

THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORTS

[Volume 10]

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE THIRD SESSION (1983) OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FOURTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA

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| 18th Sitting | 14:00 hrs | Monday, 1983-12-12 |
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MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (71)

Speaker (1)

*Cde. Sase Narain, O.R., J.P., M.P.,

Speaker of the National Assembly

Members of the Government – People’s National Congress (58)

Prime Minister (1)

Cde. Dr. P.A. Reid, O.E., M.P.,

Prime Minister

Other Vice-Presidents (4)

Cde. H.D. Hoyte, S.C., M.P.,

Vice-President, Production

Cde. H. Green, M.P.,

Vice-President, Social Infrastructure

Cde. B. Ramsaroop, M.P.,

Vice-President, Party and State Matters

*Cde. Dr. M. Shahabuddeen, O.R., S.C., M.P.,

Vice-President and Attorney General

Senior Ministers (6)

Cde. R. Chandisingh, M.P.,

Minister of Education and Social Development and Culture

Cde. R.H.O. Corbin, M.P.,

Minister of National Mobilisation

*Cde. R.E. Jackson, M.P.,

(Absent – on leave)

Minister of Foreign Affairs

*Non-elected Member

*Cde. J.R. Thomas, M.P.,

Minister of Home Affairs

*Cde. H. Rashid, M.P.,

Minister of Energy and Mines

*Cde C.B. Greenidge, M.P.,

(Absent)

Minister of Finance and Economic Planning

Ministers (7)

Cde. U. E. Johnson, M.P.,

Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister

Cde. Sallahuddin, M.P.,

Minister within the Ministry of Agriculture

Cde. R.C. Fredericks, A.A., M.P.,

Minister of Youth and Sports within the Ministry of Education,
Social Development and Culture

Cde. S. Prashad, M.P.,

Minister of Transport within the Vice-Presidency
of Social Infrastructure

*Cde. Y.V. Harewood-Benn, M.P.,

(Absent)

Minister of Information and Public Service

*Cde. Dr. R.A. Van West-Charles, M.P.,

Minister of Health and Public Welfare

*Cde. K.W.E. Denny, M.P.,

Minister of Manpower and Co-operatives

Ministers of State (2)

Cde. M. Corrica, M.P.,

Minister of State within the Ministry of Internal Trade
and Consumer Protection

Cde. H.L.B. Singh, M.S., M.P.,

Minister of State within the Ministry of
Regional Development

Parliamentary Secretaries (4)

Cde. A.W. Bend-Kirton-Holder, M.P.,

Parliamentary Secretary, Housing, within the
Ministry of Health and Public Welfare

*Non-elected Member

Cde. D.A.N. Ainsworth, M.P., (Absent – on leave)

Parliamentary Secretary within the Ministry of
Education, Social Development and Culture

Cde. B. Bhaggan, M.P.,

Parliamentary Secretary in the Office of the
Prime Minister

Cde. J.B. Caldeira, M.P., (Absent)

Parliamentary Secretary within the Ministry
of Agriculture

Other Members (23)

Cde. M. Ally, M.P.

Cde. M. Armogan, M.S., J.P., M.P.

Cde. B. Beniprashad, M.P.

Cde. A.A. Chin, M.P.

Cde. J.P. Chowritmootoo, J.P., M.P.

Cde. O.E. Clarke, M.P.

Cde. E. B. Davidson, M.P.

Cde. H. Doobay, M.P.

Cde. A.B. Felix, M.P.

Cde. E.H.A. Fowler, M.P.

Cde. P. Fredericks, M.P. (Absent)

Cde. E.F. Gilbert, M.P.

Cde. J. Gill-Mingo, M.P.

Cde. A. McRae, M.P.

Cde. E. Melville, M.P. (Absent – on leave)

Cde. J.M. Munroe, J.P., M.P.

Cde. R.N. Primo, M.P.

Cde. P.A. Rayman, M.P.

Cde. C.G. Sharma, J.P., M.P.

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

Cde. B. Tiwari, M.P.

Cde. C. Vandenburg, M.P.

Cde. R.E. Williams, M.P. (Absent)

Members from the National Congress of Local Democratic Organs (2)

Cde. R. Bishop, M.S., M.P.

Cde. B. Latchminarayan, M.P.

Members from the Regional Democratic Councils (9)

Cde. K.N. Jones, M.P. (Region No. 1 – Barima/Waini)

Cde. K.V. Jairam, M.P. (Region No. 2 – Pomeroon/Supenaam)

Cde. C.A. Singh, M.P. (Region No. 3 – Essequibo Islands/West Demerara)

Cde. W. Bipat, J.P., M.P. (Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica)

Cde. H.I. London, M.S., M.P. (Region No. 5 – Mahaica/Berbice)

Cde. I. Chowritmootoo, M.P. (Region No. 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne)

Cde. N.R. Charles, M.P. (Region No. 7 – Cuyuni/Mazaruni)

Cde. D. Abraham, M.P. (Region No. 8 – Potaro/Siparuni)

Cde. D. Hinds, M.P. (Region No. 10 – Upper Demerara/Berbice)

Members of the Minority (12)

(i) People's Progressive Party (10)

Minority Leader (1)

Cde. Dr. C. Jagan, M.P.,
Minority Leader

Deputy Speaker (1)

Cde. Ram Karran, M.P.,
Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly

Other Members (8)

Cde. J. Jagan, M.P. (Absent)

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud, J.P., M.P.,
Minority Chief Whip

Cde. N. Persaud, M.P.

Cde. C.C. Collymore, M.P.

Cde. S.F. Mohamed, M.P.

Cde. I. Basir, M.P.

Cde. C.C. Belgrave, M.P.

Cde. H. Nokta, M.P.

(ii) United Force (2)

Mr. M.F. Singh, C.C.H., J.P., M.P.

Mr. M.A. Abraham, M.P.

OFFICERS

Clerk of the National Assembly - Cde. F.A. Narain, A.A.

Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly – Cde. M.B. Henry

PRAYERS

14:10 hrs

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

The Speaker: Comrades and hon. Member, leave has been granted to Cde. Melville for six weeks from the 9th December and to Mr. Feilden Singh from today until the 8th January, 1984.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS ETC.

The following papers were laid:

- (a) State Pension (LILIAN CHANDISINGH) Order 1983 (No. 49) made under section 4 of the State Pensions Act, Chapter 27:04 on the 18th November, 1983 and published in the Gazette on 1983-11-26.
- (b) State Pension (ELSIE McALMONT) Order 1983 (No. 43) made under section 4 of the State Pensions Act, Chapter 27:04 on the 14th September, 1983, and published in the Gazette on 1983-09-24.
- (c) State Pension (STEVE O'DONOHUE) Order (No. 42) made under section 4 of the State Pension Act, Chapter 27:04 on the 14th September, 1983, and published in the Gazette on 1983-09-24.

QUESTIONS TO MINISTERS

Communication with Aircraft

Cde. Ram Karran: I wish to ask the Vice-President, Social Infrastructure, Question No. 6 standing in my name on the Order Paper, namely:

Is the Vice-President aware that for a very long time air traffic control has not been communicating on high frequency radio with aircraft operating in the Interior which is a legal requirement?

If so, what steps are being taken to rectify this serious breach of safety regulations?

The Vice-President, Social Infrastructure (Cde. Green): Cde. Speaker, the answer is, Yes. It is a requirement that aircraft operating in the Georgetown Flight Information Region (FIR) establish and maintain two-way communication with an Air Traffic Services Unit within this region. This contact is maintained and has always been maintained.

Fowl Pens Built in the Manaica Hospital Compound
the Minister of Health and Public Welfare

Cde. Ram Karran: May I ask/Question No. 7 standing in my name on the Order Paper, namely:

Will the Minister say how many fowl-pens have been built in the Manaica Hospital Compound during the period 1981-1982 showing cost of labour and materials separately?

The Minister of Health and Public Welfare (Cde. Van West-Charles): Cde. Speaker, in relation to Question No. 7, during the period 1981-1982 eight (8) poultry pens 100 ft. by 30 ft. were built. Labour cost was \$33,758.00. Material cost was \$59,097.00. It must be noted that if only new materials were used in the construction, cost for the pens would have exceeded \$200,000.00.

Trips by the Land Rover at the Mahaica Hospital

Cde. Ram Karran: May I ask the Minister of Health and Public Welfare Question No. 8 standing in my name on the Order Paper, namely:

Will the Minister say whether the Land Rover stationed at the Mahaica Hospital is authorised to be in Georgetown three times a week, and what are the reasons for the nocturnal trips?

Cde. Van West-Charles: The Land Rover stationed at Mahaica is authorised to be in Georgetown any day or night whenever the need arises, since it is the only vehicle stationed at Mahaica Hospital and is used for the purpose of conducting most of the Hospital's business.

Cde. Ram Karran: May I ask the Minister a supplementary question? Can he give us the reason for the three nocturnal visits a week? Is the Minister aware of the fact that personnel from the Mahaica Hospital are engaged in karate exercises in Georgetown three times a week?

The Speaker: Cde. Ram Karran, just a minute. As far as I recall the Minister's answer is that the vehicle is in Georgetown night or day whenever the occasion arises. Now, let me hear what is your supplementary question.

