Co-operative Officer who is stationed there and many other officers who are concerned were present. I asked him to take orders from the farmers. I told him that if he wanted to see the land prepared properly then two months in advance he should supply them with the necessary plants and not wait until the land is properly prepared before giving delivery because many people are in need of plants and just simply cannot get them.

I should like to turn now to subhead 18, Fisheries Extension Services. Fish is very scarce in Guyana today and very expensive. In some parts of this country the fish that is bought for two dollars is not enough for one person and seeing that Trinidad and Brazil are in a position to export Hassar to other parts of the world –

**The Chairman:** You said that in the general debate.

**Cde. Ally:** The Minister was not here.

**The Chairman:** I am not concerned with that. Make the other point, please.

**Cde. Ally:** I am asking a question on something else and I shall just have to point this out to pave my way to the question. I want to ask this: Seeing that in Guyana we do not have enough fish for our factories can the hon. Minister say whether the Government is willing to make land available for this kind of Hassar rearing? On the same land people could rear livestock.

I do not know whether the Government has given this question consideration but I think the Minister should look into it because it would be one way to help the situation in the country. There are many people who are willing to go into this industry. I only hope that the Minister will look into it and that something will be done as early as possible.

**3.05 p.m.**

**Cde. Sukhai:** Cde. Chairman, I would like to raise a question on page 60, subhead 1, item (4) Project Manager (Special Programme). I would simply like to ask the Minister how far is this new programme succeeding. So far as we understand, between May-June 1978 and May-June 1979 it was proposed to put 20,000 new acres of land under various types of crops and I wish to refer to some of them: corn 4,000 acres, legumes 5,000 acres, soya bean 3,000 acres, cassava 4,000 acres, ground provisions 3,500 acres, vegetables 500 acres. I would like the Minister to say how many acres of new-land have been cleared and in what areas.

**The Chairman:** Could you tell me what you are speaking on? Subhead 1, what item? That is a post, the post is either filled or it is not filled. Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud has spoken generally on all these things about the non-filling of vacancies. This is dealing with the appointment of a person to a post. Project Manager (Special Programme): he has been appointed for a special programme.

Yes, Cde. Dalchand, cane farmers.

**Cde. Dalchand:** Cde. Chairman, page 60, item (39), Veterinary Officer. In this particular field there is a great shortage of these particular officers.



**The Chairman:** Cde. Persaud has made a general statement about these things. He has spoken about it, if he spoke generally. I have given Cde. Persaud a lot of latitude, great lot of things he ought not to have been permitted, because I just didn't want the same repetition.

**Cde. Dalchand:** There is a serious drop in the livestock production because of a shortage of these officers. Even this morning over the radio programme the marketing division was saying that they will rehabilitate the pig industry. It is because the industry has gone to bottom and this is because farmers cannot get the services of these officers. They are very scarce. I am speaking on livestock which includes pigs. I want to ask the Minister that something be done urgently to see that the posts for these particular officers are filled.

Page 64, subhead 13, Veterinary Preventative Measures: Cde. Chairman, here again at this stage the various farmers can ill afford to buy the drugs available for preventative measures, diseases etc. I want to bring to your attention that at the Government agency, one bottle of worm repellent is being sold today for \$105. That same drug was \$64 only a few days ago. It has gone up nearly 66 per cent. Farmers are encountering tremendous problems to get drugs. You can't get drugs to treat tick-sand I heard over the programme this morning that the Ministry of Agriculture intends to transport these drugs to farmers. I want to say that the amount there provided is not enough and I want to ask that more money be provided for this particular head.

Artificial Insemination Services, subhead 16: Last year the Minister gave the assurance that this service would have been extended to the country. Up to today this service is not even obtainable on the West Demerara. On the Essequibo Coast, it is worse. This service is just limited to the East Bank and East Coast areas. I want to ask that this service be extended as far as possible throughout the country.

Subhead 31, National Cane Farming Committee. Cde. Chairman, this Committee is asking for a small amount, \$20,000 but I want to tell the Minister that this particular Committee is not serving its purpose; the Committee is not allowed to function. Now, we understand that the Minister intends to close up this particular Committee and to have a section in GuySuCo to service cane farmers. Cde. Chairman, you can imagine if the cane farmers will have to be

serviced by GuySuCo what will happen. There are many problems facing cane farmers. We have been complaining to the Ministry about this, we have been raising matters at the various levels but I don't know if it is a directive from the Minister when we speak for the cane farmers we are told that we must speak through a confederation.

I want to tell the Minister if he is interested in the development of cane farming, then the complaints of the Guyana Cane Farmers Association must be listened to. We are interested to see that cane farmers develop and expand and the NCFC should be retained. The Minister should not get liaison teams and liaison committees appointed to this organisation as he intimated in his Budget Speech. Let us have democratic elections and let the cane farmers throughout the country elect representatives. Only in this way we can stimulate and development within the industry.

**Cde. Dindayal :** Cde. Chairman, page 60, Item (24), Crop Agronomist: I was reliably informed that the contract of one Dr.Ratna has expired and he has gone and this post has not been filled by someone capable. I was made to understand that someone succeeded him but very shortly it was reported in the press that he committed a fraud and another person is being substituted.

**The Chairman:** What that has to do with it?

**Cde. Dindayal:** I would like to say that is a very important position and the position must be filled by someone capable because that field is very important for the development of the rice industry which will enable it to produce all yields, better quality of grains, so that we can afford to export.

**The Chairman:** What is the question Cde. Dindayal?

**Cde. Dindayal:** We would like this post to be filled by a qualified person. Cde. Chairman, page 63, item (139), Pest Controller, for 1978 the approved estimate was \$7,470 and this same amount is being asked for this year 1979. This post also is a very important post.

**The Chairman:** Cde. Dindayal, what is the question? I think all the posts are important if not they would not be on the estimates.

**Cde. Dindayal:** I would like the sum to be increased because we have seen that this sum is inadequate to take care of this.

Page 64, subhead 12, Agricultural Extension Services: \$168,832 was approved in 1978 but only \$50,350 was spent, and for this year only \$50,350 is being asked for. This sum is inadequate. More money should be voted and properly supervised.

### 3.15 p.m.

Cde. Chairman, I would like to draw to the attention of the Minister that in this field there was no proper supervision because the extension services machine is being abused. We have seen this machine is being used to bulldoze people's farms which these other groups have no authority to do. The Regional Minister told the controllers of these machines to stop bulldozing these people's farms and they never stopped. I am calling on the Minister to look into this matter and to have proper supervision of these machines so that only really needy cases will be assisted.

**Cde. Kennard:** Cde. Chairman, I would have to deal with the items page by page rather than speaker by speaker in order to be intelligible and to save comrades some time.

**The Chairman:** I would suggest that you deal with the single question of filling of vacancies and technical people so that everybody can be answered on that head.

**Cde. Kennard:** On the question of vacancies, I would not repeat what was said except to amplify that with respect to Vets, there are seven posts; the Principal Agricultural Officer, Veterinary and Livestock Science, and six Veterinary Officers. There is provision for nine Veterinary Officers. We have six Veterinary Officers appointed and three additional Veterinary Officers will be appointed upon their graduation this year June. That will bring our complement up to nine. But the six officers we have can be deployed to give fair service to as many livestock producers as possible.

Reference was made to Crop Agronomist. As you see, there are four posts under item (24). We have three such officers, who are qualified officers, employed. Mention was made of two expatriate officials, one who served here some years ago and one who has recently retired.

They are not, for the information of Opposition members, shown on this establishment. Dr. Pawar, who was here and who gave excellent service was on the United Nations Development Programme. His assignment expired when that programme came to an end and he returned to India. He has done work and he knows that we have commended him for his contribution. But his position was absorbed into the Guyana Rice Board, not the Ministry of Agriculture. The post is now occupied by a Guyanese, Mr. Chin, B.Sc./M.Sc. who is the rice breeder in Guyana. It was Mr. Chin who produced a number of varieties that are doing so well on farms such as “T”, “S”, “N”. Some of the preliminary work, of course, was done by Dr. Pawar.

Dr. Chandra Ratna, also was on a special programme relating to the Tapakuma project. He is from Sri Lanka and that project has come to an end but his duties are being absorbed by the Guyana Rice Board, not the Ministry of Agriculture. There are qualified officers to undertake that job. One of these officers has a doctorate in Philosophy and another has his Master’s degree in Science. So that adequate arrangements are being made for the Guyanese to replace the expatriates on the completion of the assignments of the expatriates to Guyana.

On the general question of the references made to Pest Controller, that is really a subordinate post. It is more or less a skilled labourer who will be involved in the actual physical application of insecticides, particularly on coconut estates. There are at present dozens of such persons available to be employed. There is no need for them to have any professional or technical qualifications. That in totality is our staff situation and it is in good shape.

Let me point out again, as I did in the debate, and I agree with you, Cde. Chairman, that we must not repeat ourselves, there are more persons who are professional agricultural staff employed today than ever before. They are merely posts in these Estimates. Members must not lose sight of the fact that the agricultural sector, as it expands outside of the Ministry of Agriculture, carries posts to be filled by Guyanese. The Ministry has been serving as a reservoir, from which we have been feeding staff into the various Agricultural Corporations. For example we have provided professional staff for the Guyana Sugar Corporation to staff their Other Crops Division. We have supplied about six officers from the Ministry. The Livestock Development Company we have staffed, so that a larger number of professionals are in fact serving the farmers

and agriculture in Guyana than ever before, both in the Ministry in these para-statal organisations attached to the Ministry. The Estimates do not, therefore, tell the whole story.

Agriculture continues to expand. For example, the M.M.A. Authority has been created and we have to provide staff for the Authority. Tapakuma is expanding and we have to provide more staff for the new-lands. For Black Bush, the Corentyne Extension, we have to provide staff. Therefore, I agree that we have to get more staff trained and I have already indicated the arrangements being made to train more staff at the U.G., the G.S.A., and overseas to fill the ever-increasing number of places in the agricultural world of Guyana.

With respect to the training itself, reference was made to the Guyana School of Agriculture. Let me assure the House that many are called but few are chosen. Large numbers of aspiring agriculturists, large numbers of aspiring young people who want to become part of the action as they see a progressive and expanding agriculture, want to get into the action and they are applying to the school. The applications outnumber the available places in the school and a selection is done by an impartial committee of members of the Board of the Guyana School of Agriculture. Perhaps if he were permitted to speak – but there is no time for that – the Deputy Chairman of the Board of the Guyana School of Agriculture, Pandit Sukul, who is here, would be able to confirm what I have said about impartiality in the recruitment of applicants.

**3.25 p.m.**

May I further state the training at the G.S.A. is free? It is part of Government's policy of free education to our young people so that those who are selected are trained at a cost to the taxpayers, to the people of Guyana, and not at their own expense. They might, of course, buy minor items or subscribe to a Club but these are trivial contributions for their own social benefit. Their education is free of charge. So there is no need really to award scholarships. All entrants are endowed with scholarships to the school.

