

THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
OFFICIAL REPORT

[VOLUME 7]

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

190th Sitting

2 p.m.

Monday, 25th June, 1979

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (63)

Speaker

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

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

Prime Minister (1)

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

(Absent)

Deputy Prime Minister (1)

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

(Absent)

Senior Ministers (12)

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

(Absent – on leave)

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

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

Ministers (2)

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

*** Non-elected Ministers**

Ministers of State (10)

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

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

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

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

Cde. J.R. Thomas,
Minister of State, Office of the
Prime Minister

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

(Absent)

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

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

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

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

(Absent)

*** Non-elected Ministers**

Parliamentary Secretaries (5)

- Cde. M.M. Ackman, C.C.H.,
Parliamentary Secretary, Office of the
Prime Minister and Government Chief Whip **(Absent)**
- Cde. E.L. Ambrose,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture
- Cde. M. Corrica,
Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of Education, Social Development
and Culture
- Cde. E.M. Bynoe,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Trade
and Consumer Protection
- Cde. Wrights, J.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Economic
Development and Co-operatives

Other Members (15)

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

Members of the Opposition (16)

People's Progressive Party (14)

Leader of the Opposition (1)

Cde. C. Jagan,
Leader of the Opposition

(Absent)

Deputy Speaker (1)

Cde. Ram Karran,
Deputy Speaker

Other Members (12)

Cde. J. Jagan

(Absent)

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

Cde. Narbara Persaud

Cde. C. Collymore

(Absent)

Cde. S.F. Mohamed

(Absent)

Cde. I. Basir

(Absent)

Cde. C.C. Belgrave

(Absent)

Cde. R. Ally

Cde. Dalchand, J.P.

Cde. Dindayal

(Absent)

Cde. H. Nokta

(Absent)

Cde. P. Sukhai

(ii) Liberator Party (2)

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

Mr. M.A. Abraham

OFFICERS

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

Acting Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly – A. Knight

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

The Speaker: Leave has been granted to Cde. Hoyte for the period 22nd June to 13th July, 1979, to Cde. Mingo for a week from today, to Cde. Tyndall from today to the 3rd, July, 1979, to Cde. Oscar Clarke for today, and to Cde. Nascimento for a period of three months from the 22nd June, 1979.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following Papers were laid:

- (1) (a) Report of the Auditor General on the Public Accounts of the Government of Guyana for the financial year ended 31st December, 1970.
- (b) Loan Agreement made on 21st March, 1979, between Guyana and Canada for Establishing a Development Line of Credit.
- (c) Financial Paper No. 1/1979 – Schedule of Supplementary Provision on the Current and Capital Estimates (Advances made from the Contingencies Fund in 1978), totalling \$3,215.066. [**The Minister of Finance**]

In terms of Standing Order No. 68, the Minister of Finance named Thursday, 28th June, 1979, as the day for the consideration of the Financial Paper.

- (2) (a) Report and Accounts of the Guyana Sugar Corporation Ltd. for 1978.
- (b) Annual Report and Accounts of the Guyana Liquor Corporation for 1978. [**The Minister of Agriculture**]

**REQUESTS FOR LEAVE TO MOVE THE ADJOURNMENT OF THE
ASSMEBLY ON DEFINITE MATTERS OF URGENT
PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**

Freedom of Association and Expression

Cde. Ram Karran: Your Honour, I humbly ask permission to move, at the appropriate time, the Adjournment of this House to draw to its attention a matter of definite urgent importance. The circumstances are as follows].

Application was made by the National Proprietary Committee –

The Speaker: You are not going to read out all that is in the letter.

Cde. Ram Karran: No, I am just giving you briefly what the problem is but Your Honour has already got a letter indicating what it is. Hon. Members, I believe, would like to know. I wanted to ask the House to adjourn and discuss it because a very serious breach relating to the freedom of association and expression occurred on that occasion.

First, the police refused to give permission for a march and we feel, I think, that the House ought to know and to make an expression as to why refusal was given for that at that important time, the International Year of the Child.

Secondly, while the meeting, which was allowed, was in process and members –

The Speaker: That was on another date?

Cde. Ram Karran: Yes. While the members of the organisation were addressing the meeting, a group of hooligans came out armed with sticks and attacked the meeting, attacked the vehicle which was being used for the carrying of materials, loud speakers and so on, lawlessness took over and the police seemed to have done nothing although, subsequently, reading in the newspapers, one got the impression that the meeting was properly policed. What appeared in the newspaper the next day was that these people had had disagreements among themselves and this violence erupted. As one who was present there ---

The Speaker: Cde. Ram Karran, I am not allowing that.