Cde. Ram Karran: Will the Minister explain what the vehicle is doing in Georgetown three nights a week and is he aware that personnel from the Mahaica Hospital are engaged in karate exercises in Georgetown with the vehicle and that the vehicle is unavailable in the district for delivery and things of that nature?

National Assembly

14:15 hrs

The Speaker: What he really means is if you are aware that when the vehicle is in Georgetown at nights, it is used for purposes other than the Mahaica Hospital work?

Cde. Van West-Charles: No, Cde. Speaker.

The Speaker: You have to answer Cde. Ram Karran, Cde. Hoyte.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

The Vice-President, Production: (Cde. Hoyte): Cde. Speaker, during the course of last week the Minority Leader telephoned me and asked whether he could have an interview to discuss the Acquisition of Lands (not Beneficially Occupied) Bill, 1983, which was scheduled for its second reading in the National Assembly last Thursday. I suggested to him that it might be a more convenient course to have the Bill adjourned and to hold the discussions with him after the sitting of the Assembly. Pursuant to that undertaking, I applied to have the Bill adjourned and I did hold discussions with the Minority Leader after the adjournment of the Assembly. Those discussions, I thought, were very useful and very cordial; and, on that basis, I undertook to present the views of the Minority Leader to the Government and Members of the Cabinet, and to revert to him and let him know what the reaction of the Government was. Those discussions were held in good faith, and therefore, Cde. Speaker, I was particularly disturbed and perturbed, to read in the Mirror Newspaper of Sunday 11th, December 1983, the following report:

"The People's Progressive Party moves to shelve Land Bill. The controversial Acquisition of Lands not Beneficially Occupied Bill which was scheduled for debate on Thursday was deferred in order to facilitate a discussion on the issue between the PPP and the PNC in the House. The PPP is seeking withdrawal of the Bill and had requested a postponement in order to put its views to the Leading Party. It is understood that the PNC will now, having heard the arguments of the PPP parliamentary group, decide whether or not it will proceed with the Bill."

Cde. Speaker, that publication put me in a very invidious position because I understood the discussions to be proceeding in good faith. I myself, as long as I hold a ministerial position, will always be ready to listen to representations made by members of this House or members of the public on matters affecting my Ministry or my portfolio. However, I am not prepared to be coerced. If I have the slightest impression that any one is attempting to pressure or coerce me, then I will dig my heels in and ignore any representation from such persons.

1983-12-12

14:15 – 14:25 hrs

My first inclination had been to forget the undertaking I had given and to proceed with the Bill today. However, on reflection I think that notwithstanding what I consider to be an act of bad faith on the part of my colleagues on the other side of this house, I would fulfill the undertaking I had given. I would present the views of the PPP parliamentary group to the Government and I would let them know what those views are. But I do deplore this action.

Cde. Ram Karran: Cde. Speaker, --

The Speaker: What head are you going to speak under? Let us call it Personal explanations.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Cde. Ram Karran: Cde. Speaker, I wish to express my regret and the Party's regret for the appearance of that offending article in the Mirror and to assure the hon. Vice-President that as far as my knowledge goes none of the people who had been involved in the discussions had expressed any views. It is my view your honour that the article was written before the actual discussion took place and I was not aware of the fact. The Mirror I think is printed on Friday. I was making enquiries and I found out that the article was written before. I do wish to express our regret, sir, and I hope that the hon. Vice-President will take the matter to the Cabinet with the view to having it discussed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS – FIRST READING

The following Bills were introduced and read the First time:

- (1) Intoxicating Liquor Licensing (Amendment) Bill 1983, Bill No. 26/1983.
- (2) Customs (Amendment) Bill 1983 – Bill No. 27/1983.
- (3) Spirits (Amendment) Bill 1983 – Bill No. 28/1983. /The Minister of Finance and Economic Planning, on behalf of the Government./

PUBLIC BUSINESS

MOTION

APPROVAL OF FINANCIAL PAPER NO. 2/1983

"Be it resolved that this National Assembly approves of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 2/1983 – Schedule of Supplementary Provision on the Current and Capital Estimates totaling \$55,962,956, for the period ended 1983-10-31." /The Minister of Finance and Economic Planning./

1983-12-12

14:15 – 14:25 hrs

The Minister of Finance and Economic Planning: (Cde. Greenidge): Cde. Speaker, in accordance with Article 171:2 of the Constitution, I signify that the Cabinet has recommended for consideration by the Assembly a motion for the approval of proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 2/1983 – Supplementary Estimates, current and Capital for the period ended October 31, 1983 totalling \$55,962,956, and I now move the motion.

1983-12-12

14:25 – 14:35 hrs

National Assembly

14:25 hrs

Motion proposed.

The Chairman: We will consider the Paper as usual, that is, items will be taken from both the Capital and Current Estimates in the order for which the Ministers are reasonable.

Capital Estimates, page 1, items 1, 2, and 3.

Cde. N. Persaud: Cde. Chairman, item 2, Division 506 – Constitutional Agencies, subhead 12,001 – (New) Buildings. I have noted a new subhead for Buildings and they are now asking for the sum of \$560,000. This sum, according to the notes, is to renovate building to be used as office of the Audit Department. This building is situated on High Street in Kingston and anyone who knows this building, despite the cost of materials today, will know that it will not cost more than \$1/2 million to construct a new building to that size. I have passed there on very many occasions and rehabilitation of this building has been going on for a very, very long time. The amount involved there, if I am to understand the notes, is for the renovation.

I would like to enquire from the Minister concerned whether the Government has acquired this building and, if so, how much they have paid for it. Also, is my understanding of the legend correct, that this whole sum is only for the renovation of this building which I consider to be very, very exorbitant.

The Prime Minister: Cde. Chairman, as it is well known, the Audit Department has been a long time in difficult conditions as far as buildings are concerned and even though in the original budget efforts were being made for them to continue in the conditions under which they have laboured for some time, it was found impracticable to do it because the building was threatening to fall at any time. Thus, it was necessary to do something very quickly and so this is before the Assembly for the renovation of the building as well as to get some additional furniture, not only for the building, but for the stations outside of Georgetown.

I am certain that all those who know the situation would agree that there was no opportunity to delay any longer. I am not in any debate about the cost of this exercise. My friend seems to be an architect, a quantity surveyor and all that. But this has been worked through by those experts and technicians and it is only our good sense to accept this so that the building can be fixed properly for future use.

The Chairman: Current Estimates, pages 8 and 9, items 37 to 44. Capital Estimates, page 1, item 4.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Cde. Chairman, I want to speak on Capital Estimates, item 4, Division 510 – Ministry of Agriculture, subhead 46,002 – Assistance to Dairy Farmers. I wish to pose a few questions. I would like to know the kind of assistance being given to dairy farmers, who are the beneficiaries, what is the yardstick used for the assistance. This is a very sensitive area of our potential and everyone will concede the precarious position in so far as milk is concerned. Our own very sincere view is if the dairy farming is properly mobilised and channelled there can be greater production of milk each day. My very reliable information at the moment is that the Milk Pasteurisation Plant ceased functioning and people are not receiving milk currently. We are not opposed to assistance at all but we do not feel whatever funds that are available to the Government to be used in this connection are being properly utilised so that we can get the effective proper benefit that can accrue from dairy farming in Guyana.

The Vice President, Administration: (Cde. Hoyte): Cde. Chairman, the Government has targeted the cattle industry and, more particularly, the dairy industry for very serious attention next year and in the years ahead. There are three aspects of this matter to which I would like to refer this afternoon. First, there is a Ministry programme which has now been conceptualised and the details worked out. This we hope to implement from the beginning of next year. This is a programme which seeks to increase milk production by building upon the experience which we have acquired over the years, the existing cattle population, and the arrangements which people have in place at present for maintaining their herds.

1983-12-12

14:25 – 14:35 hrs

This programme will call for the development of small herds of about five milk cows or so which people will be allowed to keep in their homesteads so that by doing that we do not disturb the traditional pattern and seek to disrupt a way of life which has developed over the years. The second aspect of the project involves creating communal pastures where people who have sizable numbers of cattle. The important thing about this particular aspect of the programme is that we hope the management of these pastures will be undertaken by the cattle owners themselves. Thirdly, we hope to develop commercial farms by people who have a few hundred head of cattle and who have the money and the willingness to make the necessary investment. Fourthly, we will supplement these three above-named projects by establishing or extending state farms which we have.

The second programme concerns a project which is being financed by the Government of Yugoslavia from the Solidarity Fund. Under this project the Government of Yugoslavia will make certain sums available to enable the Livestock Development Company to upgrade the Kingston Milk Plant and to provide some additional infrastructure to ensure that milk which is produced can be efficiently transported and delivered to the consumer.

The third programme is more ambitious in scope. It is a programme which is designed to undertake a serious study of the national potential. This is being financed by the Inter-American Development Bank. Again the Consultants who are undertaking this work are Yugoslavs. Incidentally, both Yugoslav teams are in the country at the moment, the team which will be looking at the Milk Plant and the other facilities required by Lidco to improve its operations and the team which will be looking at the wider project for establishing, on a national basis, our dairy industry in this country.