With respect to a few other points, I think that I have dealt with the staff situation and the recruitment situation on page 64 which came in for some queries and observations.

The Purchase, Production and Distribution of Seeds and Plants, subhead 9: There is a particular variety of cabbage which is grown in Guyana called KK Cross, which is a high yielding, very adaptable variety which is imported from where that variety is produced, in the United States actually. There was a general shortage of cabbage seed last year which affected the cabbage grown not only in the United States but elsewhere where people wanted that particular variety. Therefore, the supply reaching Guyana was also short and all farmers could not get their requirements. But this year supplies are ample and there is already in the country adequate seed to meet the needs of all farmers requiring growing cabbage, that is, the KK Cross.

With respect to the production of other seeds, the Ministry is continuing to increase this and in order to reduce our dependence on imported seed supply we are establishing a major seed producing centre at Ebini on the intermediate savannahs. We selected that site because it is relatively dry and this is required for the technology of seed production. You do not require a humid climate as on the coast. Good seed will be produced there. Equipment has already arrived for it and, as I indicated in the debate, this is being financed by a grant of half a million dollars from the United States Agency for International Development.

We are hoping to produce a good deal of the vegetable seeds which we now import from foreign countries. But we can never become self-sufficient in seeds and we do not want to become self-sufficient in seeds. The technology in seed production requires that varieties be produced by specialised technicians in countries abroad and in specialised localities that are suited only for seed production not necessarily for the production of the tuber or what have you that one wants out of a plant. A farmer in England would import seeds from Australia, New Zealand or America. An American farmer would import the seeds of some varieties from India or Ceylon. This is part of the world's seed technology and we are part of it. We will continue to import the best available seed in the world and produce in Guyana the best seed that we can produce in relation to our climatic and other situations and constraints.

Farmers are getting as much vegetatively propagated materials as we can provide. Occasionally they are disappointed. The Comrade says the farmers on the Corentyne River, who might have come at a time to order citrus plants, expected to get them the same day while others

who had placed their orders in time in advance of production – as they should – received their supplies.

I would urge members to advise farmers to place their orders for seed and planting material, such as citrus, in advance of the time that they are ready to put those plants in the ground and not the same day. These things have to be produced and planted at the right time. If we receive that type of co-operation all would be supplied with their planting material.

Not only is the Ministry itself producing seed and planting material. In addition to this, State organisations are producing. In these days, as we know, the Guyana Rice Board produces all the seed paddy required by the farmers and I am glad that there was no criticism of that because farmers are getting the best seed and plenty of it and rice throughout Guyana.

The Guyana rice Board, in addition, is now producing black-eye seeds for supply to farmers. GuySuCo is also producing black-eye and corn so that we can produce as much seed as possible in the State organisations, in the State farms, for supply to farmers. So it is not merely in the Ministry. We look to the other corporations as well to produce seeds and planting material for our farmers. For example, high yielding varieties of cassava were produced by GuySuCo and distributed to farmers last year.

With respect to Fisheries, about which some comments were made, we have a total of 167 trawlers in Guyana of which 43 are Guyanese and of those 43 there are 31 owned by the Government of Guyana and held by State companies, Guyana Marine Foods and Guyana Stores Trawling Division. The policy, as I indicated, is to keep expanding our national fleet as fast as we have the funds to pay for the construction of new trawlers. This is part of our policy. So we can see an ever-increasing fleet of trawlers for Guyana.

As indicated during the debate, we do not want to repeat ourselves, but a suggestion was made that fish production had declined and Guyana Food Processors are not getting enough fish for sale to consumers. This is not so and, as I indicated during the debate, Guyana Food Processors, which is the Government purchasing agency for fish from trawlers, increased its purchase last year and this amounted to 4,610,000 lbs. of fish in 1978 compared with 674,872

lbs. in 1977. That is an increase of seven times. More fish was landed and distributed at these low prices to consumers throughout Guyana.

I did not quite understand the observation of a member about the production of Hassar. Hassar, I know, is a delectable fish. We all like it. He was saying that you can grow Hassar and cattle on the same land. This is some technology that I do not know about. I would like to be advised a bit more about growing fish and beef on the same land. [Cde. R. Ally: “You get better results.”] He will get a fee for that advice and perhaps a national award if he can tell us how to grow the two things at the same time.

Soil tests: Cde. Roshan Ally is not fully aware of the facts. I should like to invite him to visit the soil testing laboratory at Mon Repos and he would see the considerable amount of work that is being done. Last year the soil testing laboratory took and analysed 6,502 samples of soil from farms. That is a lot of samples. Recommendations were made to farmers as to the best fertiliser to apply. Farmers may take their own samples on the advice of the Ministry and send the samples in to be tested. Better yet, they should consult the district Field Assistants who will help them to take samples properly, uncontaminated, and to have those samples sent to Mon Repos to be tested and to get the results and recommendations.

In addition to the Ministry’s services, the Guyana Sugar Corporation does soil tests for cane farmers and the Guyana Rice Board has now introduced a special service to test soils for rice farmers. So there seems to be more soil tests than members thought were taking place.

The question of veterinary drugs was raised under subhead 13, page 64, Veterinary Preventative Measures. Contrary to what was said, there is an adequate supply of vet drugs in Guyana. The point is this: The Comrade said they are too expensive but this is the price that Government is charged by the suppliers abroad and in the case of drugs distributed by the Ministry of Agriculture, they are distributed at cost and cost means what we pay for them without adding the overheads and other costs including the operation costs. It just shows how expensive things are in the world at large; that is why if we relied on outside for our own food, we could not afford to buy it. And that is why we must grow more food in Guyana which we are doing and which we should do in our spare time as well.



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3.35 p.m.

The drugs are sold at cost and there are adequate supplies and if prices are considered high, the fact is that Guyana has no control over world inflation or the price of petroleum. A lot of these drugs are produced from petroleum so that whenever you hear that the petroleum price is going up as we read again this morning, you can look ahead for a further increase in prices in most cases.

We are trying to make this National Cane Farming Committee more representative as a cane farming industry and, therefore, as indicated, liaison committees have been established. Members on the estates in each area were elected by the cane farmers in their particular district to serve on the liaison committee and out of those elected members, we are asking them to elect a member to the National Cane Farming Committee so that we have the electoral system right through. Frankly, I do not know what the member is complaining about except that we have not recognised his association which is only a letterhead. The Guyana Cane Farmers' Association is just a letterhead.

Comment was made that the transport and travelling provision is exorbitant. That is not so. If you look at the estimates you will see that we have brought it down even in this time of inflation, with higher petroleum costs, with an expanding Ministry, from \$412,842 in 1976 to \$380,000 in 1979. What efficiency! Can you expect anything better? What greater control over waste which is depicted by these figures.

With respect to the comrade referred to by Cde. Roshan Ally, travelling is not indicated on these estimates. He is a member of the Guyana Rice Board. We are not considering the estimates of the Rice Board this afternoon; we are considering the Estimates of the Ministry of Agriculture and therefore I cannot enlighten him or reply to his observations because I am sure he was making an accusation. Any accusation should be decided in court, of course. That is all.

*Head 28, Ministry of Agriculture – Agriculture - \$7,833,288 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**The Chairman:** Pages 66 to 69.

## **HEAD 29: MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE**

### **LANDS AND SURVEYS**

Question proposed that the sum of \$4,051,665 for Head 29, Ministry of Agriculture – Lands and Surveys, stand part of the Estimates.

**Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud:** Cde. Chairman, page 66, item (14) and (16). Now, these deal with the Secretary to the National Lands Selection Committee. Can the Minister tell us when this committee was appointed, who are the members of the committee, how many meetings the committee held during 1978, when last it met, how many acres of new-land it has allocated bearing in mind the hunger for land? There are a number of applications. I have got files of letters from people including co-ops who applied, who have been receiving no response and if we are taking money and we are getting up organisations for the distribution of land, one would expect that those who are employed to give this service would be actively engaged in carrying out their duties. Of course, the Minister and the Ministry ought to see to it that it is done. That is all on page 66, sir, and I go to page 69.

On page 69, I want to speak on subhead 15, Garden of Eden Land Development Scheme, and subhead 16, Onverwagt Land Development Scheme. Would the Minister agree that the Government has allowed all these schemes to run down completely? The policy and programme behind these schemes have undoubtedly been changed, many of them have been doing their own thing, the type of crops and all of that. Is the time not right for the Government to have an objective examination of all these schemes to bring them back to a proper footing so that they can contribute efficiently to production in the country? People, when they find difficulty in cultivating a particular crop and there is no assistance, no response, no technical advice, they make their own decision and they do their own thing. I just leave it at that for the moment because I feel that I would be erring in my duty if I do not draw it to the attention of the House.

Subhead 19, Wauna Land Development Scheme: I think the Minister should give us some report on this scheme, what is really taking place, what is being done. As far as I am aware, it is only something being done on the palm oil. I have had a deep look into the scheme and the Government is far behind what is had projected. It was expected that by 1978 they would have cultivated 2,250 acres. My information is that about 13 acres are under cultivation. Of course, apart from the hand mill we should have had a big factory, a bigger mill set down there. Nothing has been done in this direction and, of course, there is input into the scheme. From looking at the scheme and examining it, I am told that it was envisaged in active operation in the scheme, but this has not materialised and the scheme is far behind what it should have been. I hope the Minister will concede this and not let us get into controversy because I have first-hand information and I was on the scene.

Subhead 22, Resumption of State Lands Working Party Expenses: I do not want to direct the Minister to all the areas. I have urged in Parliament the need for legislation for land reform and the Minister said something is being done. Last year he said that something is still being done but when one looks at the vote provided, \$2,800, what can that amount do in this sensitive area of resuming State lands rented at cheap rentals and probably now being re-rented by people at very high rentals to the farmers who producing. They are not only collecting rents, they are making profits. Rapacious landlordism is not unknown to the Minister and I myself have been looking through certain papers, certain reports and certain areas have been identified, areas like Aurora, Airy Hall, Land of Plenty. I think something ought to be done more objectively and this \$2,800 obviously is not the answer.

### 3.45 p.m.

Subhead 23, Investigation of Application for Lands. I want to refer to one specific case in this instance, and that is a place called L'Union on the Essequibo. We all know who owns this land. I am told that farmers had applied for land after they are thrown out by a particular landlord. I want to be kind to that landlord and not to call his name. They tried to get redress in the Land Assessment Committee and they did not succeed. They took up a piece of land, and I

think 58 farmers are involved on the scheme. They met, formed their co-operative Society and they applied for but could not get registration. Nobody investigated them, no action was taken, and it was suggested by the Minister of that Region that the name of the Co-operative should be re-named the “Palm Tree Co-operative”. Whatever the connotation of that is, I leave it to this House. The name was changed but it looks to me that the Minister has failed in this instance to get the people registered, to get them a lease, and all the things that are required to get into cultivation. Now I understand they have been threatened that they will be removed –

**The Chairman:** Let us move on. We are behind time already.

**Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud:** We have got the provision. I cannot understand. I take the one point. I am looking for all reasons to see why but the point is that there is evidence that the people are not getting land and I think the time has come when the Government should realise the fact that it wants farmers on the land and that ought to be the primary consideration. The name has been changed –

**The Chairman:** Cde. Persaud, you have been repeating these things over and over.

**Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud:** This is involving a number of people on a number of acres of land and I want to persuade the Minister to see that something is done, that the people get land.