Cde. Ram Karran: Yes, sir. But many people who were at the meeting complained – some complained to me –

The Speaker: That is going into the merits of the Motion.

Cde. Ram Karran: Okay. Because of the fact that these things were known and because these denials took place, I think this House ought to suspend its business in order to bring this matter to its attention and to see that matters of this kind do not occur, that the freedom that we talk about and the freedom which we are promised should not be abridged in the future. I move, sir, accordingly.

2.10 p.m.

The Speaker: Cde. Ram Karran, some years ago it was agreed that whenever Motions of this nature are to be raised they should be sent not later than 11o'clock so that proper consideration could be given them. When they come at 11.30 and 11.40, as in this case, very little time can be given to them and, in addition to that, it is discourteous not even coming to me before raising it in Parliament. I think it is not a proper manner in which it should be done.

However, I have looked at the letter very carefully and wish to repeat a statement I made in this Parliament some years ago that in matters involving this type of Motion – I shall read for your information what it says:

“These conditions” –

that is, the matter must be definite, urgent and of public importance –

“are stringent and it is the duty of the Chair to ensure that they remain so.”

In the first place, the matter that is sought to be discussed must be definite. Here you have raised two different matters, one dealing with the 30th May and the other on the 1st June.

Secondly, it must be specific, unambiguous and based on fact and not on hearsay. I need not repeat what you have in your letter here. Nothing at all is specific in the sense of not being hearsay and being very factual. It must be urgent; it must be raised at the first opportunity, which you have done; it must be a larger issue than purely an administrative matter. This is a complaint against the Police. This is merely administrative.

Cde. Ram Karran: House of Israel.

The Speaker: Government has no control over that. It is my responsibility to consider claims which are raised for discussion. Under paragraph (2) of Standing Order 11, matters are to be allowed by the Speaker on Motions for the Adjournment only if such matters are definite, urgent and of public importance. For it to be definite it must be a single specific matter not covering several ones as you have done in this letter. In my opinion, your claim for the Adjournment fails on that ground alone. It also fails because it is an administrative matter. In my view it does not qualify and I regret I will not be able to entertain the Motion.

Cde. Ram Karran: I merely want to say one thing, that you were engaged when I came into the Chamber and I apologise. I did ask and it was too late.

The Speaker: The apology is accepted.

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS – FIRST READING
NATIONAL CANE FARMING COMMITTEE (AMENDMENT) BILL 1979**

A Bill intituled:

“An act to amend the National Cane Farming Committee Act.” [**The Minister of Agriculture**]

The Minister of Agriculture (Cde. Kennard): Cde. Speaker, I would like to have your permission to withdraw the presentation and First Reading of the National Cane Farming Committee (Amendment) Bill 1979, the reason being that we have discovered a very regrettable typographical omission. It is proposed, therefore, to have the Bill published again and presented on another occasion.

Bill, by leave, withdrawn.

**PUBLIC BUSINESS
BILL – SECOND READING**

PUBLIC CORPORATIONS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1979

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to amend the Public Corporations Act to make provision for the appointment of an Executive Vice President and more than one Vice President.” [**The Prime Minister**]

The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House (Cde. Ramsaroop):
Cde. Speaker, may I on behalf of the Cde. Prime Minister move the Second Reading of the Bill intituled he Public Corporations (Amendment) Bill 1979, No. 8 of 1979.

This measure is a simple and sensible one. It is simple as is evidenced by the explanation given to it in the Explanatory Memorandum of the Bill, that is, it seeks to provide for the appointment of an Executive Vice President and more than one Vice President for the better functioning and co-ordination of the administration of the Guyana State Corporation.

It is sensible because it will inure to the more effective and efficient functioning of the Guyana State Corporation. It boggles the mind now to contemplate the magnitude of the responsibilities that now fall on the shoulder of the Executive Vice President of the Guyana State Corporation. Indeed, that person now has a span of control and an ever-widening complex of relationships which can be dramatically seen when I read these figures to this House. In his own department, that is, within the State Corporation itself, he has six Department heads who relate to him covering areas like Finance, Personnel Relations, Industrial Relations, Public Relations, Information Systems and the Secretariat itself.