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

(Cde. D. Hoyte continues)

Now these sums which are being allocated are all in aid of those projects. At the moment very many farmers on their own and many ranchers are attempting to move their cattle from areas which have become too small for them and the Government is assisting them in this exercise.

Only last week I was in the West Berbice area and spoke to a number of cattle owners who were anxious to move their cattle and, indeed, we were able to facilitate them. We permitted some of them to move their cattle even though the formal leases and permissions have not yet been granted. They were doing something which we are interested in having them do and I think that given correct policies, given encouragement, given the necessary support our cattle owners can do a great deal to increase dramatically the production of milk in this country.

The Speaker: Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: I am glad that the Cde. Vice-President raised West Coast Berbice because I am sure he should be aware now that the dairy farmers there were complaining very bitterly about harsh treatment being meted out to them. Like himself, I have visited that area and they were told that arbitrarily that they have to put their cattle miles and miles away from their homestead. We know of the serious crime rate and the fact that the rustlers are there, they are moving away people's cattle by day and by night. I wonder if the Minister will be kind enough to tell us whether a satisfactory solution has been reached whereby these farmers in the area are allowed to keep some of their cattle at home and within a distance that they can supervise at this given period.

Cde. Hoyte: I have been meeting the farmers and ranchers personally. Week before the last, I met a very large group at Bush Lot and many of these matters have been sorted out. As I have said many ranchers want to move from the coast, many ranchers, because their herds have now reached hundreds and the pasturage available for them is inadequate and they recognise this.

1983-12-12

14:35 – 14:45 hrs

In the MMA scheme there is one area – the Kabawer – area which has been set aside for the development of ranches and that is one area where we hope that some of these commercial ranchers will be established. Again we discussed with the MMA officials, the Ministry officials and the farmers the question of developing the left bank of the Abary as one of the main cattle areas, and indeed, last week we decided to commission a survey of the entire area between the Abary and the Mahaicony so that we could have a proper understanding of what lands we have there – a proper understanding of how people are in occupation of those lands. Such occupants are new occupying right now because they are occupying in a haphazard way and we would like, on the basis of that knowledge to design a scheme which would be a reasonable one and which the farmers themselves and ranchers would want to support.

The Speaker: Items 37 – 44.

Cde. N. Persaud: Cde. Chairman, under item 44 we notice supplementary provision of \$500.00 is being sought to provide for repairs to the newly acquired building. My question would be where is this newly acquired building, from whom was it purchased and how much was the purchase price – the building for which we are seeking the \$500.00 for the repairs?

The Speaker: Cde. Hoyte.

Cde. Hoyte: I must confess Cde. Chairman, that this caption is a trifle misleading. It is not newly acquired in the sense that it is newly bought or obtained. The caption refers to the building in Camp Street which used to house the Ministry of Labour. This new Ministry of Manufacturing Industry is accommodated there and required some minor repairs, fixing windows and things like that.

The Speaker: Page one – items 2, 3, and 4 on the current and item 5 on the capital.

Cde. Ram Karran: I refer to item number 2, rental and maintenance of buildings originally provided for by \$555,000 and we are now asking for an additional \$4,420,000 and here I refer to the legend – to provide for the repairs and paintings of Government buildings.

You cannot give your wife money and tell her she has to budget if she has to buy a bangamary and buy blackmarket oil and buy flour and all these things. The House has gone on record Sir, as asking – you yourself have asked that the things be shown separately. Surely a housekeeper would be in a lot of trouble if she has to plan for all these things that the Government is planning here, that is why they run into so much trouble. How much is to be used for painting and where will you get the paint and what repairs, on which building? Surely the Minister cannot come and push this down our throat like that and expect us to pass it. They must tell us in detail. We want some details here.

Cde. Green: Cde. Speaker, we have the responsibility for maintaining all Government buildings. If my good friend requires the kind of minute and profuse detail to which he refers I suppose he can ask the questions separately.

The Speaker: Pages 1 – 8, items 5 – 36.

Cde. Feroze Mohamed: Cde. Chairman, item number 5 here on page one. May I draw the Cde. Minister's attention to today's Chronicle which reported a speech by the Principal of the Critchlow Labour College in which he said that the College is suffering from financial shortage. So grave is the financial situation, the paper reports, that the Critchlow Labour College may now be considering asking students to pay tuition fees. Should this happen I think it would be a retrograde step, moreso as it caters primarily for workers and their children. We think that the Government – and we call upon the Minister to say whether the Government would agree with us to seriously consider an increase in the grant to the Critchlow Labour College in view of the important work that they are doing with workers and to discuss this question fully with a mind to providing an increase grant to the Critchlow Labour College.

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

14:45 hrs

(Cde. Mohamed continues)

I turn to page 4, item No. 14, Expenses Specific to the Agency. Here I wish to ask several questions. First, as I understand it, Mass Games are linked to the promise to distribute uniforms to a particular section, if not all, of the participating students. My information is that students have not received these uniforms to which they are entitled as a result of their participation in the Mass Games this year. If my information is correct, may I ask the Minister why these deserving students did not receive their uniforms and how early they will receive them. Moreover, if, possibly, they have received uniforms, whether that money is reflected within this huge amount that is now being requested.

Secondly, in view of the teeming problems that today affect the education system, may I ask the Minister whether consideration will be given to discontinuing this particular exercise or, at least, suspending it and perhaps later, when Guyana enters better times, it can be reconsidered. This is also pertinent to the fact that the popularity of Mass Games is still questionable in the country today.

Thirdly, will the Minister explain what measures have been taken to provide lessons to those children who have suffered as a consequence of their participation in the Mass Games this year. If measures have been taken I would like to find out whether these measures have been monitored to ensure that they have been effective and that the students who have lost their studies by participating in the Mass Games have benefitted or, at least, have had their losses reduced.

Fourthly, in view of the fact that food problems in Guyana have particularly hit hardest the children in Guyana, whether the Minister and Government will seriously consider diverting the huge sums spent on Mass Games to provide milk for children especially the hard-pressed children in our schools. The Minister may recall that earlier this year I sent a letter to this effect but without receiving a reply. An opportunity now appears for me to repeat that call at this particular moment in Guyana.

Page 7, item 32, Head 45 – Secondary School/Multilateral and Community High Schools, subhead 104 – Other Technical and Craft – Skilled. Here, Cde. Chairman, may I remind you that we have consistently advocated for an increase in teachers' salaries and you may also recall that during the Budget Debate I did make a call for that increase. It is good that the Government has agreed to offer increases to teachers. However, it should also be noted that the increases in salaries to teachers have been accompanied by a high degree of dissatisfaction, a dissatisfaction that stems from the compulsory character of the savings schemes that have been implemented. In fact, there seems to be confusion around investment in these schemes. Some feel that it is compulsory while others feel that it is not. We would like to ask the Minister to clear the air for us on this score. However, from all indications, reports and information received, it would appear as if the schemes are being operated as if they are compulsory because deductions are being made from the increases given to teachers, thus compounding or adding –

The Chairman: I do not want to stop you but I think you raised this question before and I think Cde. Hoyte gave you an answer, namely, that the schemes are not compulsory, they are voluntary. You are therefore repeating the same thing to see if you can get a different answer.

Cde. Mohamed: That question I want to clear. Thank you, Cde. Chairman. Now, I make the second point. Since Cde. Hoyte explained earlier that the schemes are not compulsory, then can the Minister explain why deductions are being made from teachers' salaries at this moment even though teachers –

The Chairman: That is not the whole of the answer that Cde. Hoyte gave. He also went on to say that they are making voluntary contributions and, if they agree, naturally the deductions will be made. That is the point the Vice President made.

Cde. Mohamed: If you permit me. I am making a different point here and it is that deductions –

The Chairman: I permit you, but not to repeat.

Cde. Mohamed: Deductions are being made at this moment. Teachers have not been given a form to say "I want these deductions made." A form is required. That form has not been received in spite of the fact that deductions are made. Therefore, the Minister ought to give some clarification because it is a concern of teachers country-wide.

Why are the forms not given? Why are deductions made? How can the Minister determine whether a particular teacher prefers a scheme which will be initialled D.I.A., H.I.A. or P.R.A./ R.I.A. if they have not been given the form which will determine what scheme they prefer and whether they want to contribute to any of the schemes. I think therefore the Minister ought to give some clarification because many of the teachers want to know what is happening to the money the Ministry is deducting at this particular moment.

The Minister of Education, Social Development and Culture: (Cde. Chandisingh):
Cde. Chairman, there are several questions which require answers and I will begin in the order in which they were asked.

With respect to the Critchlow Labour College, the statement was made that in today's "Guyana Chronicle" the Principal of C.L.C. has referred to certain financial problems. This is item 5, page 1, Head 40 – Ministry of Higher Education. I am aware that the Critchlow Labour College has suffered problems with respect to its financial allocation. Earlier this year the Ministry allocated a certain sum of money to Critchlow Labour College which was admittedly well below the amount that has been allocated in the past. This, however, was based upon the understanding that the College itself and perhaps the T.U.C. would find some ways and means, in common with many other agencies similarly affected by the financial stringencies, to help toward greater self-financing. Discussions were held with the Principal and other officials of the Critchlow Labour College with a view of even making suggestions as to how fund-raising efforts could be made. This was not something unusual because it applied to several other agencies which normally receive allocations and grants.