**Cde. Ally:** Cde. Chairman, page 69, subhead 13, Black Bush Polder Land Development Scheme. Last year I noticed that the sum voted was \$438,831 but the Government had to come back to this House for revised amount; that was the last Financial Paper we had before the House. The amount was revised to \$1,080,116. Now they are asking for \$896,392. With this sum of \$1,080,116 they were unable to maintain the work, all the trenches and drains still need to be cleaned. I would like to ask the minister how soon these trenches and drains will be cleaned and when those that need re-digging will be re-dug. Could the Minister say whether he is aware that owing to the trenches and drains needing cleaning, with the little rain we had, many farmers suffered losses on their provision farms? One suffered about \$5,000 losses on this tomato crop.

The agricultural officer in the area assessed the loss at \$3,000. Will the Minister say if this farmer will be given the necessary compensation –

**The Chairman:** How has that something to do with this? That is something different. This is Black Bush Polder as a whole. What that has to do with compensation?

**Cde. Ally:** It is the Land Development Scheme. Will the Minister further say why farmers at Black Bush Polder could not have got the necessary irrigation water when it was badly needed? As a result, over 25 per cent of the riceland at Black Bush Polder remains unplanted. All these farmers who could not have planted owing to the absence of irrigation water paid for ploughing of the land.

Could the Minister say whether farmers would be compensated for the money spent for ploughing and if the rent for last year will be written off? Most of these farmers have lost crops for the last three consecutive crops, owing to the absence of irrigation water. Is the Minister aware that rice farmers of Yakasari Field 2, North and South, could not harvest the drops owing to the irrigation water not rising to the required height? These farmers of Yakasari Field 2, North and South, have suffered for three consecutive crops. Before, they were getting adequate supplies of irrigation water in those very fields. Could the Minister say what is responsible for this? Is the pump not working well? Is it because of the uncleaned trenches from which the farmers could not have got the water?

I would also like to speak on subhead 23, Investigation of Application for Lands. I was made to understand that the Minister has set up a Committee in Black Bush Polder to look into application for land. I was also made to understand that this is costing the Government \$300 for every meeting.

**The Chairman:** Cde. Ally, you have made this statement so many times that I am disgusted hearing it. Please ask a question.

**Cde. Ally:** Will the Minister say whether they will only investigate those people who have made applications for the land or they will look into the fields where people are holding more than one plot of land? There are many people who had up to fifteen plots of land in the

Polder. I would also like to ask Minister whether some of these people are paying rent. For instance, there are people who are living there for the past seven to fifteen years –

**The Chairman:** Cde. Ally, you said all that before in the general debate. If the Minister was not here it is not my fault. I am here.

**Cde. Ally:** Cde. Chairman, I do not know, but I am here to represent people. People are planting a half plot of land, now they are being harassed by this Committee and being put off the land while people are there illegally on the lands.

**3.55 p.m.**

**The Chairman:** Cde. Ally, what you should do is to ask your question and do not repeat yourself over and over. There are ways of doing it. I am not here to tell you what to do.

**Cde. Ally:** I should like to ask the Minister to say how Mr. McGowan, who is planting Plot 176 at Mibikuri South, got on this plot. Is he there legally? Did he pass through a selection committee? Will the Minister further say why this particular person's name appeared on the list of those people who were supposed to be taken to Court? Over \$2,000 is due on rent on this plot of land and when these people were taken to Court that particular name was subtracted from the list. Why? Will the Minister also say how the Manager of the G.R.B. branch of Black Bush Polder qualified as a settler to plant one half of plot 115 Yakusari?

**The Chairman:** The subhead we are dealing with is Investigation of Application for Land. This has nothing to do with rent. Is the person properly given land or not? That is the question you can ask.

**Cde. Ally:** he was planting two and a half plots of land. My question is: Did he get this land legally or illegally? Did he apply and pass through the Committee? Did the Committee approve of him or not? There are many people of this nature who are planting land at Black Bush Polder.

I also wish to ask the Minister whether he is aware of the fact that one Samaroo is planting a plot of land at Yakusari North. That plot is 162. This is a farmer. How did he get into

Black Bush Polder? Is it true to say that he was planting land for the Kennards and because they wanted land from him –

**The Chairman:** Cde. Ally, I am not going to listen to you any more. Cde. Nokta.

**Cde. Nokta:** Just a short question on page 69, subhead 7, Land Water Transport. I am reliably informed that the Land Officer stationed at Mabaruma has been immobile for about nine months. The launch that is used is parked at Kumaka stelling and as such that officer cannot perform his function as he is expected to do. Will the Minister say how soon will proper transportation be provided for that officer?

**Cde. Basir:** Page 69, subhead 10, Essequibo Estates. The Legend happens to be vague here and I should like the hon. Minister to say whether the Essequibo Estates, the land which is being formed by the G.R.B. in Essequibo, is the State farm and, if it is so, is cassava cultivation still being carried on? What is being done about cassava cultivation and the production of sticks for planting in other areas?

**The Chairman:** I wish people would ask questions like Cde. Basir.

**Cde. Kennard:** Cde. Chairman, page 69: I think I shall start first by clearing the air of a bit of scurrility that I think was attempted a while ago by Cde. Ally – and there are, I suppose, hundreds and thousands of “Allys” in Guyana – just as we might be aware that there are also a large number of persons by other names including “Kennard”. Let me assure Cde. Ally and this House that the Minister of Agriculture, Cde. Kennard, own no land in any part of Guyana. All he owns is a house in Georgetown. So I do not know to whom he is referring, named Kennard. That is a matter for him to explain. Anyway, there is no connection and I wish to assure the House of that.

With respect to the other items, items relevant to the selection of people for land development schemes, again I want to assure the House that the selection is on the basis of complete objectivity, complete impartiality and neutrality. There is no patronage, no nepotism in terms of selecting people for settlement on land settlement schemes. Perhaps it is this

impartiality which disturbs some of the Members on the other side, because they expected in the true tradition of their own customs and practice, that there would be patronage.

The land selection committee that has been referred to in these Estimates is a central committee in Georgetown comprising five persons – farmers, co-operative officers, Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Lands – and they have been receiving applications for land and have been making recommendations to the Commissioner of Lands for land to be allotted. When those recommendations are made to the Commissioner, he would advise the Minister of Agriculture who would in turn, where necessary, either, if he is authorised, approve the issues or where not authorised under the law, would refer the recommendations to the President for approval. That is the procedure. It passes through many hands. [A comrade: “who approved Jonestown?”] The President.

This is the general procedure. The Central Lands Committee, for example, holds no less than five meetings every month. They meet at least weekly. In fact, during the month of February some seven meetings were held and they visit the country areas as well and hold meetings on the spot in the areas such as Anna Regina, Kuru Kururu, Vergenoegen and so on. They do not merely sit in Georgetown. They visit other areas, this group of impartial men who examine the applications and make the distribution.

During last year 1,414 applications were received for land and the number of applications approved amounted to 701. Some 400 were rejected for reasons not qualifying. But we wish to ensure that land that is distributed goes to the deserving people who are capable of beneficial occupation and productive development and not to those who apply for speculative reasons.

The committee’s criteria are based on a number of factors and points are ascribed to each factor. On this point system the committee then identifies the people who should get land. Points are awarded for agriculture experience, for landlessness – the applicant owns no land – the size of his family and really his need, so that, in the final analysis, land is issued to *bona fide* people who have the need for land and with the capability and capacity to develop that land.



During last year, in addition to the Central Land Selection Committee, we appointed regional committees as well. There is one for Black Bush Polder because of its peculiar problems. Black Bush Polder, as you know, was a settlement started during the regime of the P.P.P. We discovered a large number of irregular occupations and other irregularities, and we had, therefore, to set up a committee under the chairmanship of the Regional Minister himself. This committee was required to review the existing land occupation to examine all existing leases and to determine whether the occupant was in there by regular means and had entitlement to the land. That committee has been sitting and sifting the grain from the chaff and dealing with rumours and complaints of the nature mentioned by Cde. Roshan Ally. If he wishes to make representation with respect to matters that excite his interest, I suggest that he should do so to that committee and the Regional Minister and this Committee would examine the situation and invite him to establish the truth or otherwise of the allegation.

**4.05 p.m.**

With respect to the Wauna Land Development Scheme and in fact the other land development schemes to which reference was made, we have Black Bush Polder, Garden of Eden, Charity Amazon under the various heads 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, all the heads that were mentioned. The Government's policy has always been that having developed an area, having created a land development scheme as the name implies, the area is expected to support itself, therefore, as local authority, as the State will not issue patronage and subsidies to the end of time to that particular locality. That area must become a local authority; stand on its own legs, so that the people's resources which the Government is expending for land development will be used for developing additional areas to expand agriculture in general.

All these schemes mentioned here have reached a point in time where they should become local authorities managed by the people themselves out of the resources of the people who had benefited from years of subsidisation by the people's Government. Arrangements are being made for the rapid transfer of these land development schemes so that they may stand on their own legs as matured communities and pay their way. This applies to Wauna, Black Bush

Polder, etc., so that whatever the people are demanding, they themselves would seek the means for meeting their own needs.

**The Chairman:** There is subhead 10. I think Cde. Basir asked.

**Cde. Kennard:** Cde. Basir referred to the Essequibo Estates and the production of cassava sticks for farmers in the Pomeroon. The arrangement there is that some initial cassava sticks would be multiplied and then issued to farmers and out of the production on the farms, the farmers thereafter would multiply the sticks for further distribution to other farmers, so that there is nothing permanent about producing the sticks at McNabb. It is only a temporary arrangement to get the production of these varieties of cassava started and, thereafter, the farmers will produce the sticks for distribution to other farmers in the Pomeroon and other areas. And that is the whole scheme of things with respect to the production of cassava sticks at the Essequibo estates.

*Head 29, Ministry of Agriculture – Lands and Surveys - \$4,051,665 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**The Chairman:** Pages 70 to 72.

## **HEAD 30 – MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE**

### **HYDRAULICS**

Question proposed that sum of \$4,108,097 for Head 30, Ministry of Agriculture – Hydraulics, stand part of the Estimates.

**The Chairman:** Cde. Minister.

**Cde. Kennard:** I should like to move two amendments to this Head. I am seeking your leave under Standing Order 83 to move the suspension of Standing Order No. 66 (1) to dispense with the notice required so that the amendments can be considered at this time. Copies of the amendments have been tabled.