Added to that there are over eight Executive Chairmen who relate to him, and to compound his difficulties, there are about 30 General Managers in the relative corporative structure who relate to him for decisions.

It can be seen, therefore, that it is either desirable or prudent and sensible that that particular person should be assisted in the discharge of his responsibilities and that is the nature of this measure before the House today. It will enable the Executive Vice President to appoint Vice Presidents to assist him in the more expeditious discharge of his duties. That is the measure that is before the House and which I commend to this House.

Question proposed.

Cde. Narbada Persaud: Once again a Motion is placed before this House seeking to enlarge an already very large bureaucracy. The figures given by the Minister in introducing the Bill obviously do not require, in this time of crisis, for the enlargement of such type of bureaucracy. Some time ago we were told that we are going to create here in Guyana an egalitarian society. By that I understood that as time went by the gap between the rich and the poor, the gap between the big ones and the small ones, would have narrowed the gap, but after a decade we still find ourselves, instead of narrowing the gap, trying to enlarge that already very wide gap.

I wish to point to some of the discrepancies, to some of the extravagance in the bureaucracy, which already exist in the State Corporation and in the corporations themselves. And when we talk about creating an egalitarian society, then one must really compare notes. We must compare notes in the sense when the Prime Minister talks about creating an egalitarian society, and the notes as they exist at the moment in certain corporations.

2.20 p.m.

A director, for example, in a corporation, is entitled to a free motor car. Apart from that motor car, he is entitled to a chauffeur for that motor car. He is entitled to all gasoline when on personal or official business. He is entitled to repairs to that motor car and for replacement of even tyres and everything for that car. And as recently happened when a car, driven by a director's son, crashed, that car was also repaired at the expense of the corporation. How is it, in this time of crisis, we are not going to try to avoid this type of extravagance? Rather than trying to curtail at that level, we are trying at the other end to expand.

In Guysuco, for example, we find that there are a number of persons who are only acting and acting. Provision is not made for the confirmation of their appointments. Not at that level, but at the other level, they are now seeking to expand at again fat salaries. What I am talking about here only goes for directors at corporations. One can very well imagine what the allowances are going to be for Vice-Presidents and Executive Vice-Presidents when this Bill would have been passed. A director in a corporation, if he wishes to join any club or any social organisation, that membership fee must be paid by the corporation. Why, for this pleasure? When on the other hand, the minimum of \$14 per day is denied a man working in the same corporation who asks for it out of necessity to live. But we pay on the other hand for the bureaucrats at the top to go and join clubs, to go in the evenings and play skittle, and billiards and darts and have drinks. That is what the corporation pays for on one hand and on the other hand denies a man \$14 a day to buy food in order that he can go the next day filled with energy and strength to perform his day's work.

We have for these directors, the big ones, but not only directors, this will go for managers, general managers, for Vice Presidents and all the like at the top bracket, fat allowances, better medical schemes, better pension schemes. When you compare all of that with what is given to the man at the bottom, then that talk about creating an egalitarian society becomes really a farce. Because the disparity is so great, then one sees that the talk, not only of creating an egalitarian society but the talk of creating socialism in this country, as preached by the ruling party, is also a farce. Why must a director every week get one carton of cigarettes free, when the man at the bottom has to queue up and even when he queues up, he doesn't get? He doesn't even know where to queue, because of the shortage that exists. Six weeks' leave per year with passage allowance for wife and children to England. In this very House I heard the Minister of Finance say that those privileges for civil servants would be taken away, would be limited, would be restricted. They would be forced, because of the financial crisis in this country, to invest their money in debentures if they don't want to go and spend their holidays here in the interior in Guyana or at some holiday health resort somewhere in Guyana. They cannot go abroad. But this exists for the big ones in the corporation.

Now, from my information the salary for a director ranges between \$2,000 to \$3,000 per month. One may very well argue but, Cde. Speaker, we are told here at budget time that drastic cuts are being made in certain directions, particularly as far as social services are concerned, education, health, transportation, old age pension. An old-age pension of \$15 per month is paid to a man who has given his whole life working towards the economy of this country yet we see that disparity which is so great and we talk about this egalitarian society. The salaries are so big that the confidential secretary of the company is the only person permitted to make up the salaries book, because of the fat allowances, salaries and all the other amenities that they are entitled to. Is it not a shame for the country and a government which claims to be a socialist one to be hiding the salaries of those big directors? I cry shame on this government to have such double standards and yet talk about socialism. It is a shame.