However, it appears that in the process of examining the possibilities for financing we were informed that the authorities of the Critchlow Labour College were unable to provide any substantial funds on their own and therefore an appeal was made for the restoration of the further amounts which would enable the College to continue its very good work.

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(Cde. Chandisingh continues)

Based upon these requests and having exhausted all the other possibilities, assistance was provided to the Critchlow Labour College and the amount which is being asked for under supplementary provision here is a further indication of the recognition given to the fact that the Critchlow Labour College has experienced these difficulties and must continue, and that the Government is very appreciative, to say the least, of the role of the Critchlow Labour College and the good work it is doing. So every effort is being made within the general financial limits to help the Critchlow Labour College to meet its obligations and its responsibilities to the labour movement and to the community at large.

Now with respect to Mass Games, that is on item 14. May I say by way of providing some clarification, that the amount shown under voted provision, that is, \$1 million under the subhead 301 – expenses specific to the agency – this amount is not entirely for Mass Games. As a matter of fact, in the preparation of the Estimates for this year, the Division of Youth and Sport falls within the Ministry of Education, Social Development and Culture. So the provision for that division – the Division of Youth and Sport – is taken care of under this voted provision of \$1 million. The amount that was allocated for Mass Games from that \$1 million, was \$500,000 and so the additional provision now sought should be added to that \$500,000.

Now, Cde. Chairman, Cde. Feroze Mohamed asked about some linkage of distribution of uniforms with Mass Games participants. Well, I am not aware of any undertaking, certainly not on a continuing basis, of providing school uniforms for Mass Games participants, since this exercise, this area of activity in the school curricula is expected eventually to reach out to all students. The reason it has not done so at this point in time is because obviously, it has just begun and it takes some time and facilities and so on in order to expand that programme. So that the short answer is that I am not aware of any undertaking to that effect – the continuing distribution of School uniforms to Mass Games participants. What has happened is that costumes are purchased.

Much of the expenditure involved goes towards the purchase of costumes for the Mass Games physical displays and what the Ministry has done is to allow the participants to retain certain items, particularly the shoes that have been purchased –the yachting shoes. These have been given to the students after they have been used. But the costumes by and large are usually retained in order to save on future presentations, so that they can be readjusted wherever possible to fit for future Mass Games performances.

Now the hon. Member referred to a huge amount being asked for. In this respect I would also like for his information to let him know that a very large portion of the expenditure of Mass Games or Mass Games preparation is devoted to providing meals and snacks for the thousands of children who participate in the practical exercises. As you know, for Mass Games 1983 which was held earlier this year, we started by providing snacks. And then out of concern for the well being of these children who at that stage spent practically all day at the National Park. We were concerned about their well being and so decided to increase the quantity and quality of food provided to the children. So this in itself accounts, as far as I can recall, for a large portion of the supplementary that is now being sought.

Another question had to do with whether consideration is being given or would be given to discontinue Mass Games for the time being until better times – better times financially, and also that in view of the fact that he still alleges that there are still unpopuliarities associated with it. But, Cde. Chairman, my response to that is that no consideration is being given to the discontinuance of Mass Games even temporarily. What we are attempting to do is to introduce certain measures - which as we go along we gain experience, we have learned from experience - to try to improve not to lessen the cost by reducing say the amount spent on food, but to improve the quality of a balanced diet and so on. And furthermore, we seek as far as possible to utilise our funds and resources as frugally as possible. Another aspect of it that I would like to inform the Member of is that, you know, some people tend to see Mass Games as a show. But Mass Games really, or what we call Mass Games – you can call it any other name as you wish, some countries call it Mass Gymnastics displays and so on – comprise the elements that go to make up what we call Mass Games – music, dance, gymnastics, drama, history, development of consciousness among the children themselves, parents and teachers, and all of these elements we think are very important for the development of our young people.

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(Cde. Chandisingh continues)

Therefore we should not just see Mass Games as what we see at the National Park. This is just a culmination of what we are introducing in the school system. It is not something new either because physical education has been there for some time. What we are doing in Mass Games is bringing together in an integrated way these disciplines so that we can help to develop the all-round personality of our children. Without taking much more time on this matter I want to emphasise the great importance to the upbringing of our children that Mass Games holds for us. That is why we are seeking to extend the elements of Mass Games to more and more schools and children throughout the country. That is the ultimate objective even though we have not been able to implement it fully at any one particular point in time.

Another direction in which we are moving is to reduce the amount of time that is taken in addition to the normal school timetable and syllabus. And so this year in preparation for the 1984 Mass Games certain syllabuses have been introduced at least in those schools which will participate; Georgetown, East Coast, East Bank, West Coast, West Bank Demerara and even on the Corentyne. The training is going on even at school during what may be called co-curricula periods. Therefore, the time that will be taken for more intensive training at the National Park will be considerably reduced compared with what has happened in the past. As I said, as we go along we are developing more and more our technique.

So far as lessons to those who may have suffered, as Cde. Mohamed puts it, are concerned, the Ministry has looked at this and has been taking steps to strive as far as possible to ensure that the children have lessons which would help them to catch up, as it were. I would just like to give one experience I had. I had a conversation with the head of one of our leading schools. I was personally investigating this matter and he told me that he found in his school, by virtue of the way in which the teachers join together as a team to organise the lessons and so on, that the children who participated in Mass Games did better at the examinations that were held subsequently than those who had not taken part or even comparing with another group on another occasion.

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His explanation for this was that participation in the exercise brings out not only physical, but mental alertness, developing that faculty in young people so that when they came back to school their efforts were greater in learning. The teachers verified this and found that they had benefited as a result of their participation in Mass Games. I am not going to try to say in this Assembly that in every school this is what happened because we know that in some schools the teaching is better organised than in others. But from the Ministry's point of view and a follow-up through Education Officers, we seek to ensure that these lessons are given. In time to come my expectation is that these extra lessons or catch-up lessons would not even be necessary because of the way in which the whole preparation for Mass Games will be organised.

Some people say it is unpopular. Okay. But a lot of innovations and a lot of new things which are good for this nation tend not to be appreciated by some people until they have an opportunity of really seeing the value of the innovation. Thus my impression is that a lot of people are not opposed to Mass Games as such or the training which their children receive. Some of them through their P.T.A. etc., have offered us useful suggestions in order to seek to improve the organisation of Mass Games and so on. Therefore, that is my answer to those questions.

Cde. Feroze Mohamed also referred to food problems and asked whether we will consider diverting funds to provide milk for children. I have already given you my answer on the question of Mass Games as such. It is known, and I repeat it here, that the Ministry of Education has been conducting school feeding programmes for the nursery children. Not only skimmed milk which we receive through the World Food Programme is being provided, but some of the liquid milk from Lidco has been used particularly in the Georgetown area. There were periods when there might have been certain shortages so the milk might not have been given every day. But this problem has been resolved and my information is that milk is being distributed on a regular basis to nursery schools all over this country. One would appreciate the big task that this involves.

I would like to indicate, too, since we are talking about food, that one of the big innovations which has been reported already in the media that holds a lot of promise for the country as a whole has to do with the recent efforts made through the Ministry and

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Conbisco and the G.P.C. to produce sweet biscuits for the nursery school feeding programme composed entirely of rice flour as the main ingredient. Not a bit of wheaten flour is included. Also included, of course, will be items like sugar and fats and so on. But this is another innovation that I think we ought to take note of and, in a sense, be proud of because all along we have people who come up and say this cannot be done or you have to do it only in this way. We have found out of necessity, so to speak, that we were able, through the enthusiasm of a few people who put their minds and their hearts to it, using different formulas and different processes, to turn out a product which is acceptable. After several trials, errors and failures, within a matter of days in this case they came up with a sweet biscuit produced mainly from rice flour. These biscuits are now being distributed on a pilot basis for testing the acceptability in the nursery schools. Perhaps it would be very useful to bring some for the Members here to sample.

Cde. Chairman, it is significant that in the past when we said flour we meant only one thing. When we said flowers we meant the beautiful flowers. But now the very fact that when we speak we make particular reference to the type of flour is in itself a significant development to show what our people can do once we set out minds to be self-reliant.

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(Cde. R. Chandisinh continues)

Comrades, I took the opportunity to inform the honourable members on the Minority of this development and let us note, friends, that in some cases we cannot say 'either or' but we have to move simultaneously because we cannot afford to do without one thing in order to supply another thing. But this is our position at this time.

Increased salaries, item 32. Cde. Feroze Mohamed alleged that with the increased salaries which I am glad to say that he recognised as a very positive development - but with the increased salaries went a certain dis-satisfaction over savings scheme and he asked whether it is compulsory or not. To answer this question let me say this - these savings schemes or deferred income as I understand them are voluntary and any employee can join one or the other of these schemes. In this particular instance you may recall that the Government had recognised the need for teachers to have increases in salaries and this was even mentioned when Vice President Hoyte introduced the budget since last year. But at the time it was not found possible to implement the agreement or the payment to teachers because of the state of the economy. And so earlier this year around about April the Guyana Teachers Association and the Ministry of Education on behalf of Government entered into discussions on the method of implementation of the agreement - that is, the discussions were to find ways and means of honouring the agreement to pay the teachers but at the same time recognising Government's inability to pay in cash immediately all the total amount of salaries so as a result of those discussions there was a package agreement and as far as I am aware the forms have been given to teachers. My information is that forms for all three schemes have been sent to the heads of schools so that teachers could opt for one or the other and again according to my information they have been responding in that way, So that therefore is my answer to that question and I hope I have answered or at least tried to answer the questions asked.