**The Chairman:** Leave is granted.

**Cde. Kennard:** Cde. Chairman, I now move that Standing Order No. 66 (1) be suspended.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Standing Order 66 (1) suspended.*

**Cde. Kennard:** Cde. Chairman, I now move the amendments which I signify have received Cabinet's approval:

Subhead 1 Personal Emoluments:

Insertion of the following new Division after Item (25):

**“MECHANICAL DIVISION”**

1 Chief Engineer, Mechanical	... A36 - \$13,620
1 Specialist	... A31 - \$11,640
4 Mechanical Engineer	... A24 - \$25,536
3 Senior Mechanical Superintendent	... A 23 - \$19,080
3 Mechancial Superintendent	... A 16 - \$11,808”.

Total Personal Emoluments:

Substitution of “\$1,431,311” for “\$1,349,627”.

Total of Head:

Substitution of “\$4,189,781” for “\$4,108,097”.

*Amendments proposed, put, and agreed to.*

**The Chairman:** Cde. Persaud.

**Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud:** Cde. Chairman, when one looks at this Ministry and the number of departures from it, any amendment which proposes money reasonable to keep the officers, undoubtedly receives the support of the Opposition. One question on this page is, will the Minister tell us what is the position in this Ministry will respect to engineers? He has had resignations from near the top right down. I wonder how we are going to maintain the sea defences and how we are going to provide drainage and irrigations. I leave it for him to tell us exactly the position.

And now I move, sir, to page 72, subhead 7, Expenses of Trainees. This has been increased from \$600 to \$6,000. Is it a coincidence, an error, and if it is, will the Minister tell us why the increase?

Maintenance of Land, Water Transport has been increased from \$59,000 to \$100,000. Probably he will wish to offer an explanation on that.

**The Chairman:** Which one that is?

**Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud:** Subhead 9, sir. There are several increases. I am just looking at the main ones. Engineering Surveys, not that we are opposed to it but it has been a 100 per cent increase. He probably can tell us why.

Then I come, sir, to subhead 16, Maintenance – River Defences; subhead 17, Sea Defences – Maintenance and Operation; subhead 18, Maintenance of Drainage and Irrigation in other than declared areas. Cde. Chairman, the Minister I am told is aware of the recent breach in Essequibo and I don't want to make a long speech on it but I want to simply say that these breaches occur as a result of clear negligence. It is useless for the Ministry to get active if the Minister concerned to get active in the area when the breach has already occurred and say that they are doing something.

4.15 p.m.

Our position from this side is, if these areas are properly serviced, if the sea dams are serviced, we can avoid many of the breaches. Correction of the breaches is not the end to the problem because when these breaches occur farmers suffer in many ways. The current crops and the soil deteriorate and there are many areas of breaches where no compensation is given to any of the farmers and they are compelled to go back on that same land that was affected by flooding from time to time. I therefore want to call upon the Minister to call upon his officers, if he has them. Something is radically wrong. Breaches start on such minor ground that I wonder why they leave them until they occur.

As we are talking about irrigation, in the Leguan area, the Rice Action Committee let in salt water on the people and damaged their crops and land in Amsterdam. I want the Minister to ask the Permanent Secretary, who is himself in that area as a farmer, what the result is. The result is that the farmers have lost tremendously in Leguan. What is the Minister doing about it? What is his Ministry doing about it? Has the Minister investigated to find out, if the Ministry was involved directly at the central level, who it was that ordered that kind of situation? We can only appreciate the gravity of the situation if we see it or if we are involved. We have learnt over the years, because of our close affinity with the farmers, to appreciate their sufferings and hardships from time to time, some that are brought on them by sheer negligence, in some cases, by wrong action and in other cases by inaction.

I understand the same thing occurred in Wakenaam. There has been a breach there for months and nothing has been done. Is the Ministry aware of this? If not, let me inform the Ministry in this Parliament and let me hope that the Minister and his officers will take cognizance of it and not wait until the place is inundated again.

I want to refer to the No. 43 Co-operative Society, Port Mourant. I also want to refer to an article in the **Chronicle**. The General Manager of the Guyana Rice Board, Cde. Neville Sutherland on Wednesday carried out on-the-spot investigations into the problems facing two Co-operative Societies back of Port Mourant Estate. According to the report in the newspaper, the visit showed that there was need for concrete culverts to be constructed on the eastern side of

the No. 43 co-op to allow water to be drained through Albion Estate. This is to facilitate cultivation of more than 2,400 acres. Further, the visit showed the need for a box koker near the land occupied by the Port Mourant United Co-op to improve irrigation which will enable another 960 acres to be cultivated, while another big box over what is called the ... dam would allow over 3,500 acres of land from Port Mourant to be irrigated and for ploughing to be made easy for the next crop.

When these people visit these areas and they talk to the press you get the impression that action will be taken immediately. My information, and this can be supported, is that no action has been taken up to now. Why cannot simple maintenance work be carried out in these areas? There is no action and hence production suffers. That is a drainage and irrigation area. I want to ask the Minister specifically if he could give this House the assurance today when he speaks, when the work will be carried out in this area so that farmers can be inspired to produce.

Let me take an area, Mora Farm. In this area it is a scandalous situation. It involves many families and thirty-five acres are owned by fifteen farmers. The sea dam suffered erosion in 1975. The people were told that they must make a deposit of over \$500 so that work could be done because it is not drainage and irrigation area. They have made that deposit. They were told to get 36 poles to carry out the work. Those poles were put by the people. A dragline was acquired and sometime after, it broke down. I am told that the dragline is still there, broken down, and they are paying watchmen around the clock and no action is taken to alleviate the suffering of those people in the area. The subhead I have chosen to speak on refers to an area, which is outside the drainage and irrigation area, to show that there is some provision. The whole idea is for the Government to have water control so that the farmers can produce to the maximum. The fact is that no action has been taken up to now. I want to know when the work will be started there, when the demands of the farmers will be satisfied so that their sufferings can be brought to an end. It is useless to attempt to ask for any form of compensation because I would be pouring water on duck's back.

I would close off by saying that generally the Government has not done very well, having referred to those specific areas in so far as maintenance work is concerned. I am not talking

about general water control. You can talk about Tapakuma, M.M.A. I do not want to talk about it again but there are many areas outside of M.M.A. and Tapakuma that are neglected. I hope the Minister will make a decision and ask his officers to carry out an investigation into all those areas that require minor work. Even at Bonasika, there has been a problem for a number of years at the five-door koker. They suffer whenever the water is high.

**Cde. Ally :** rose –

**The Chairman:** Cde. Ally, if you do not ask proper questions and if you are going to be insulting to people, I will not listen to you again.

**4.25 p.m.**

**Cde. Ally:** I wish to ask the Minister if he could tell us the reason why the Manabisi pump is being controlled –

**The Chairman:** Under what head and item is that asked?

**Cde. Ally:** Subhead 15, Pumping Stations, on page 72. Why is the Manabisi pump being controlled in Georgetown instead of on the Corentyne?

I wish to ask the Minister whether he is aware of the fact that many times when the pump is in working order there is no fuel for it. Many times private persons have to take fuel in so as to supply the pump.

I should also like to ask the Minister whether he is aware of the fact that because of the frequent breakdown of this pump, and the fact that it is without fuel on many occasions, many farmers use their own private pumps. As result of this over 30 per cent of the land within that area still remains unplanted. Will he tell us the reason why this pump is not functioning properly?

**The Chairman:** Cde. Minister.

**Cde. Kennard:** Page 70. The Staff: The Comrade raised the staff situation again and I do not have to repeat myself – I have already explained the staff position – except to say that, as I indicated, in the Ministry of Agriculture there is a pool, a reservoir, from which the corporation and authorities are drawing staff in the interest of the people. So it is with drainage and irrigation. The Hydraulics Division has been able to supply staff to Tapakuma, M.M.A. and elsewhere while still retaining its competence.

On page 72 there was an observation on training, whether there is a typographical error. This \$600 is a figure of fact. The explanation is that last year the cost of these trainees was borne substantially from another head and just this small amount was charged against this head. This year the accounting practice is to show all the training pertinent to hydraulics under the Hydraulics head. Hence the explanation for the increase from \$600 to \$6,000.

Subhead 13, Engineering Surveys: I shall refer to subhead 9 in a while. There are more engineering surveys to be conducted and we have provided for doubling the provision. There will be, for example, preliminary survey work done on the Upper Corentyne, in the Crabwood Creek area, and this will take some of these costs. On subhead 9, Maintenance of Land, Water Transport, there was raised the matter of virtually doubling the cost of maintenance of Land and Water Transport. The equipment that we have, survey vessels, launches etc., have suffered from deferred maintenance, but this has now caught up with us and many units will have to be virtually rehabilitated, rebuilt, in 1979 so we have had to double the vote for increased maintenance.

We then move to subhead 16, Maintenance – River Defences, and subhead 18, Maintenance of Drainage and Irrigation in other than declared areas, the whole question of maintenance of river defences and the maintenance of drainage and irrigation works. What I want to emphasise with respect to general comments on the maintenance of drainage and irrigation works is that we are maintaining drainage and irrigation works of declared drainage and irrigation areas. Unfortunately, the larger proportion of land on the coast, and particularly on the river banks, is not within declared drainage and irrigation areas.



If we spend money properly, as we are required to spend money properly, we should spend these sums only in declared drainage and irrigation areas and not in undeclared areas. For example, Mora Farms, is not a declared area and people there must pay the full cost of the works done. I must concede that money was lodged for work to be done but as the speaker himself, Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud, mentioned the dragline broke down and got stuck and before we could start up the dragline again parts were stolen from it. One day it was the starter, the next day it was the battery, the next day half the dragline – by the people themselves – with the result that there was a dragline sent in the good faith, in good working order, but eventually the dragline was virtually stripped and this was the main reason for the work not being proceeded with. We tried to arrest this by putting a watchman of our own and he is still there.

What we have decided to do, notwithstanding the great damage that was done to the people's equipment, to the State, we have budgeted this year to get the Mora Farm work done as a grant with the people co-operating by providing a certain amount of self-help as well, and this would therefore dispose of the Mora Farm question in 1979 notwithstanding the behaviour in the past.

The remark about the No. 43 Co-op, both questions were raised under subhead 18. There is a co-operative in possession of land which, by virtue of a lease, is their land. It is not declared drainage and irrigation area. How can you expect the Government to come in and do work which is their work, which they must pay for? It is their enterprise, it is their business, the State is not involved, it is not a State scheme, it is not declared drainage and irrigation area. Whoever made a promise like that was not authorised to promise anything. The officer ought to have told the people that he would recommend that they would get some help. If, in fact, he has recommended, now that it is further recommended by my good friend whose behaviour during this debate has been exemplary, that recommendation has been accepted and work will be done. He gave most constructive criticism during the debate and that is a reward for that. That is all, Cde. Chairman.

*Head 30, Ministry of Agriculture – Hydraulics - \$4,189,781 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**The Chairman:** Pages 207 and 208.

**DIVISION XIII – MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE**

Question proposed that the sum of \$52,722,000 for Division XIII, Ministry of Agriculture, stand part of the Estimates.

**Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud:** A very brief contribution on subhead 7, Agricultural Development. The legend states “To provide for research, development and extension works associated with diversification for Agriculture”. I have always urged diversification and on previous occasion referred to –

**The Chairman:** What page are you speaking on?

**Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud:** Page 207, subhead 7. The point I have been making is that diversification is vital but I do not think that the Minister can really claim tremendous achievement in this area. I hope that he will not again tell us about black-eye peas. There are so many other things. As I said, name it, we can produce it.

Apart from attempting to score any debating points, one would expect that something would be done this year in the area of diversification and of intercropping. Indeed, this subhead is very wide. You talk about agricultural development, develop the industry that is already there. What is being done about the coconut industry that we can become self-sufficient in oil? Nothing is being done. It is left in certain areas, particularly on the East Coast. The inter-drainage is there. You allow the coconuts to drop. There are snakes. One single man is there. He picks it up and cleans it. We cannot run the coconut industry like this. I am told – I haven’t seen it myself but a man who has got great experience in agriculture told me that he passed and he saw signs of caterpillar at Mahaicony. I wonder if you heard about it, if not, I will ask you to investigate it.

**4.35 p.m.**

We support the vote for agriculture development at this stage. If we are to have development we need a number of things. In the coastal areas where we have available lands which were surveyed, soil tested, recommendations made, give them to people who want them,

particularly lands in adjacent areas where you have got the population, where you have got road and transport and other facilities so that you will not have to get money to provide certain facilities that are already existing, like Orealla, the extension of the Crabwood Creek/Orealla road. You have large acreages that the development programme says have good soil and people can really produce tremendously.

There are many areas that need feeder roads. Let us take Ruby and Look Out. The Minister knows and these are his figures which he gave some time ago in the **Chronicle**.

Produce in the Boeraserie area, 3,900 pounds of plantain, 4,800,000 millions of pounds of sweet potatoes, 1,000,600 pounds of cabbage, 280,000 pounds of fruits, millions of pounds of cassava. I have visited this year and I speak from first-hand information. You know the road to go in; you have to put up all the glass in the car; when you come out, it is all dust. There is absolutely no facility there beginning with pure water supply. And this is one small area that is producing tremendously. Eight million dollars have been thrown into Soesdyke-Linden project. That is the input; we don't know what the output is. We are hoping that one day some time or the other somebody will persuade this Government to produce an audited statement of the input all the projects so that we can really have an assessment of what the output really is and see how millions have been thrown away in this country.

I have spoken with the people; they are living there, they are away from civilisation, they are willing to stay there. You want to drive them away. Even in the Wauna area, people have been running away. I have got the actual figures and I have got a letter from somebody there. Cde. Chairman, let us help these people. They want things like feeder roads. I was talking with a farmer from Ruby-Look Out; the trenches are filthy. In fact, two-three months ago, they sent in a Hymac, it did a little bit of work then they forgot it. Cde. Chairman, there is no health centre, there is no nursery school, and I think I must really put up a strong plea. I hope, like on the previous occasion, I am objective and the Minister would be as objective as he was only a few minutes ago to tell this House that he is going to take action. I am not sure whether the Regional Minister has reported to him on this area, if not, I think he should call him up for discipline.

Cde. Chairman, I want to ask that something be done generally for agricultural diversification and agricultural development. Now I move to subhead 29, Development of Honey Industry. We know that the African bees infiltrated, we know what they did, they probably succeeded in thwarting, if you had anything going on. We need development of our apiaries so that we can have real development in honey. I am of the view that nothing was done to control the infiltration of the African bees. You use the radio, you use it for a lot of things; use it for agriculture education: close up the holes so that the infiltration will not take place, so that you can preserve your queens so that they will not be abducted by the African bees. I think the situation would have been better. But that has not happened and so the queens were seized and we saw the destruction of the industry.

Cde. Chairman, page 208. We have a number of heads. I do not want to deal with them specifically but I just want to draw attention to one point. This year, the vote is greater than in any other year but you must talk in terms of percentage, what the budget was in those years and what the budget is this year, then we shall really see the reality of the situation. If you look, sir, on the right hand side of the page you will see that the provision in the 1978, under this very sensitive area of agricultural development, was \$22,692,000 but we spent only \$12,673,817. Indeed, if the agricultural process was moving as it should and there was a serious approach towards agricultural development, one would have expected, as we approach December 1979 the Minister would come before this House with a supplementary estimate and tell this House we are moving. We have reached the point where the Government or the Ministry or those concerned have proved that they are not competent to spend a paltry \$22 million in an area that requires it for agricultural development. I think that would have been an objective criticism. Will the Minister tell us what will be done in 1979?

**The Chairman:** Cde. Belgrave.

**Cde. Belgrave:** Page 208, subhead 69, Food Crop Production Marketing. The legend states to provide for the improvement of production and marketing systems. Cde. Chairman, I am reliably informed that some large quantities of our food that we produced and marketed are now lying a drift in Trinidad and further shipments of our food produced, mainly rice, stopped. Can I

ask this hon. Minister if he is aware of this, if so, can he tell this House how we will be able to overcome this problem. I understand that Venezuela and Columbia have made some inroads into our traditional markets in Trinidad and have large stocks of rice there. Two shipments by boat, one owned by Ramgalam and one owned by Stoll, and another boat, are lying in Trinidad harbour still awaiting discharge. We do hope that our rice will be discharged. I am wondering if the Minister can give us further information in relation to this sensitive question of the future of our food produced, mainly in the rice industry.

**Cde. Nokta:** Just one short question, Cde. Chairman. Page 207, subhead 29, development of Honey Industry: In the Waini River there is a slogan, “Plenty of money but no honey”. Some time ago this Government started a honey project in the Waini River and it spent additional sums to extend it further up the river to places like Bullet Tree, Baramani and what not. Thousands of dollars were spent. This money has been wasted. Will the Minister confirm this?

**4.45 p.m.**

**Cde. Dindayal:** Cde. Chairman, page 208, subhead 41: Is this vote intended to assist farmers to repair their agricultural machines?

**The Chairman:** I am not going to allow that. If you read the legend you will see what it says.

**Cde. Dindayal:** That is a mistake- Subhead 71, Rehabilitation of Agriculture Machinery. Is this vote intended to help farmers to rehabilitate their agricultural machines? And, is the Minister aware that four new tractors were given to the Dartmouth Land Development Society –

**The Chairman:** Yes, Cde. Persaud.

**Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud:** My question is on this very subhead. I am sure you will recall that last year I called upon the Minister to take an inventory of all Government machinery within the department and the Minister’s answer then was that a Committee was set up and Cde. Minister Nascimento was made Chairman. He knows and everyone knows throughout this

country that we have got machinery just lying idle. They complain of parts being stolen. Something ought to be done immediately to have this situation remedied, because this whole process of maintenance, purchase, disposal of machinery needs to be looked at. One of the areas preventing production is lack of machinery because one of the complaints, particularly of rice farmers, is that they are not getting combines. I think the time has come for the Minister to tell us something positive in this area because we are very concerned. I think it is in a bad way. I know all the areas and I can name them.

**Cde. Kennard:** Page 207, subhead 7, Agriculture Development: That was the first question raised and the advice given is that we must expedite diversification of agriculture. I have already spoken about the extent to which we are diversifying. A country, which has originally only sugar and then early in this century rice, now speaks of other crop such as oil palm, soya bean, black eye, cabbage, in terms of doing research into new crops, research into new areas, and taking the message to the farmers in extension works. But during 1979 most of these funds will be spent in agricultural development and in little schemes, such as the schemes to which references was made, like putting culverts in some areas which are not serviced by the Drainage and Irrigation Board or Development Authorities, grading dams, digging trenches, minor infrastructural work to develop agriculture in the extended area.

With respect to major works such as the road in the Ruby area, the Minister of Works perhaps has already indicated, if not during his presentation, sometime ago, the intention to have farm to market roads and to build roads in areas including that area. These are major works that come under that Ministry but these minor works this vote will provide for.

The question of the honey industry was raised. Cde. Persaud was saying that the people were not advised correctly. He said we should have told them to stop up the holes. I do not know what holes he is talking about. But as two experts together, I would admit that the African be of harm. The provision in the estimates is to import new queens to re-queen apiaries, to give the apiaries additional strength by infusing new blood into the apiaries in order to combat the incursion of the African bees.

On page 208, there was a question asked about rice in Trinidad, the boats were not being unloaded. It is a fact that because of very heavy shipments from Guyana, from November/December, January/February and in the early part of March – shipments amounting to some 50,000 bags of rice monthly compared with formerly about 30,000 bags of rice monthly – the storage in Trinidad has been taxed to capacity. You have the situation where Guyana has shipped large volumes of rice. In addition to that, Trinidad made some arrangements some time ago to purchase rice from Venezuela under protocol that the country has, I presume, with Venezuela. That rice arrived, at least, and the rice amounting to about 6,000 tons has been unloaded during the month of March, adding to the difficulties, adding to the congestion and therefore giving our vessels a very hard-time. At the present time the Chairman of the Rice Board is in Trinidad attempting to sort that situation out. One problem is that the Venezuelan rice is of such a low quality that consumption has fallen because consumers prefer Guyana rice, which is of much higher quality. This is being tackled. It is not affecting the industry at the present time.

There are additional markets. We have just concluded a further contract to sell a further 3,000 tons of rice to East Germany and we are shipping large quantities of rice to the Caribbean generally. At the present time, there is no adverse effect on the disposal of Guyana's rice.

On the question of the machinery maintenance, this sum provided is for the rehabilitations and reconditioning of the agricultural machinery owned by the Ministry of Agriculture, draglines, excavators, Hymacs, etc. In addition to this provision, the Government as you know, is building an agricultural machinery workshop at Burma with assistance from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and that will cater for additional improvement of farmer's equipment by way of a rebuild workshop. In addition, there is build workshop being established with the assistance of the G.D.R. and that will again cater not only for Government needs but for the additional needs of the people.

**28.3.79**

**National Assembly**

**4.45 – 4.55 p.m.**

On the general observations that we had spent only \$12 million last year where as \$28 million was provided for in this vote, the explanation is simple. The provision really was for the initiation of works under international contract for Black Bush Polder.

**4.55 p.m.**

We had expected those works start at the end of 1979. They will now be started in 1980, therefore that large sum, \$20 million was provided. The works were not done last year. They will be done this year and that is the reason why the vote was under-spent.

*Division XIII, Ministry of Agriculture - \$52,722,000 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**The Chairman:** page 210.

#### **DIVISION XV – MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE**

##### **SECOND SEA DEFENCE PROJECT**

Question proposed that the sum of \$1,735,000 for Division XV, Ministry of Agriculture, Second Sea Defence Project, stand part of the Estimates.

*Division XV, Ministry of Agriculture, Second Sea Defence Project - \$1,735,000 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**The Chairman:** Page 211.