When are we going to try to erase some of the wrong things that are being done within the corporations? Is it that by the introduction of this Bill we are going to stop wrong things? Some members of management staff in Guysuco, for example, send an order to Guyana Stores. Instead, in fact, of sending an order to Guyana Stores they send it to persons, friends, who charge – you want to hear the names, I have three at hand – 200 and 300 per cent more and those members of staff claim that those items which, of course, are not available at Guyana Stores. They just push in one or two items which, of course, are not available but most of the items are available. When are we going to stop those things? We heard, Cde. Speaker, the report here, carried in the issue of the Chronicle of 1st June, “G.E.C. tells why it must raise rates.” From the 1st of July we are going to be asked to pay 35 per cent increase. Where is the report of the Merriman Commission? Let us see what is going on. We are hearing nothing now. Is the inquiry finished? The Luckhoo report came and the faults went on the management. But what Luckhoo failed to do was to put in the report so that the nation will know that the top management failed hopelessly because of political interference.

The Speaker: Cde. Narbada Persaud, I don't think that is relevant to this debate.

Cde. N. Persaud: Cde. Speaker, perhaps you are right but I thought that since we are dealing with corporations ---

The Speaker: We are merely dealing with the personal increases. I have allowed you a lot of time hoping that you would come down to it.

Cde. N. Persaud: Cde. Speaker, the personal increase to my mind is not necessary. What I am saying is that if you were to plug all these discrepancies here and these dishonest practices then the personal increase sought for this afternoon will not be necessary and so in order to prove that that is not necessary, I want to allude to these facts.

I have called in this House, Cde. Speaker, over and over for an inquiry into the Rice Marketing Board. Here again \$14 cannot be paid to the man pushing the truck but top personnel, they are getting increases, and in this crisis, and yet we are talking about this society –

The Speaker: Cde. Narbada, it is three times within the space of 15 minutes you have made that same contribution about the \$14 for the man at the bottom and for the large salaries for the man at the top.

2.30 p.m.

Cde. N. Persaud: Cde. Speaker, sometime this year we have had presented in this House these two reports for the year 1977. Today, we are fortunate enough to have these very two Reports presented again in this House.

The Speaker: Please identify them so that the Reporters will know what Reports you are talking about.

Cde. N. Persuad: The Report and Accounts of the Guyana Sugar Corporation Ltd. for 1978 and the Annual Report and Accounts of the Guyana Liquor Corporation for 1978. Where are the other Reports from the other Corporations? Fortunately we have these two reports for 1977 and for 1978. We have no other Report for 1978. Is the increase for staff asked for this afternoon going to assist us to know what is going on in the Corporation, by having Reports presented in this House? This is not going to assist us. What is going to assist us is to have all these acting appointments for years in the various Corporations confirmed. I have also called in this House some time ago, and I have to repeat it, for the Reports of these Corporations to be audited by the State Auditor by the State Auditor so that the Public Accounts Committee and the Parliament would be able to know what is going on there. Despite all these calls, nothing is being done. We must be able to look into these cases carefully and see whether it is really necessary to have this increase in the number of Vice Presidents. I do not know whether it is going to be one Executive Vice President or more than one Executive Vice President, but to my mind it is only creating a bigger bureaucracy. It is a waste of money in this country, particularly at this time. All that I am saying is that if there is proper management, proper supervision and if these Corporations are efficiently run, then the need will not be there for the increase of personnel, increase of allowances, increase of salaries, increase of other staff. We are only asked for one Vice President but when Vice Presidents are named and appointed they will have staff and there it goes.

I want to urge that a thorough and close examination be made of every single Corporation in order to identify these malpractices which I would have liked to go into this afternoon but, unfortunately I will not be permitted. When these are identified – and they do not need additional Executive Vice Presidents to do that – then we would have better results than we are having at the Electricity Corporation where taxpayers are going to be asked to pay an additional 35 per cent for the running and mismanagement due to political interference at the top.

The Speaker: Before you begin hon. Member Mr. Singh, I want to address a remark to Cde. Narbada Persaud. Perhaps it was done inadvertently, I am sure, but when I had proposed the question you stood up and started to speak without my calling upon you. I am sure it was due to inadvertence. Hon. Member Mr. Singh.