Cde. C. Jagan: Cde. Speaker, the Minister gave us some additional details on the question of this scheme of payment of teachers and he was trying to elaborate a bit further on what the Vice President had said previously. I would like to get from him very precisely what is meant by compulsory. The word is going around that the scheme is not compulsory. Does that mean that the teacher does not have to pay if he does not want to or does it mean the teacher only has the option of deciding on one of the three schemes. That is what we will like to know very clearly - that has not yet been made clear.

Cde. Chandisingh: I would explain again Cde. Chairman, that while the schemes as such, generally speaking are voluntary, there was a package agreement in the discussions held between the Ministry and the Guyana Teachers Association which concluded that the teachers would contribute to the schemes in order to enable the Government to fulfill its obligation to the teachers. So that was an agreement reached in this particular case between the Government and the Union on behalf of teachers.

Cde. C. Jagan: The teachers have clearly stated that they were not adequately consulted by the Union and the Union negotiated this and consequently that no where the question of compulsion comes in. From the way we understood it, although the Teachers Association negotiated this with the Government, it is understood that the Union members still had the right to decide whether they want to go into the scheme and if so having decided to elect to go into the scheme to elect which one, but we are told that the thing is voluntary and yet at the same time it is compulsory.

The Speaker: Page 10, item 56; page 1, item 1; page 9, items 45 and 46 and page 2, items 6 - 8.

Cde. N. Persaud: Cde. Chairman, on page nine, item 45 \$2,500,000 supplementary provision now being sought to meet payments for retrenched workers and re-imbusement to the Transport and Harbours Department for payment of pensions and gratuities.

My question to the Minister is what portion of this money is

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to meet payments to retrenched workers and (2)

for how many retrenched workers?

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On page 2, item 8, National Projects. The sum of \$15 million is being sought under this Supplementary Provision, which is "additional provision, to pay Bidco and other Corporations for bauxite and other items exported under Government to Government counter trade for goods to be used on national projects and otherwise. My questions are: (1) What are the other corporations apart from Bidco involved? (2) What are the other items exported? (3) What are the values for each corporation? (4) What are the goods that are being imported to be used on national projects and otherwise?

The Chairman: Cde. Greenidge.

The Minister of Finance and Economic Planning (Cde. Greenidge): Cde. Chairman, if I might answer the questions in the order in which they were put. First of all, referring to item 45 on page 9, Pensions and Gratuities, "To meet payments to retrenched workers" The amount going to the retrenched workers - the amount rather than the proportion - is \$2.2 million. The number of workers I do not have at hand.

Secondly, in relation to the questions on Capital Estimates, page 2, items 5 to 9, the corporations involved in the counter-trade arrangements were many. In addition to Bidco, there would also have been the Guyana Rice Board, Guysuco and some other corporations involved in smaller transactions. The other items exported, in addition to bauxite, would similarly ^{have been} rice, sugar, pharmaceuticals, rum and that sort of thing.

Finally, the goods we obtained in exchange for those items were cement, steel and commodities used on a variety of agricultural and construction projects. They were mainly capital inputs for the public sector projects.

Cde. Dr. Jagan: Cde. Chairman, with regard to the last item on what is called "counter-trade", there was an interesting article yesterday in the "Sunday Chronicle" about trade between Guyana and Dominica and what was very surprising to me was the statement - I do not know how true it is - that the last shipment made officially by the Guyana Rice Board to Dominica was in 1981 and the previous shipment before that was in 1979. I would like to ask the Minister whether he is aware that this country had a rice agreement before Caricom came into being - and

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presumably there was a similar agreement under Caricom – that as long as Guyana can supply rice to any Caribbean country it is bound to buy from here within the Treaty of Caricom. Therefore, how is it we are now rereading in the "Sunday Chronicle" that the last official shipment of rice was in 1981. Does that mean that the people in Dominica have stopped eating rice altogether since 1981? Why is it? What were we doing all the time? Were we sleeping? Were we not pursuing this matter to see that they take their relevant quota or make their relevant purchases from Guyana?

Cde. Greenidge: Cde. Chairman, I think the Cde. Vice-President would like to take this one if he may.

The Vice-President, Production: (Cde. Hoyte): Cde. Chairman, I think that even the Minority Leader would know that you cannot compel anybody to buy anything. It is true that there is a Caricom Agreement. It is true that there is an obligation between the members to facilitate Caricom trade and to purchase from one another but the fact of the matter is that many of these arrangements have been disrupted through the intervention of the United States of America. For example, our rice market in Jamaica has been virtually eliminated by the supply to Jamaica by the United States of America of rice under PL 480 even though PL 480 agricultural produce, by the very United States law, is not intended to supplant traditional trade. It is intended to be an additionality. But these are the facts of life. We are dealing with an exercise of power. There is no way that anybody can do anything about it vis-à-vis the political developments that are taking place in the Caribbean, whether one considers the Caribbean as Caricom or whether one looks at it in the wider context of the so-called "Caribbean Basin." I think it is important that Members of this Assembly take note of what in fact has been happening as the regional integration movement more and more is being subjected to extra-regional attack and its institutions and arrangements are being eroded.

Cde. Dr. Jagan: When the P.P.P. was in the Government I was faced, on one occasion, with this same problem. In 1964, I think it was, or earlier than that, the Jamaicans were buying packaged rice, Uncle Ben rice, from the United States and other places. I remember that with Rice Marketing Board officials we took our packaged rice, put it on a piece of white paper along with Uncle Ben rice and showed them.

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They admitted that ours was superior in quality and they were forced to buy from Guyana. If they were forced to buy under the P.P.P. Government, then what is happening now? What is the benefit of being in Caricom if we cannot sell to them. The only thing we are selling to Caricom is rice and we have to buy cement, fertilisers and all kinds of things at excessive prices when they can be bought from other places at cheaper prices.

Cde. Hoyte: It is remarkable that the Minority Leader –

The Chairman: Do you allow these questions to go on?

Cde. Hoyte: It is important that the point be explained. PL 480 rice is not bought. It is rice provided under a long-term arrangement under such concessionary terms that it is virtually a grant. So the rice is being given to the Seaga Government.

The Chairman: Cde. Hoyte, did we not also take some positive action in protesting when Jamaica was given rice under PL 480?

Cde. Hoyte: We did protest but I would say that we are dealing with a political power. Do we have gun boats to send to Jamaica and tell them to buy our rice?

The Chairman: Pages 9 and 10, items 47 to 55.

Comrades and hon. Member, this completes consideration of all the items. I will now put the Motion which is that the Committee of Supply.

"That the Committee of Supply approves of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 2/1983 – Schedule of Supplementary Provision on the Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$55,962,956 for the period ended 1983-10-31."

Agree to.

Assembly resumed.

Cde. Greenidge: Cde. Chairman, I have to report that the Committee of Supply has approved of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 2/1983 and passed it without amendment. I now move that this Assembly doth agree with the Committee's Resolution.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

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BILLS – SECOND AND THIRD READINGS

DRAINAGE AND IRRIGATION BOARD (TRANSFER OF FUNCTIONS) BILL 1983

A Bill intituled:

"An Act to provide for the dissolution of the Drainage and Irrigation Board, the transfer of its functions to certain Regional Democratic Councils and for related matters." /The Vice-President, Production./

Cde. Hoyte: Cde. Speaker, this Bill seeks to decentralise the functions of the Drainage and Irrigation Board, --

The Speaker: I think you are going to defer the other Bill?

Cde. Hoyte: Yes, Cde. Speaker, and devolve upon the Local Authorities that is the Regional Democratic Councils, the powers and functions hitherto vested in the Drainage and Irrigation Board. The existing Board was established in 1940 and it had the responsibility for establishing drainage and irrigation areas, developing Drainage and Irrigation systems and managing those systems. It suffered from a number of defects, the most important of which I believe is the fact that it was a centralized body attempting to deal with Drainage and Irrigation problems all over this country. It proceeded in a haphazard way and it was responsible for administering some 34 drainage and irrigation areas in different parts of the country. The drainage and irrigation areas tended to have been developed in a very haphazard way, some of them were large, some of them were small. In fact, some of these areas came into being sometimes on the initiative of the Government, and sometimes as a result of representation made by farmers and other persons in rural areas. Over the years, the Board became more and more inefficient and it has become clear that a centralized body cannot really deal adequately with drainage and irrigation matters in the various parts of this country. The decision was, therefore, taken Cde. Speaker, to decentralise the functions of the Board and invest them in the Regional Democratic Councils. Now this move has a number of advantages.