#### **DIVISION XVI – MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE**

##### **IBRD PROJECTS**

##### **TAPAKUMA IRRIGATION PROJECT**

Question proposed that the sum of \$15,350,000 for Division XVI, Ministry of Agriculture, IBRD Projects, Tapakuma Irrigation Project, stand part of the Estimates.



*Division XVI, Ministry of Agriculture, IBRD Projects, Tapakuma Irrigation Project - \$15,350,00 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**The Chairman:** Page 212.

## **DIVISION XVIA – MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE**

### **TAPAKUMA IRRIGATION PROJECT**

Question proposed that the sum of \$7,600,000 for Division XVIA, Ministry of Agriculture, Tapakuma Irrigation Project, stand part of the Estimates.

**Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud:** Will the Minister tell us if the contract for Phase 2 has already been awarded? If not, will he say what is the reason for the delay, because he has already made that the Ministry is far behind schedule with this project and it does appear that there is further impediment in the progress in these areas bearing in mind the sensitivity of these areas and the suffering of the farmers. What is causing the delay, if the contract has not yet been awarded?

**Cde. Kennard:** The contract for Phase 2, Tapakuma, has not been awarded. The contract has now been advertised. The closing date for bidders is 12<sup>th</sup> April. The contract will be awarded thereafter, after the applications have been considered. The lowest bidder will get the contract. The delay in advertising, and therefore in the subsequent awarding of the contract, was due to a reappraisal of the whole project because of the escalation of costs. The price of oil has gone up; overseas inflation has risen and this has meant inflation in price. We have been looking at all of this in terms of the economic benefits. Those studies have now been completed. We know what it ought to cost at current levels and we are now going out for bidders. Subsequently we will award.

**Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud:** Will the Minister be able to tell us when the physical work will commence bearing in mind all the contracts. My information is that Phase 1 has not yet been completed. When will the physical work commence bearing in mind that the contract will be amended? I ask this so that next year I shall not have to ask.

28.3.79

National Assembly

4.55 – 5 p.m.

**The Chairman:** If you are there.

**Cde. Kennard:** I shall give Cde. Persaud a safe date and the safe date is 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1980. The physical digging will begin then. The machinery will be in the country, the foreign technicians will be in the country. The contract will be for a period of 30 months, so that it will end 30 months after the date.

*Division XVIA, Ministry of Agriculture, Tapakuma Irrigation Project - \$7,600,000 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

*Assembly resumed.*

**The Speaker:** The Assembly will be suspended for 30 minutes.

*Sitting suspended at 4.57 p.m.*

5.26 p.m.

*On resumption –*

*Assembly in Committee of Supply.*

**The Chairman:** Before we start the Head of Attorney General and Minister of Justice I wish to indicate that tomorrow we will consider the Ministry of Foreign Affairs first. I think this is by agreement. Then we will do Education and Information and the Appropriation Bill.

Pages 18 and 19.

## **HEAD 2 – SUPREME COURT OF JUDICATURE**

Question proposed that the sum of \$1,109,493 for Head 2, Supreme Court of Judicature stand part of the Estimates.

**Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud:** Subhead 1 (4), Puisne Judge: I think we are all aware of the back log of work in the Supreme Court and the general consensus among those concerned to have trials expedited and not to have people languishing in the prison for long periods without

trial. If my information is right I understand that there is a vacancy among the Puisne Judges. I myself have sat down here and tried to count them and I found ten, whereas the Estimates provided for eleven. If I am right will the Cde. Attorney General inform the House how early that vacancy will be filled so that we may have the full complement and move towards expeditious trials.

Sometimes when you walk through the corridors of the Supreme Court particularly after lunch you never find more than three courts –

**The Chairman:** I am not allowing that discussion.

**Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud:** If I may move to item (14), Clerk to the Chancellor, item (15) Chief Registry Officer, item (16) Senior Registry Officer, item (17) Registry Officer.

Item (14), I am told that these positions have not been filled and you have people with junior status. I am not saying they are not qualified to be promoted but what I am saying is that they do not enjoy the status at the moment to serve as registrars to the Judges. Why is there a long and undue delay in appointing these people if they are there? Fill the vacancies if they are not filled.

Could the Attorney General tell us what is the function of the Legal Secretary at item (22) in this particular department? My information is that this office also is vacant and if it is an important office why is it not being filled?

Item (24), Chief Court Reporter. I am told that the number of reporters has been increased to 9. This is supported by the estimate itself – 5 and 3 making eight and if you turn the other page there is an item for Temporary Court Reporter. I assume that there should be at least one there. But despite the fact that the structure came into being, since that time there are only three reporters to man the Supreme Court and Courts in Demerara, Essequibo and Berbice. Why are these posts not filled in view of the increased remuneration?

**The Chairman:** For the same reason that we cannot fill our posts in Parliament.

**Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud:** The Attorney General is fully competent to answer for

**5.30 p.m.**

himself. You are not unaware as a practising solicitor of the incessant complaints by judges that there are no reporters and definitely it is impossible for three reporters to serve the courts mentioned before. What is more, Cde. Chairman, with an increased salary, an officer, who had resigned, was re-employed on contract and this position is causing great uneasiness in the department. People feel that something is radically wrong. Probably the Cde. Attorney General is not aware and the time has come for him to look into these things. There are countless complaints in that department. I know the Attorney General is busy with other duties but I think it is necessary for him to look into these matters, that is why I am taking the opportunity on this occasion of drawing it to his attention. In fact, I am told that of the three, one rarely performs the function of the court reporter. I have the name; I have no intention of using the name.

I think we need to train people, if people are there who have already been trained, if people who are there who have got the qualification and they can serve, I think there ought to be no delay in their expeditious appointment. I think we should try to identify the person who is thwarting the process of appointment. I have my own view and information. Cde. Chairman, as you can see on page 19, item (37), there is provision even for temporary court reporters, and apprentice court reporters, so that people can be brought within the stream to be trained on the spot. They would have had the basics and probably more than the basics but if they can sit with experienced people, they would be able to develop their own experience and so be able to fill the many vacancies that exist.

Subhead 11, Expenses of Jurors. There have been complaints, but let me just refer to one where the jury actually went on strike in Berbice and refused to sit despite attempts at persuasion from everyone including the Judges. Following requests, promises were made and they had their complaints aired as we read them. Could the Attorney General tell us if any effort is being made to deal with the problems of which they have complained? I think it is a question of increased remuneration for persons who serve as jurors. I would wish to concede that serving as a juror is a

civic duty and financial consideration should not be the primary influence when giving such distinctive services. Nevertheless, it ought not to be so ridiculous that a person would be ashamed of receiving his packet at the conclusion of his services. My information is that that is the position and I am sure if the Cde. Attorney General should direct his mind to the last time when there was an increase he would find that probably the criticism of the jurors concerned, and, indeed, my call for re-examination of the situation, would be very objective and fair.

Another area of complaint has been and still is the payment to witnesses. The same point of civic duty undoubtedly is applicable but I wonder if I can refer you to these figures. They probably date back to the late forties or early fifties: farmer, \$1.50 per day, clerk \$2.00, a professional person \$5.00, domestic \$1.00. But look at this one, a rural constable \$9.10. If a lawyer goes and gives evidence he gets \$5.00. I am just putting the facts as I have them. I wonder what yardstick was used to decide these sums. I think the Attorney General should look at that as well.

**The Chairman:** Cde. Attorney General.

The Attorney General and Minister of Justice: Cde. Chairman, the answer to the first question, which was raised by my good friend Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud concerning the existing vacancy in the High Court bench is that we hope to have the vacancy filled as soon as could be. The position became vacant on the 9<sup>th</sup> September, 1978. Since then, we did introduce in this House certain measures with a view to alleviating the burden on the High Court Judges and they are passing over some part of their work to the magisterial bench. We have had under consideration the evaluation of the extent to which the burden on the High Court might have been reduced by the operation of the new measures and when the evaluation is completed, we will move to the stage of making a definitive decision as to whether there is need to fill the vacancy. I think that is as candid an answer as I can offer.

Now, Cde. Persaud raised the question concerning subhead 1, item (17), Registry Officer. Yes, there have been some positions vacant both in the Supreme Court Registry and in the Deeds Registry and the departmental authorities have in fact initiated the necessary steps for filling these vacancies. But what happened was that the appointing authority very wisely and very

prudently, in my view, suggested that since the post of Registry Officer is interchangeable within both registries that the two registries should come together and make a joint presentation to the appointing authority so as to achieve the greatest rationalisation in the appointments. That little procedural variation has resulted unfortunately in the little delay which has rightly attracted Cde. Persaud's attention to which he has referred with his usual perceptiveness.

And then I turn to subhead 1, item (22), the post of Legal Secretary. Cde. Persaud asked, I believe, what is the objective behind the creation of this post. The answer to that is that we hope through the creation of this post to afford some assistance to the Justices of Appeal. The posts are substantively vacant because unfortunately we have not been able to identify candidates with the requisite qualifications and so what we have been doing is to attempt to ensure the discharge of the functions of the post by making acting and other temporary arrangements. As soon as people turn up who satisfy the required qualifications, of course, there is no reason on earth why we should not move to have these vacancies substantively filled.

Now, as for subhead 1, item (23), Cde. Persaud spoke about the position of court reporters. I do wish with great humility to adopt the incisive and apt remark which you, Cde. Chairman, made when you drew attention to the fact that we in this National Assembly have ourselves been able to fill corresponding vacancies and that, of course, is because of the well-known fact that a position of this kind is one which calls for discipline and application beyond the average. Not every shorthand writer can be a court reporter or a reporter for the National Assembly. We have these problems and the House is well acquainted with these problems.

#### **5.40 p.m.**

We have four Court Reporters up to sometime last year when one unfortunately resigned. We have three now. The one to whom Cde. Persaud was presumable referring is attached to the Court of Appeal but I respectfully disagree with him in so far as he ought to suggest that she is not functioning as a court reporter. It is within my knowledge, Cde. Chairman, and perhaps within your Honour's also, that she does, in fact, take notes of Counsels' arguments and Judges' judgments in the Court of Appeal. That, I understand, is within the compass of her functions and

I am informed by the Registrar who is next to me that she does go down to the High Court now and then and take summing-up.

I want to add a little remark, that we have however done rather well in our training scheme. Last year at this time when I spoke in this House, we had only one trainee, as your Honour will recall. Now I am very glad to report, as in duty bound I am, to the House that we have five trainees. Since the period of training is only two years, within a short while we hope to have a graduate or two from that system.

It is not correct – I do believe that my good friend Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud has been misinformed when he suggested to the House, and I am quite sure he did not deliberately intend to suggest what was not accurate, but sometimes we are all in the hands of people who give us information; I do, however, wish to correct the impression that I believe the House may have got from him – that there are people who have not been appointed. My understanding is the lamentably there are no people in that category. If there were any persons within that category, we would snap them up as quickly as that and put them in the right slots because we want these people. I do not think the House can have the slightest doubt that we really do want these people. We are looking for them all over the place. Really, if Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud would be so good as to confide in me the whereabouts of any candidates who satisfy these qualifications I would be very glad to make their acquaintance and to expedite their appointments as soon as may be.