Mr. M.F. Singh: Thank you, sir, I always wait until you call me to speak. There are times when I feel very upset that you do not call on me to speak when I want to speak, but one has to be subject to the constraints of the Chair. The person acting for the Prime Minister – I am not sure what coming events are casing their shadows – said that this was a very simple Bill. Maybe it is simple in terms of words. How sensible it is is a matter for debate.

The hon. Minister says it boggles the mind as to what Guystac has under it at the present moment. Sure, it boggles the mind, but whose fault is that? Who caused it to boggle the mind? We did not do it, the Government did it. Like a giant octopus, here, there and everywhere encompassing over 80 per cent of the economy of this country. Sure, it boggles the mind. That is why they have problems. One would have expected that the Government embarking on this would have examined all the pros and cons, it would have made an assessment of the situation and it would have been prepared to cope with it. But this Bill in itself seems to be an admission of its gross incompetence and its inability to cope with the situation. Now they are asking for more personnel to cope with what the Minister says boggles the mind.

Again I ask, who caused it? Where is the improvement? We were told that when private enterprise ran so many of the Companies and Corporations that have now been taken over by Guystac, that they were dirty capitalists, they were sucking the lifeblood of the people, we must take them over, we must stop them from doing this. Well, we have taken them over. Have we stopped anybody from sucking the lifeblood of the people? Instead of an improvement, what is happening is that we have “Guylines” all over the place. Instead of an improvement in the distribution system of food and other foodstuff, what we have got is a situation where people are suffering all the time. It did not happen in the old days under private enterprise. In the old days,

the private enterprise mark-up may have been 15, 20, 25 or 30 per cent. The Government described that as sucking the lifeblood, as dirty capitalists. What is the Government doing now?

What is it that the Public Corporations and Government Companies are doing? What is their mark-up? I have been told this by one Manager. He said, “Look, I am in charge of an enterprise that used to import cars. We are not importing cars so that our profits from the sale of cars are not there anymore. Our turnover is not the same, but I am expected to make the same kind of surpluses.” He says, “Well, Feilden, in order for me to make the same kind of surpluses, I have to put up my mark-up at over 100 per cent, sometimes 200 or 300 per cent, in order for me to make the same surpluses.

This is what is in effect happening. It stands to reason because if you have an organisation with a certain amount of personnel, buildings and maintenance, and all the rest of it, your turnover is less. You are not selling the same kind of big items and making the same kind of big profits. You are required to make excessive surpluses in this economic crisis, the Government expects you to make surpluses. They have said so. How do you make it? By increasing your mark-up. And that is in fact what everybody knows. I know that as an owner of a car. I know that the kind of prices I used to pay I am paying a hell of a lot more and do not tell me it is because of the oil crisis and inflation. It is because also of an increase in the mark-up. This has been admitted privately on so many occasions by so many people.

2.40 p.m.

So what are we doing now? We are increasing the bureaucracy. We are creating more executive positions. How do we pay for this? We can only pay for this by again increasing the mark-up. Right now there are no such people. They will come; they will be in existence and as the former speaker said, they will have to have staff, offices and all the perquisites that go with the office. This will cost money. From where do you pay for it? Guystac will have to pay for it.

The public corporations will have to pay for it and they will still have to continue making surpluses. One sees the whole situation instead of getting better is likely to get worse.

We all know that at the present moment we are really suffering from a serious lack of experienced personnel. What has happened within recent times is that the experienced people are clearing out and jobs for the boys have come into operation. I would like to know that there is a genuine attempt to really streamline the whole state of affairs. The place is in a mess at the present moment. As I said, all that we seem to have are “Guylines.” Productivity has been affected in so many corporations. I will not even name the electricity supply. We all experienced it here and we know all about the Luckhoo Report. Will this Bill improve the situation? To my mind it needs a radical change of policy and I would even go so far as to say that it needs a change back to the old private enterprise days in which, as we all remember, there were no “Guylines,” there were no shortages as exist at the present moment, in which efficiency and economic service to the public were the driving mark.

I say: Let us cut down on the bureaucracy, let us cut down on the mark-up, let us cut inefficiency and let us try and give control back to those people who are versed in running businesses and business organisations as they used to do in the past. Let us make a genuine attempt to do so.

The Speaker: Cde. Minister.