First of all, it is in keeping with the policy of the Government to decentralize decision making and responsibility for managing and developing the various areas of this country. It will enable a greater degree of accountability in that farmers will not be dealing now with some remote central entity but with people in their own particular region who they know well and who have a responsibility under the law for dealing with drainage and irrigation. Most important of all, I think, Cde. Speaker, is the fact that there will be the opportunity, and I think it is a wonderful opportunity to benefit from the advice and the involvement of the very farmers who will benefit from the systems which have to be maintained and which will be developed over time. The Bill itself makes provision for the transfer of assets, the transfer of rights, and the transfer of liabilities in the usual way. There is one point, however, to which I would like to draw attention and that is the various clauses of the Bill which provide for the state to assume responsibility for some of the liabilities of the Drainage and Irrigation Board so that the new councils will not start off hamstrung so to speak by liabilities which have been incurred by the old Drainage and Irrigation Board. I think, Cde. Speaker, that the Bill is simplicity itself in that it seeks to do something which surely is laudable. It surely will be beneficial and given good will and an interest in working the new system properly, we ought to get greater advantage accruing to the country and to our agricultural sector as a result of decentralisation of devolution which the Bill will be providing for.

Question proposed.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Cde. Speaker, I would just like to make a few observations. The Vice-President will not deny the sensitivity of this area and the need for a rational approach to drainage and irrigation in the country. He spoke of the involvement of the farmers. One can only hope and expect that that will be translated into reality, because our experience has been and still is that in all these areas there has been invariably more imposition than consultation. Many many areas are suffering greatly and gravely because of the absence of drainage and irrigation and more so because of poor drainage and irrigation. We do not oppose the principles of these centralisations but we are compelled and forced to make the point that even those who constitute the regional bodies do not represent the will and aspirations of the people. Of course, I will speak a little bit more on that point in another Bill.

While the Bill itself – actions or litigations that have been started in the courts, I would like to know whether those litigations will now be taken care of by the Regional Councils?

According to the Bill, I assume from my interpretation of the Bill and examining it in conjunction with the principal act that the section – no need for clarification – which deal with the right of the farmer to claim compensation in case of loss and damages will still remain a part of the statute, as one would expect, hence the farmers will continue to enjoy the right to sue the Regional Council because there might be some provision somewhere or the other which I have not found, I hope it does not exist, where action cannot be taken against the L.D.C. That is my fear at this moment. The Minister will be in a better position to answer that, but examining the Bill itself in relation to the act I see that those provisions which entitle the farmers to take action for compensation are still there and have not been deleted or amended. I notice apart from the Regional bodies being directly involved with the Minister himself, it continues to have a great say in the administration of drainage and irrigation because the Council, I supposed, will now do exactly as the Board used to do – report to the Minister and if necessary he takes positive action to ensure that we avoid any disaster which the farmers on so many occasions had to face and in so many cases without compensation. Those are our observations at this point. We were saying that the farmers should have been on the Board, they are not. They are not in the Councils at the moment and one can only expect there will be some device, some mechanism where the farmers can play a more direct role in the process of drainage and irrigation in the country.

Cde. Hoyte: Cde. Speaker, I wish to assure my friend, Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud that the Bill does not take away any rights. If he would look at paragraph 4 of clause 3, he will see that that paragraph makes provision for actions to continue against the Regional Councils, except in certain cases so that all the statutory and common law rights which the farmers and other citizens had against the old Board, they will continue to have.

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(Cde. Hoyte continues)

As I said, you can set up any number of institutions and you can organise them in any way you think fit. They are not going to function unless people are involved, particularly the people for whose benefit these institutions have been established. I myself have been a strong and unapologetic advocate of decentralisation and the devolution of authority on various regions in this country. I have already seen the involvement of farmers. It is expected that these Regional Democratic Councils will set up a number of committees of themselves, an important one of which would be the Committee dealing with agriculture and, more specifically, with drainage and irrigation matters.

About two weeks ago I was on the West Coast of Demerara, and I saw what was a most remarkable development. It only shows what can happen if we give people an opportunity to do the things which they really want to do for themselves. I found there that the Boerasirie Land Development Society had undertaken to rehabilitate the drainage and irrigation systems in that area where its members were farming, and the society did a marvelous job. My proposal to the Regional Democratic Council was that it should consider two things: first, pay the Co-operative Society for the work which it had done, because normally it should have been a responsibility of the Drainage and Irrigation Board and, secondly, consider the possibility of employing the Society to carry out the maintenance works on behalf of the Council in that area. I am sure that, through self-interest alone, the Society will do a very good job. The Members will be working for themselves and for their own benefit. Thank you Cde. Speaker.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Assembly in Committee.

Clauses 1 to 6 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Schedule.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: With your permission, Cde. Chairman, I have one short question on the Schedule, page 6. The amount is increase for construction work etc from \$10,000 to \$100,000. That is understandable. The Regional Council is expected under that provision to have certain plans drawn up but whatever the job with respect to estimate and everything it would be kept in the office and open for inspection for one month. There is an area which needs consideration. The people who are involved will not be aware of the construction work. When the original Act was drafted the sum was \$10,000 and we were talking of a small area, a little District Council. Here we are talking about a Regional Council and that definitely will involved several districts. One would have expected in this amendment a provision to make it public by some kind of publication to say that new construction work is to be undertaken to the extent of 'X' dollars. It will help to save corruption because you can have the emergence of little czars in all these areas doing all kinds of things. I think in the interest of the nation and the legislation itself there should be some provision, whereby it will be made public to alert the people concerned to go and inspect and be involved in the process.

Cde. Hoyte: Cde. Chairman, I think that this provision has to be read in conjunction with the procedures of the old Drainage and Irrigation Board which combined the Councils under the Local Democratic Organs Act. When works of this kind are going to be undertaken they will have to be advertised so that members of the public who have an interest can represent that interest, whatever the interest might be.

Schedule agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Assembly resumed.

Bill reported to the Assembly, read the Third time and passed.

The Speaker: It is six minutes to four. I take it that the Assembly will agree that we proceed with the other Bill until we are completed.

Comrades and hon. Members indicated in the affirmative.

The Speaker: Cde. Corbin.

MUNICIPAL AND DISTRICT COUNCILS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1983

A Bill intituled:

"An Act to amend the Municipal and District Councils Act." /The Minister of National Mobilisation./

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The Minister of National Mobilisation: (Cde. Corbin): Cde. Speaker, according to Section 11, Chapter 28:01, as obtains at the present time, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor in office on the day of elections of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor for the ensuing years shall be eligible for election. But under this proviso it states very clearly that the persons eligible for re-election would not be eligible if they have served three terms. All this piece of legislation is seeking to do is to make a slight amendment to Chapter 28:01, Section 11, to facilitate the persons being elected to be eligible for five consecutive terms.

There are also some amendments which are standing in my name as well. One of those amendments seeks to facilitate this piece of legislation coming into effect from the 1st December, 1983. It also seeks to have a third Clause which would change the date on which this election should be held. It should be held by the 23rd rather than on the 16th December.

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(Cde. R. Corbin continues)

Cde. Speaker, as we are well aware since the introduction of the New Constitution and the establishment of Local Democratic Councils efforts have been made and are being made to give people full involvement in decision making. The term for the Regional Democratic Council stretches over a period of election to Parliament, that is five years as presently obtains and it is proposed too that with the establishment of the other sectors of Local Democratic Organs that this same policy will follow.

It is also the intention of the Government to ensure that the other sectors of Local Democratic Organs are established as early as possible so as to give the entire people full opportunity for expression through these new organs of Local Democratic power.

This piece of legislation Cde. Speaker, simply seeks to put in line the term of office five years into Parliament, five years for election to the Regional Democratic Council and for the same rule to apply for Town Councils, whether it is in Georgetown or elsewhere that the period will be the same so there will be no disparity in the periods for election to office. As we are well aware the Local Democratic Organs are also governed by the amended Municipal and District Council's Act, this very chapter 28:01. I therefore, see no great complication to this amendment Cde. Speaker, and I would therefore like to commend it to the House and Assembly and beg to move the Second Reading.

Question proposed.

The Speaker: Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Cde. Speaker, I hope after the Cde. Minister would have heard me that he would see not complication but the seriousness of this Bill.

While Chapter 11 permits a Mayor to continue for three consecutive years, section 23 of the very Act provides for elections of the Council to be held every three years. The history is that elections were last held in the year 1970. While the Local Democratic Organs Act makes provision for the office of Chairman and Deputy and for the Council in totality to continue for a period of five years equating with Parliament, the provision there is elections must be held also every five years.

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No matter how eloquent a Minister is, no matter how brief he is and if he possesses the power of persuasion such a Minister will not succeed this afternoon in persuading or moving anybody into accepting a situation where powers are going to be extended, terms of office are going to be extended for the institution that has continued for thirteen years without going to the people. It is abundantly clear that the Mayor, Deputy and the entire Council does not have the mandate of the people. It is an imposition on the people and what should be done if such an amendment is contemplated to first and foremost to hold elections and to then bring the argument which the Minister adduced in the Parliament this afternoon. In those circumstances the Opposition can do no less than record its strongest protest and opposition to this measure and to take the opportunity now to call upon the Minister and the Government to hold Municipality and Local District and Councils elections throughout the country.