There was subhead 11, Expenses of Jurors, I think, that Cde. Persaud turned to. Your Honour, I think the House will know that for some while, unfortunately it has been for some while, we have had under consideration the question of reappraising the remuneration of jurors as well as of witnesses. But there are two factors. There are many useful plans, many well thought-out plans, which unfortunately have to undergo, as it were, a re-organising re-appraisal in the light of the economic austerity which has been inflicted on us, as well as on so many countries of this world. This is not to say that we have abandoned those plans. We are pursuing them but we must make haste carefully. I do take the point.

I am completely *ad idem* with Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud when he referred to the important, though not exclusively relevant, fact that service both as juror and as witness is really a service by way of a discharge of an important and very solemn civic duty and, therefore, while it is true that we cannot entirely throw the factor of monetary consideration throughout the window, it is not really decisive of the question at all. I was intrigued and interested in the discrepancies, to which Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud invited my attention, in the rate of the remuneration of witnesses. I had an idea myself but they were differentials. I was a little startled to find out that Rural Constables receive as much as \$9.10 whereas doctors receive \$5 and others receive even less than that. There is certainly something here that we should review in the light of the socialist philosophy of the Government and I would make haste to examine the position. If he is right that there is this enormous discrepancy, I certainly would have attention fixed upon it immediately.

*Head 2, Supreme Court of Judicature - \$1,109,493 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**The Chairman:** Page 20 and 21.

### **HEAD 3 – MAGISTRATES**

Question proposed that the sum of \$1,460,386 for Head3, Magistrates, stand part of the Estimates.

**Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud:** Subhead 8, Rental of Court Rooms. I noticed that we have a nominal sum of \$10. In addition to that we have all the several complaints of Magistrates, some of them adjourning courts resulting in litigants suffering. I think the Attorney General must look very objectively at the conditions under which Magistrates and Judges work. But in addition to that there is a question of storage. I serve on the Public Accounts Committee. Without any intention of divulging what we hear at the Public Accounts Committee, concern must be expressed for the storage of documents.

So far as the Supreme Court is concerned, we have heard on many occasions that important files are missing. Judges have complained. What is wrong with the security in the



courts? I am told that when a particular person is there, the file is generally in danger and some people can say in which direction the file has gone. That is my information. But I want to urge that consideration should be given to proper security of all documents. I remember no less a person than the Director of Public Prosecutions only a week or two ago talking about there being no proper place to keep exhibits. I am very concerned.

I feel as a Member of this House that Parliament ought to take cognisance of it and urge that something be done specifically with respect to Magistrates' Courts 1, 2 and 3. In Court 3 we store all case jackets but when that was decided I understand that that storage was to cater for three courts. Now we have thirteen courts, and there is the same storage facility. When a jacket is there, exhibits may be in it. It will remain in the storage vault for fourteen days and sometimes when you go back to it, important documents are not found. I think the time has come for Parliament to air its views so that the Attorney General can tell us what action is being taken to improve the situation.

Subhead 13, Rice Assessment Tribunal: I am reliably informed that the Rice Assessment Committees have not been meeting as they should. In fact, I have been told that in Essequibo they have not met for a long time. One of the reasons advanced is that the Rice Assessment Magistrates are called upon to do criminal work in the Magistrate's Court and they are more occupied with that kind of work than functioning as Rice Assessment Chairman. In fact, one Magistrate has been exclusively absorbed in the magisterial field and he does not do any rice assessment work at all. I would like to ask the Attorney General to look at this question. We know the importance of the Rice Farmers (Security of Tenure) Ordinance. We know that that is an important segment in so far as the development of this country is concerned and if the forum for redress is not functioning efficiently and worse yet, if it is not functioning at all, it will be another area where the farmers will be impeded, if not frustrated, in their production drive.

**5.50 p.m.**

The Attorney General is more conversant with the Essequibo Coast than I myself. He knows that area; he knows the people; he knows of the countless complaints at Aurora, Airy Hall, Land of Plenty and so many other places that can be named. My information is that farmers

have not succeeded in getting the Rice Assessment Committee to meet. Hence there are a number of matters that have been pending for a long period.

I want very sincerely and strongly to urge that if Magistrates are appointed to the Rice Assessment Committees that work should be their primary function, bearing in mind the importance of the Rice Farmers (Security of Tenure) Ordinance and the fact that this is the only forum for redress. There are so many claims, so many applicants, so many cases, to be heard and they are not being heard.

**The Chairman:** Cde. Attorney General.

**Cde. Shahabuddeen:** Cde. Chairman, dealing first with the question raised by Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud concerning the figure of \$10 shown as rental, of course, the explanation for this miniscule figure is that it is only a nominal sum. Rental for court rooms is really paid by the Ministry of Works and Transport. This is a nominal figure to give the magisterial department leeway to rent additional rooms if the necessity arises and if there are savings from other items which could be used.

As regards the question of the physical surroundings of the Courts, this Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud may be assured is a question that is very close to my own mind. Therefore I am very pleased to be able to report to this House that under new ownership and management the building known as Wharton's Building has undergone something like a face-lift and I believe that there is better accommodation for all concerned who use that building. I am going to pretend to this House that we have reason to be as satisfied with that as with every other area which is involved but we are looking at this.

The question of documents has also been raised and I do lament that now and then there have been occasions for complaint and Cde. Persaud has used this forum today quite rightly to air his side of the complaints. There is room for improvement. We are exploring the matter. We are investigating it and we are going to do as much as we can and as quickly as we can to see what improvement can be effected to the existing system.

Subhead 13, also attracted Cde. Persaud's attention. This deals with the Rice Assessment Tribunal. I agree emphatically with him that a person whose appointment as Chairman of the Rice Assessment Committee should concentrate primarily on his functions as Chairman, but I did not understand Cde. Persaud to suggest that if he has spare time he might not utilise that to do ordinary magisterial work. In fact, in my own experiences, the Chairman of the Rice Assessment Committees have traditionally helped out, since this scheme was established in 1956, I believe, with ordinary magisterial business but certainly there should be no question of a Chairman so concentrating on ordinary magisterial functions as to neglect his primary responsibility. I am not myself aware of such neglect but, as in duty bound, I am to investigate this complaint and if there is any wrong, to seek to have it put right.

There were some specific questions relating to the situation on the Essequibo Coast. I think I should let the House know what my understanding is of the position. There is an ordinary Magistrate resident on the Essequibo Coast. There is no resident Chairman of the Rice Assessment Committee but that does not mean that the Rice Assessment Committee does not sit. I understand that it does sit, that the Chairman resides out of Essequibo but goes down there quite regularly and he holds meetings of this Committee.

*Head 3, Magistrates - \$1,460,386 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**The Chairman:** Page 25.

## **HEAD 6 – OMBUDSMAN**

Question proposed that sum of \$36,821 for Head 6, Ombudsman, stand part of the Estimates.

**Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud:** I am reliably informed that the office of Ombudsman has been vacant since September. This is a constitutional position. I do not question the vote or anything but I do question the unnecessary delay in appointing someone to this important post which is part of our Constitution – to be specific article 54. I want the Attorney General to tell us why the Ombudsman has not been appointed. What is the delay and when will he be appointed so that the Constitution, article 54 specifically, will not be honoured in the breach? I think he is

the best person for me to direct this question to this afternoon, who ought to be custodian, as head of the Bar, of our Constitution and particularly those guaranteed positions.

Another aspect that has a constitutional obligation is this. I refer to article 54 (3):

“Where the Ombudsman has made a recommendation under paragraph (1) of this article and within a reasonable time thereafter no action has been taken which appears to the Ombudsman adequately to remedy the injustice, he may lay before the Assembly a special report on the case.

(4) The Ombudsman shall annually lay before the Assembly a general report on the performance of his functions under this part”.

Since 1974 there has been no report by the Ombudsman. For four years there has been no report. This has been a serious constitutional breach and I thought that the Parliament ought to be informed. I have examined myself the last report so that we can know in what area the Ombudsman is working, what have been the complaints of citizens, what has been the remedy and so on but, devoid of any report, I think we are not in a position to say what work the Ombudsman has done. Now, of course, we have none. And generally without dealing with any specific area I do not think the office is properly staffed and even with the positions stated here there are vacancies.

If there is any seriousness in this aspect of the Constitution we should have, first, the Ombudsman; we should have the office properly staffed; we should have it efficiently and effectively dealing with complaints and reports. If it is a matter that requires the sanction of Parliament where action has not been taken, then the Constitution gives the Ombudsman the power to send to us a preliminary report on that particular issue. More specifically, an annual report should be laid in Parliament, to which fact I have alluded.

**Cde. Shahabuddeen:** Here again I find myself in agreement with my friend Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud when he spoke of the manifest importance of this great constitutional post and I wish to assure him that we on this side are anxious as he on that side seems to be to have it filled. Indeed, it was with this prospect in view that very early in October last year the Prime Minister, whose responsibility it is to initiate the steps to make the appointment, wrote to the Leader of the Opposition inviting him to confer with the Prime Minister with a view to tendering to the Prime

Minister his valuable advice as to what should be done about making an appointment but, lamentably, the Leader of the Opposition has not yet found it convenient to meet with the Prime Minister on this subject. There is also the question of looking around to find someone who is really suitable for this appointment.

**6 p.m.**

Now, Cde. Persaud is also accurate in stating that for some years now, unfortunately, reports have not been submitted as required by article 54, paragraph (3) of the Constitution. This is a matter which has caused the Government as much concern as it has apparently caused Cde. Persaud. As I understand it, the explanation which might be offered by the Ombudsman's department is that the department has been afflicted for several years by a high turnover in staff. Nobody in particular seems to be content with staying in the vitally important position of Secretary. And so he has had these problems and possibly because of these problems, although in many cases he has written his report in draft, he has not been able to finalise it. That, Cde. Chairman, is the actual position.

*Head 6, Ombudsman - \$36,821 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**The Chairman:** Pages 28 and 29.

## **HEAD 9 – PUBLIC PROSECUTIONS**

Question proposed that the sum of \$264,609 for Head 9, Public Prosecutions, stand part of the Estimates.

**Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud:** One short question, Cde. Chairman: I am sure that the Attorney General is aware that the evidence is given in the court, at the conclusion of the sessions, of the number of people awaiting trial and I think it is more or less under the charge of this particular department to ensure speedy trial. I agree that there are other areas that are intertwined but it has to be initiated by the D.P.P. They are the ones who have to indict.

My information is that after the conclusion of preliminary enquiries, it takes a long period before the particular accused person is indicted. That is impediment number one. And even after

indictment a person has languished for a long period in the prison on remand. That is a type of incarceration; he is not permitted freedom and trial. I think that the time has come when Parliament must express its concern and call upon the House and the Attorney General to ensure that the Constitution is observed so that a man is given a speedy trial because the general maxim is delay is a denial. I wonder therefore if the Attorney General could tell us what steps are being taken. I know he made the point about whether the current number of judges can carry the work. I am no expert, I am no legal man but my whole reaction to that would be that you would have more people languishing there. My reaction would have been appoint a judge, not that I want a big court bureaucracy but surely I want people not to be in jail and I think the evaluation as to whether the magistracy can take it off would have been useless. Because that would have had to be equated with the number of new offences and increase in crimes and you will see that the magistracy itself has a number of outstanding cases if you were to carry out investigations. So my main concern and concern of the Opposition is people must be tried speedily.