Cde. Ramsaroop (replying): Cde. Speaker, there thundered forth, as is the custom of Cde. Narbada Persaud a number of inaccuracies in his presentation. I will not trail those inaccuracies and respond to them but there are certain matters which I think it might be good for me to comment on lest the records of this House be left incomplete. One cannot blow hot and cold in any argument. As a lawyer I can tell him – the hon. Member Mr. Feilden Singh will appreciate this – that one cannot approbate and reprobate at the same time. We hear from Cde.

Narbada Persaud that there are areas of irregularities. He was very cautious not give names although I think it is a breach of the Standing Orders to speak of persons without disclosing their names because they do not have a right to reply here. We hear that there are irregularities in these corporations but it is precisely to combat those irregularities that it is sought now to strengthen at the highest level of the Guyana State Corporation the complement of managerial staff that is necessary to offset those difficulties. One cannot, therefore, say that these things exist and managers are going there and getting things on the side on the one hand and on the other hand deny the Government a chance to strengthen certain details. Therefore the argument by Cde. Narbada Persaud was very tenuous and plausible, if not a piece of sophistry, to which this House should not be subjected.

Then we hear, too, about selective clubs and here again this House is regaled with high-sounding words without names. Who are the members of these selected clubs? May I ask Cde. Narbada Persaud?

The Speaker: No. Cde. Ramsaroop, that is not fair. When they call names I tell them they must not do it because the man is not here to answer. Now you castigate him for not calling names. I do not think that is fair.

Cde. Ramsaroop: I think it should go on the record of this House that in terms of having selected clubs in Guyana, it was this Government that initiated definite measures to reduce the number of those clubs. No longer today do we have clubs bearing the names of various ethnic strains in Guyana as we used to have. The Guysuco pools now are open to all and sundry, even those who are not members of staff of the sugar estates. It is this Government that has sought to reduce these apparent ills of discrimination to which Cde. Narbada Persaud alluded.

Then we hear about the high perquisites and emoluments of managers, but let me remind this House that when the first big takeover was being initiated by the Government of Guyana it was

the Leader of the Opposition who insisted among other things that those very managers be kept on under conditions no less favourable than they enjoyed. We hear today this palaver here about members getting exorbitant and handsome conditions. At this very moment efforts are being made to curtail some of the perquisites of many general managers in Guyana.

We hear also about corporations and the financial discipline that should be exercised by those corporations but let me not remind Cde. Narbada Persaud of the now legendary act that was committed by his leader when he took –

The Speaker: No, no, Cde. Ramsaroop. I will not permit that. The debate was going at a very high level. I am not allowing aspersions to be cast.

Cde. Ramsaroop: However, the books that are presently handled by the corporations are properly audited and I must say this for the record of this House lest there be any misinterpretation that there are acts of irregularities being committed. All these books are audited accounts are submitted to this House. I think it is asking too much of the Accountant General's Office that it should be saddled with the financial responsibility of auditing the existing departments of the Ministries of this administration as well as the accounts of the corporations within the Guystac complex of companies.

We are treated to a piece of inaccuracy – I expect better from my learned friend Mr. Marcellus Feilden Singh – when he speaks of Guystac having 80 per cent of the economy of this country. It is inaccurate. Guystac does not control Guysuco and Guymine. [Mr. M.F. Singh: “Guystac and the Government.”] He is now correcting what he said. In the light of that correction he may be right. Certainly he cannot be guilty of such a transparent piece of inaccuracy as to tell this House that Guystac controls 80 per cent. I hope that that is not symptomatic of the attitude of inaccuracy which will characterise his participation in ensuing debates in this House.

25.6.79

National Assembly

2.40 – 2.50 p.m.

I think those are the points that I wish to respond to. I will not degenerate into the mudslinging that was apparent in the debate from the other Members of the House. [Applause]

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

2.50 p.m.

Assembly in Committee.

Clause 1.

Cde. Ramsaroop: Cde. Chairman, I wonder, with your leave, if I can move the Amendment that has been circulated today to the effect that we add immediately after the words, “Short title” and commencement,” and after the figure “1979” we insert the words “and shall be deemed to have come into operation on the 15th May, 1979.

Amendment proposed, put and agreed to.

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

Clauses 2 to 4 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill

Assembly resumed

Bill reported with an Amendment to Clause 1: as amended, considered: read the Third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, “That this Assembly do now adjourn until Thursday, 28th June, 1979, at 2 p.m.”

[Cde. Ramsaroop]

Adjourned accordingly at 2.50 p.m.