This Bill, Sir, is not confined to the municipality, it extends to all the Councils, Districts and Village Councils. Chapter 28:01 is still alive and in operation. In many areas of this country many of the District Councils have been appointed during my term of office in this Parliament. I recall advocating very strongly on behalf of the P.P.P. for the abolition of the Local Government Board. That was an appointed body. It had colonial orientation and what have you, but we continue in this country in 1983 to have not a Board appointed but many District Councils throughout this country appointed and administering areas in this country.

Where is the democratisation? Where is the serious decentralisation? Where is evidence of involvement of the people? There questions cannot be answered and so Cde. Speaker, we have lived through a period of history where this Parliament passed amendments to allow political parties when the list which was exposed to the electorate were exhausted for persons whose names never appeared on the list to be appointed in these bodies. The possibility strongly exist as things are that people can be appointed Chairman and Deputy Chairman, Mayor and Deputy in the many Town Councils or City Councils, Town areas, District and Village areas who have never been exposed to the electorates of this country.

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The Government talks about the coming of the New Constitution. I would not bother this afternoon to indulge in any dialogue as to how the constitution came into being, but I make the point, where is the provision in the constitution to say that elections must not be held? Where is the provision in the constitution? While the City Councils, New Amsterdam and Georgetown, have not held elections for thirteen years the position is worse in so far as the District and Village Councils are concerned. In many of those areas it would be longer than thirteen years, I was very much on the scene in 1970 and I was also involved in that campaign and was at the counting at Queen's College that night and I recall very vividly that very few areas were involved and that is talking about Village Councils, District Councils; Sheet Anchor and Leguan – not more than two or three councils and the greater number of Councils continue in office from before 1970 until 1983. We have not seen the end Cde. Speaker, of the Local Democratic Organs Act. This Act makes provision not simply for the establishment of the Regional Councils but the Act goes beyond that when it talks about neighbourhood and what have you.

The white paper has it, the Minister is aware. Where is the mechanism and when the decision will be made for these other bodies that will go to translate their own constitution into reality? When these mechanisms will be brought? When elections are going to be held for these bodies so we have a situation in so far as local democracy, if I am permitted to define it that way, when local democracy is examined in the context of Guyana the position is that is non-existence.

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What has been the net result? The net result has been poor, or no, production. There is a serious economic crisis. There is a serious migration rate. There is the development of fear and insecurity. Unless and until these sensitive areas are corrected and we move towards genuine freedom and democracy in this country, Guyana will continue to suffer economically. We on this side have always been patriotic. We on this side have always been principled. We on this side, that is, the People's Progressive Party, sometimes even with what can be interpreted as some degree of public opposition, once it is a matter which hinges on the sovereignty, the independence, the development of the people, any act or action that goes towards the general well-being and welfare of the people of this country, have been dynamic and outspoken and have come out in support of such measures.

Those of us who speak for the People's Progressive Party in this Assembly have a duty to the people, have a duty to this country and our duty is more imposing when there is glaring and manifest evidence of serious encroachment on the rights of the people of this country. I would like to suggest strongly that not to hold elections in all the areas that I have named and more specifically to bring a Bill to extend the term of office of mayors is disgraceful to say the least. One of my colleagues is suggesting that it is reprehensible.

I want to call on the Government at this point in time to withdraw this Bill. Is it that within the numbers that remain in the many bodies throughout the country, including the City Council and Town Councils, new faces cannot be found to take on the offices of Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Chairman, Vice-Chairman? Is it that whatever talent was there has been exhausted? There have been a number of statements emanating from well-known advocates in the local government areas - I am speaking of Cde. McGowan and so on - that when they call these bodies together they cannot get a quorum. This happens in many of the councils throughout the country. Leguan, for example, on many occasions could not hold statutory meetings because of the absence of a quorum.

We have a serious situation in our local democratic institutions. There is only one way to correct it and that is to provide an opportunity for new blood to come in, to provide an opportunity for the people to pronounce and to provide

an opportunity for the people to be profoundly involved in the process of local democracy in this country.

We have had cause on several occasions in this Parliament to extend the life of these councils and I think the last Bill that came and was passed by the Government majority prevented the Government members from facing that embarrassment every year. They do not have to come each year and say, "We have to amend the law to allow the continuation in office of certain persons." Now, they are faced with a new embarrassment and that is to allow people who have been there to continue for longer periods.

As I said, the P.P.P. has been principled, has been objective. We have always placed the interest of the people of this country first in all our considerations. I say this afternoon that our criticism of this measure is more than justified. In the circumstances, the P.P.P. cannot support this measure but strongly opposes it and will this afternoon record its vote in protest of the deliberate continuation in office of all these persons whose terms of office have expired long, long ago. The persons have probably now been infiltrated with inertia. The vision is not there; the dynamism is not there; the spirit is not there and probably the will is not there to continue to give the kind of representation. The honesty is probably not there. We want elections in all these areas and we want these elections to be fair and free. We want these elections to be conducted in conformity with the provisions of the law so that the true representatives of the people can occupy these various positions in the city council, the town councils, the district and village councils throughout the country. Cde. Speaker, we oppose the Bill.

Cde. Dr. Jagan: Cde. Speaker, it is a truism that democracy is synonymous with development. What we are dealing with here is not just a quantitative question: How long must a person serve, whether it is three years or five years. What we have to deal with is a question of quality, content. We did not hear anything about that.

Only a few days ago we had a talk with the Prime Minister and this matter came up. People are fundamental. We can talk about plans; we can talk about inputs; we can talk about a lot of factors. I reminded the Prime Minister that

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when Professor Arthur Lewis was brought here as Economic Adviser he put forward a thesis that what Third World countries needed was good managers and if you have good managers, coupled with money, then the problem is solved. Well, we had good managers. Unfortunately many with skills are leaving the country. We had plenty of money, so much so that the money has become a burden. 76 per cent of the moneys collected from the people of the country has to be allocated to pay debts. The money has become a burden. So it is not for want of money, for want of expertise. Go back and see how many experts have come to this country, how many reports have been written and yet the country keeps going on a downward spiral. Look at our production figures, be it rice, be it sugar, be it anything. This has to do not only with the question of external factors, the general world crisis of capitalism. It has to do with human beings and how you deal with them. That is why Lenin said that you cannot build socialism without democracy.

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(Cde. Dr. Jagan continues)

This Government gives the impression here and abroad that we have a democratic structure. I remember going to the Kuru Kuru College some time ago and I heard the principal extolling the virtues of the Constitution how it was set up, a democratic structure in the country. I was reading the New Nation today and I saw an article dealing with people's power render account in Cuba. The article claimed that for the second time this year the People's Power has gone before the electorate in Cuba to render account for their actions. This procedure allows the people to closely question the delegates on the progress of work done and not done by them. The National ceremony to mark the year's second session was attended by 14,025 voters representing some 92 percent of the local electorate. This article was in New Nation 11th December. When I was at Kuru Kuru College, as the principal was speaking, I reminded him of Cuba. I told him that our structure was the same as Cuba and I reminded him of the fundamental differences, that is, at the grass root level and the district and municipal level. Not only Communist Party Members can stand, but any person can stand and his whole history has to be put. Not just emotionalism and who can promise more and who can give somethings, like we saw in the high powered election campaign which the Americans mounted in Jamaica for Seaga and for Hudson Phillips in Trinidad and Tobago, but a biography of the candidate so people can intelligently see what the man's qualifications are for the post, what he has done, how he has served and the, his experience with the person at the grass roots, elect him. He is elected, Cde. Chairman. He has to report back to the people. That is what we are talking about here. The people have a right to recall him.

I remember one of the first things I talked about in this Parliament when I was elected in 1947 was the democratic provision of the recalled. What have we got? Recalled! No, extend. Cde. Speaker, this matter of Local Government – my Comrade who spoke mentioned the fact that elections were last held in June 1970 for six Municipal and District Council areas. Because of manipulation and other things even where PPP had traditionally won General elections, PPP lost.

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Leguan is an example, and so the PPP decided to boycott the elections – the remaining elections which were held in December. So the PNC controls every single Authority and District Municipality in this country. Let me say that when we had talks with the PNC in 1976, the matter of Local Government elections came up. That was one of the issues. Because then we were concerned as we are concerned today, with economy, with production. Who can deny that the position today is a thousand times worse than it was then. But then we saw the handwriting on the wall and we said one of the questions you must solve is the question of democracy, the question of people's involvement. That was in 1976. We were told defer the elections of 1978 so we can have a new Constitution to give the people jobs, medicine, food and everything and where are we now? Tell us. Okay, we are not saying do not eat rice flour, but the nutritionist say we must have a balanced diet. I attended a meeting over the weekend. For two day rice and fish, rice and fish, fish and rice. You could not even get chicken to buy even if you wanted to.

Cde. Speaker, let the comrades on the Government side realize that we are in a serious situation. Cde. Van West Charles: You are not starving./You are not starving, but the people are starving. Read the nutritional report from the group of doctors. He would not read them because he cannot do anything about them. They said that the administration do not care and the Minister least of all. They cannot do anything about it, so he keeps mouthing the same old thing, there is no real mal-nutrition in this country. Well this is contrary to all facts. Cde. Chairman, I do not want to hold a debate with him on this point. Let us face the facts, the country is in a serious position.