**Cde. Shahabuddeen:** Cde. Chairman, the concern expressed by Cde. Persaud to ensure speedy trials is one that is very fully respected by the Government and I wish to assure this House that the Government has at all times endeavoured to do anything that is possibly could to ensure that people are tried as speedily as possible. There have been problems and there have been complaints but in the absence of particulars, I am afraid I cannot respond very accurately to a question posed as largely and as generously as the question put by Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud. Complaints, as the House will know, about delays in bringing people to trial are made in many countries. That is not to say that when they are made anybody should be proud of the situation, but should examine it and endeavour to see whether there is a justification for complaint and if there is justification for complaint, then we should devise solutions. This we will do, but it would have been more helpful, perhaps, if Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud would afterwards confer with me and direct my attention to any particular case which he has in mind. I do respect his reticence in not raising it here and I am certainly not inviting him to, but I would value consultations with him outside the Chamber. I would there end my remarks on that point.

*Head 9, Public Prosecutions - \$264,609 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**The Chairman:** Pages 40 and 41.

### **HEAD 17 – ATTORNEY GENERAL**

Question proposed that the sum of \$621,765 for head 17, Attorney General, stand part of the Estimates.

**Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud:** Cde. Chairman, items (3), (4), probably the other items along this line, all of them following: My information is that the Attorney General has been very unfortunate since he has taken over in that many, and I emphasise many of the very experienced and competent officers have been leaving this Ministry. If I am right I think this is the department that is in charge of drafting. I understand that the Chief Parliamentary Counsel has resigned; I know that the deputy has resigned. I know that there are others down the line who have resigned. What steps are being taken, if any, to have these positions filled?

In fact, if I can pose the other question, what steps were taken to retain experience in this particular Ministry?

I have heard it said over and over by no less a person than the Attorney General himself, that the question of drafting is taking a tremendous amount of time and they do not have enough people with this skill to expedite drafting in sensitive areas like land reform. If that statement was made when we had at least some people who were competent and experienced, one can imagine what the position would be in this year 1979 when we are losing them. I thought I ought to express concern with the objective of the Attorney General informing the House as to what the position is. I have been acting purely on information, but that is the position.

On item (15), Litigation Officer, I wish to ask a simple question and I think the Attorney General ought to alleviate a certain amount of fear that is existing, that when the court makes an award, the Litigation Officer or any officer in the A.G.'s office has the power to question the judgement and propose reduction and, in fact, from letters, makes it appear that the Attorney General's office is not prepared to go with the decision of the judge.

28.3.79

National Assembly

6 – 6.10 p.m.

I want to be very specific so that I will not be guilty of generalisation. I am referring to the case of Calvin Simon versus George Joseph. It is not subject to decision, the matter is completed. It is only a question of paying the damages and I have got all the correspondence between the lawyers concerned and the Attorney General. If I can read: “Our client eventually obtained judgment –

**The Chairman:** What have these two private people to do with the Attorney General’s Office?

**Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud:** The accident involved a Government vehicle and so the Government has to pay.

**The Chairman:** I am not aware that the Government has to pay. That is between two private people that you have called. You haven’t cited the Government as a party.

6.10 p.m.

**Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud:** The matter involves the person who was involved in the accident, he was found guilty of negligence, if I may put it that way, and you know the law. I do not know any law. It is the agent who is guilty of negligence hence the owner of the vehicle is the person liable to pay damages

**The Chairman:** Not if it is the State.

**Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud:** Probably we can get a statement from the Attorney General for future benefit of the population, that any person driving Government’s vehicle, if he kills any person on the road, bearing in mind –

**The Chairman:** You will have to draw my attention to what item you are dealing with. You may ask the Attorney General a question which is another thing.

**Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud:** My question is on Litigation Officer. My opinion is and it is not legal – that the Legislation Officer cannot bow on the question of legality and when the



court makes an award, no Litigation Officer has any right to question the award. He can go to the Appeal Court. In the particular case to which I referred, where the two persons are private individuals –

**The Chairman:** I am not allowing that.

**Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud:** Will the Attorney General tell us –

**The Chairman:** Under what subhead?

**Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud:** -- whether it is the policy of the Attorney General's Office, acting through the Litigation Officer, to question the judgment of Judges and awards?

**Cde. Shahabuddeen:** Cde. Chairman, my good friend Cde. Persaud crept into error when he suggested that lawyers have been leaving the Ministry of Justice since I assumed the Ministerial reins of responsibility. I think that is the impression conveyed. Every legally qualified comrade in this House will know that this problem has existed for many years. We have been losing lawyers, good lawyers, experienced lawyers, primarily, I believe, for greener pastures, and we wish them well. They are good men and we really could ill afford to do without their services. But there should be no suggestion that there is anything in the shape of a catastrophic exodus of personnel. In fact, when you take the entire number of those who left us within recent times, they constitute a minority of the legal staff of the Chambers. Corporate life and existence in the Chambers continue as before. The shop is open for business. If Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud care to call, he will find the doors wide open and I think he will find me there.

No, we are not anywhere near to the apocalypse he would wish to suggest is confronting us at this time. I give the House full assurance that the Ministry of Justice will, for the foreseeable future, be able to handle the legal business of the Government and, in particular, to service the affairs of this honourable Chamber. One passing remark which I will offer is that it could not have escaped Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud that the difficulty is recruiting lawyers is one which really runs across the board. I believe it has afflicted the P.P.P. in Parliament for many years now. I think it is a wry reflection that there is some difficulty reconciling the repeated protestations of the major Opposition Party about law and lawyers when, in fact, for many years

now they have rigorously excluded any single legally qualified gentleman from the in parliamentary runs. So they must know the problem. The problem is a real one. If their Parliamentary group has not crumbled because of the absence of any legally qualified gentlemen, they can rest assured that the Ministry of Justice will not.

Your Honour, the item concerning the Litigation Officer afforded a rather tenuous basis for Cde. Persaud to indulge himself in asking a question which obviously has been exercising his mind but which, I respectfully submit, was not at all relevant to the item being discussed. However, as it has reached the notice of the House, I think I am in duty bound to respond briefly. The very lucid and explicit position is that the Ministry of Justice does not question, has never questioned, never will, so long as I am there, the judgement of any judicial officer, high or low, in this land on an executive basis. If we wish to question it in the proper way, and that is the way he indicated, by appealing to the right forum. There is no case to which this Government was a party in which the Ministry of Justice sought to reduce the quantum of judgement awarded against the Government. Absolutely no case at all.

The case to which Cde. Persaud was referring, as your Honour quite perceptively noticed, was not a case on all fours at all. It was a case between private parties. I will tell this House more; no law officer appeared in that case, nor was there any trial in the sense of any controversy being litigate. It was dealt *with ex parte*. The allegation was that a Government vehicle was involved and on that basis a request was made for the Government to consider payment. If the Government is going to consider payment of a judgment in a case to which it is not a party, the Government has a right to say let us see the facts, let us see the extent to which Government may properly be said to have an involvement in the situation and that is the kind of situation to which he is referring. He should also know – if he does not I will tell him – that lawyers in private practice have before today recognised that this is a valid approach for the Government lawyers to take in a situation of this kind. Lawyers in private practice have, in fact, negotiated with Government lawyers with a view to determining what proportion of such a judgment the Government will assume responsibility for.

28.3.79  
6.20p.m.

National Assembly

6.20 – 6.24 p.m.

Your Honour, you have wide experience in legal matters and you will know that in an *ex parte* matter many experiences of defence are not raised. For example, the question of contributory negligence is not raised. But that is a matter which will exercise the mind of the Government's legal advisers in determining what portion of an *ex parte* judgment or any judgment the Government should assume responsibility for. It is quite unfair, it is quite inaccurate, it simply is not right, to use an *ex parte* judgment given in a case between private parties and say that the Government has been refusing to honour the judgments of the Courts of the land.

*Head 17, Attorney General - \$621,765 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**The Chairman:** Page 42.

## HEAD 18 – ATTORNEY GENERAL

### OFFICIAL RECEIVER

Question proposed that the sum of \$141,282 for Head 18, Attorney General – Official Receiver, stand part of the Estimates.

**Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud:** A short question under this Head generally, Cde. Chairman. I know there was a resignation at least some attempt has been made to fill the vacancy. I wish to ask the Attorney General, in the interest of the department and the public, a question. I know as a fact – on investigation I have found it to be accurate – that the records of this department are in shambles. The question of Letters of Administration: there has been no reconciliation for several years and I want to ask him very simply to appoint someone, it is not for political purpose, to investigate the position of that department with a view to bringing it to a point of respectability. You will find tremendous problems existing there.

**Cde. Shahabuddeen:** Cde. Chairman, I shall not pretend to this House that there are not any arrears in the office of the Official Receiver. We have some arrears but we have recently put

ourselves in a better position to deal with this by appointing a new State Solicitor and a new Deputy State Solicitor. We have done as much as we could to equip ourselves to grapple with the problem and to put the house in order.

I do not think that the House should be left with the impression that the State Solicitor's Office is any sort of battle field or shambles. It has never been anything of the kind.

*Head 18, Attorney General – Official Receiver - \$141,282 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**The Chairman:** Page 43.

## **HEAD 19 – ATTORNEY GENERAL**

### **DEEDS REGISTRY**

Question proposed that the sum of \$247,394 for Head 19, Attorney General – Deeds Registry, stand part of the Estimates.

**Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud:** Subhead 1 (5), Registry Officer. This is a point similar to the one I raised in respect of the Registrar to the Judges in the Supreme Court. I understand that vacancies do exist here and the people who are there have been acting for some time. Will the Minister let us know when these posts are going to be filled?

I recall that the Attorney General spoke of the department being involved. I am not opposed to Deeds coming in. I have some experience there and I should like to know that when recommendations are made, particularly from that department, whether it is the Deeds section of the other side, that those recommendations are founded on impartiality. I should like to feel that ultimately it is the Public Service Commission that will make the appointments.

**Cde. Shahabuddeen:** I only wish to adopt the answer which Cde. Persaud himself to the question which he asked and to say that as for remarks which he made towards and about impartially that those do not, in my respectful submission, been any relevance to the item which he was purposed to discuss.

**28.3.79**

**National Assembly**

**6.20 – 6.24 p.m.**

*Head 19, Attorney General – Deeds Registry - \$247,394 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

*Assembly resumed.*

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Resolved:** That this Assembly do now adjourn until Thursday, 29<sup>th</sup> March, 1979, at 2 p.m.

**[The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House]**

**Adjourned accordingly at 6.24 p.m.**

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