I understand that the International Monetary Fund is not willing to sign even at this stage what they were prepared to sign last year. The terms they gave you which they said were a recipe to riot. Even the IMF is now saying as I understand it that they have no money. That is true to a certain degree. They have no money despite the fact that more money was voted for them by Reagan. \$8.7 billion, they have been looking around for some money elsewhere. But the demands are so great that they now tell the – so I understand, they have not told me this. That is Guyana for us. So if you cannot get it even from the traditional sources where are you going to get it from?

The Speaker: You are saying that they should not borrow from the International Monetary Fund when you borrowed from them.

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Cde. Dr. Jagan: I did it from a principled position. When they go to the International Monetary Fund it is not for a solution. They had an alternative but they rejected it. This country is only looking for help from outside. You either go to one side or the other side. The answer is to solve the problem internally then mobilise people. The Chairman, of Guymine, Pat Thompson said that the moral of the people of this country is very low. Cde. Van West-Charles: "Who is he?"/He was one of your blue-eyed boys. You had him a while ago at the United Nations but he left you and disappeared.

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(Cde. C. Jagan continues)

16:25 hrs

Therefore, we in this country are in serious trouble. I am speaking with all the seriousness I hope I can bring forward to the Government's notice.

We hear all kinds of things happening. I heard a report the other day that the Regional Council put up estimates for a certain figure for necessary works. The Ministry has cut it down by nearly half. I understand the Cabinet cut it further. First, the Planning Secretariat and then the Cabinet, not the Minister. I repeat, grassroot democracy is very fundamental because here is where you are dealing with the masses of the people and you do not have that at the moment. People are alienated. Ask Chandisingh about Lenin, he will tell you that it is a fundamental problem. Therefore, we want to see that this Government deals with this question and not simply to play with it.

What has been proposed to maintain the status quo as my friend said. The P.N.C. lists for Municipal and District Councils have been exhausted. They have sought permission to incorporate people outside of those lists and those lists were very long, very big. Further than that, certain districts are fully nominated. Are we not seeing? I spoke to one foreign expert the other day, a person who has to do with looking to see how this country can be helped. He said he sat into one of these district meetings and the thing was a joke. We were talking about flour, how some of the flour which came to feed children and make biscuits had to go back. We see now it is dumped.

We were discussing production. I asked him where is the local production. Are we now producing rice at the same extent as we did in 1964? No. The projection for sugar production was twice as much as they were expected to produce this year. Grassroot democracy is fundamental not only at elected levels like the Municipal and District Councils, but workers' control. We keep repeating this thing over and over and the economy is going down further and further. The Government is paying lip service to it. They give an impression by writing about the people's power in Cuba. They are practising people's power too. Put it in practice. Ask Mr. Denny to put workers' control in practice and then we are going to start at least at that level moving somewhere.

There are many things to be corrected. The comrades must not only think of just staying in power because if that is the only consideration clearly then we are not going to get out of this mess. It is going to plunge deeper and deeper, more and more people will be going away. That is not the answer, that is not what we want for our Guyanese citizens. This is a rich country. Unfortunately, it is not possible to mobilise the actual wealth of this country. The New Nation says we must own and control the natural resources. Yes, you can own and control but as Lenin pointed out if you want to do what you claim you want to to to build a socialist society you must have democracy. This Bill is not intended to do that, it is not going to contribute to the well being of the people of this country and solve the very grave and serious problems that we now face. All of us face it. It is no use digging our heads in the sand and saying there are no shortages when there are wounds of people in the hospital in a state of degradation. Wounds of people are deteriorating because they do not have dressings, they do not have whatever drugs are necessary and they do not have the staff. This is a disgrace and a shame and all of that has to do with the existing order of lack of democracy and people's interest. I am sorry if I have to speak in strong terms but the time has come for it and not merely to push around, extending the time of Mayors and Deputy Mayors. What for? Where is the democracy here? Why don't they implement it like Cuba? Why they do not go back and report to the people? I hope they are going to withdraw this Bill and make provision for the democracy we are talking about.

Cde. Corbin (replying): Cde. Speaker, listening to the comrades on the other side of the Assembly this afternoon is in itself a demonstration of the democracy which is evident in this country. The fact that they are there^{and}/are able to express their viewpoint on this issue is evidence that in this country this Government believes that people should be free to express themselves and demonstrate the way they think. Of course, too, this afternoon we have got the impression as well, from the words of the Members of the Minority, that since 1970 nothing has taken place in Guyana to improve people's participation in decision-making, people's involvement and activities and strategies which have been development to give people a more direct say in the decision-making in the

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communities. That is indeed a very distorted impression of what is taking place in this country since 1970.

The Minority, of course, sought to use this opportunity to raise a number of issues which are completely unrelated to this question before the Assembly/^{which is}for the extension of the terms for the election of Mayors and Deputy Mayors for a five-year term and gave the impression, of course, that all we have to do if we are really serious of solving the problems in Guyana is to hold elections today and all our balance of payments problems would be resolved, all our problems of production would be removed.

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(Cde. Corbin continues)

I am afraid Cde. Speaker, that this is a very simplistic approach. What this Bill is seeking to do Cde. Speaker, is to give an opportunity for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor to be elected over a five-year term as I said in keeping with the term of office for those in this National Assembly and with the introduction of the new Local Democratic Organs.

Cde. Speaker, to discuss this would be naive this afternoon for it is quite clear that since 1970 many changes have taken place in Guyana including the New Constitution which came into being in 1980 and which sets out very clearly the new system of peoples' involvement. The present system of local Government will have to be changed. The very . . . of district councils of some of these towns will have to be changed. Some will become people's co-op, some will become activities, some will become community activities, District Councils and other sub-regional activities.

That structure Cde. Speaker, which came into being with the New Constitution in 1980 is a new approach towards giving more involvement to people in decision making. Only a few months ago in this very House we witnessed a piece of legislation to decentralise the functions of the DNI Board where the people in the various regions will be more direct in the economic and social life of that region - where they will be in a better position to mandate their forces very effectively with the hope of bringing about greater development of these regions - so to suggest as the Opposition is attempting to do this afternoon that the failure to hold Municipal and District Council election since 1970 has caused . . . to take place in Guyana is indeed not a correct view.

We have witnessed Cde. Speaker, peoples participation since the introduction of the new regional system - the very ^{estimates} that the Leader of the Minority spoke about this afternoon.

Though I do not know where his story is from - these very estimates were prepared at the centre and sent out. We have seen a different approach where even in the preparation of the estimates, plans for the development of various economic projects in the regions are looked into.

Cde. Speaker, when we speak of democra - the Opposition the view that gave/ the failure to hold elections since 1970 prevents the people from having an opportunity to express their viewpoint. Cde. Speaker for someone who is unfamiliar with Guyana's electoral system that argument - anyone in an electoral system in Guyana will see the failure in that proposition this afternoon. Since our electoral system is opposed to party politics when the elections were held political parties put up a list of candidates. These candidates represent the political party that has submitted their names. It means that even if elections are not held in a given time and different people are placed in that position they have a responsibility to a political party that is in constant touch with the people. If of course, the development had reached the stage where the people felt that the P.N.C. was necessary¹ to run this country, the people at the general elections would have removed the P.N.C. from office. But the fact that the P.N.C. is represent²ed by an overwhelming majority in this Parliament is evidence that the people have confidence in this Government and this Party. It shows that the P.N.C. is in touch with the people in every community.

It is therefore quite clear Cde. Speaker, that the arguments which the Opposition have attempted to . . . in this Parliament that this Bill will be a denial of democracy in Guyana is completely unfounded.

Cde. Speaker, the other issue raised by the speaker on the other side are not directly related to this matter this afternoon and I would not attempt to deal with the immediate problems of the other issue which have been raised in this discussion because they have been dealt with several times and at various forums.

There is still one final point I would like to make in response from Comrades on the other side that the new system of local

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democracy required that the country be sub-divided into many geographic areas starting from the Peoples' Co-operatives and marked out in maps and this required very detail work by the Lands Department, headed by the able Commissioner of Lands Cde. Earl who with his Officers and members of staff took the opportunity to travel throughout the length and breadth of this country and I am happy to report division is complete and the country has been completely divided up into various types of Peoples' Co-operatives etc. and work is now complete.

In addition there has been a lot of preliminary work which has gone up at the Attorney General's Chambers and in consultation with the Minister of Regional Development legislation which would cover the . . . in the various sectors of the Local Democratic Organs. In other words Cde. Speaker, a lot of work has gone in and I am quite certain that the new system - the other system of local democracy will not be too far away.

Gde. Corbin continues

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NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

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I wish to state very clearly that the holding of elections under this Municipal and Districts Council Act with its present structure will be totally out of order, so to speak, since it will not fit into the new Constitution. We are hoping that this new arrangement will facilitate what we might call a holding arrangement until the new system of local democratic organs is introduced and we can see the completion of this programme for a new democracy in Guyana under the People's New Constitution.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Assembly in Committee.

Clause 1, as amended, considered and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 2 and 3 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Assembly resumed.

Bill reported with an amendment, as amended considered, read the Third time

and passed as amended.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, "That this Assembly do now adjourn to a date to be fixed."

[Vice-President, Party and State Matters.]

Adjourned accordingly at 16:50 hrs.