

THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
OFFICIAL REPORTS

[Volume 8]

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE FIRST SESSION (1981) OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FOURTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA.

1st Sitting	2 p.m.	Friday, 30 th January, 1981
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MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (82)

Speaker (1)

*Cde. Sase Narain, O.R., J.P., M.P.
Speaker of the National Assembly

Members of the Government – People's National Congress (69)

Prime Minister (1)

Cde. P.A. Reid, O.E., M.P.,
Prime Minister

Other Vice-Presidents (4)

Cde. S.S. Naraine, A.A.M.P.,
Vice-President, Works and Transport
Cde. H.D. Hoyte, S.C., M.P.,
Vice-President, Economic Planning and Finance
Cde. H. Green, M.P.,
Vice-President, Public Welfare
Cde. B. Ramsaroop, M.P.,
Vice-President, Parliamentary Affairs and Party/State Relations

Senior Ministers (10)

Cde. R. Chandisingh, M.P.,
Minister of Higher Education
Cde. O. E. Clarke, M.P.,
Minister of Regional Development
Cde. R.H.O. Corbin, M.P.
Minister of National Development
*Cde. F. E. Hope, M.P.,
Minister of Trade and Consumer Protection
*Cde. H.O. Jack, M.P.,
Minister of Energy and Mines
*Cde. Dr. M. Shahabuddeen, O.R., S.C., M.P.,
Attorney General and Minister of Justice
*Cde. R.E. Jackson, M.P.,
Minister of Foreign Affairs
*Cde. J.A. Tyndall, A.A., M.P.,
Minister of Agriculture
*Cde. S.A. Moore, M.P.,
Minister of Home Affairs
*Cde. J.R. Thomas, M.P.,
Minister of Education

*Non- elected Member

Minister (13)

- Cde. J.P Chowritmootoo, J.P., M.P.
Minister, Environment and Water Supply,
in the Ministry of Public Welfare.
- Cde. U.E. Johnson, M.P.,
Minister of Co-operatives
- Cde. J.N. Maitland-Singh, M.P.,
Minister, Consumer Protection, in the
Ministry of Trade and Consumer Protection
- Cde. S. Prashad, M.P.,
Minister, Crops and Livestock, in the
Ministry of Agriculture
- Cde. Sallahuddin, M.P.,
Minister, Finance, in the Minister of
Economic Planning and Finance
- Cde. R.E. Williams, M.P.,
Minister, Fisheries, in the Ministry
of Agriculture
- *Cde. C.A. Nascimento, M.P.,
Minister, Mechanical Equipment, in the
Minister of Works and Transport
- *Cde. F.U.A. Campbell, M.P.,
Minister of Information
- *Cde. F.U.A. Carmicheal, M.P.,
Minister, Forestry, in the
Ministry of Agriculture
- *Cde. Y.V. Harewood-Benn., M.P.,
Minster of Public Service
- *Cde. H. Rashid, M.P.,
Minister, Office of the President
- *Cde. R.C. Van Sluytman, M.P.,
Minister, Drainage and Irrigation, in the
Minister of Agriculture
- *Cde. R.A. Van West-Charles, M.P.,
Minister, Health, in the Ministry of
Public Welfare.

Ministers of State (3)

- Cde. M. Corrica, M.P.,
Minister of State for Culture, in the
Ministry of Education, Social Development
and Culture
- Cde. R.C. Fredericks, A.A., M.P.,
Minister of State for Youth and Sport, in the
Ministry of National Development.
- *Cde. C.E. Wright, M.P.,
Minister of State for Construction, in the
Ministry of Works and Transport

Parliamentary Secretaries (3)

- Cde. A.W. Bend-Kirton, M.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary, Women's Affairs and
Housing
- Cde. P.A. Rayman, M.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister
- *Cde. E.M. Bynoe, M.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister

*Non- elected Member

Other Members (23)

Cde. D.A.N. Ainsworth, M.P
Cde. M. Ally, M.P
Cde. M. Armogan, M.P.
Cde. B. Beniprashad, M.P
Cde. B. Bhaggan., M.P.,
Cde. J.B Calderia., M.P.,
Cde. A.A. Chin, M.P.,
Cde. E.B. Davidson, M.P.,
Cde. H. Doobay, M.P.,
Cde. A.B. Felix, M.P.,
Cde. E.H.A. Fowler
Cde. P. Fredericks, M.P
Cde. E.F. Gilbert ,M.P.,
Cde. J.Gill., M.P
Cde. A. McRae, M.P
Cde. J.M. Munroe, J.P., M.P
Cde. R.N. Primo, M.P
Cde. C.G. Sharma, J.P., M.P
Cde. H.L.B. Singh, M.P
Cde. S.H Suhhu, M.S., M.P
Cde. B. Tiwari, M.P
Cde. C. Vandenburg, M.P
Cde. H.B. Walcott, J.P., M.P
Government Chief Whip

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

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

Member of the Regional Democratic Councils (10)

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, M.P (Region No.4 Demerara /Mahaica)
Cde. H.L. 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/Mazurni)
Cde. D. Abraham, M.P. (Region No. 8- Potaro/Siparuni)
Cde. A. Dorrick, M.P. (Region No.9- Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo)
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 on the National Assembly

Other Members (8)

Cde. J. Jagan, M.P
Cde. Reepu Demand Persaud, J.P., M.P
Minority Chief Whip
Cde. Narbada Persaud, M.P
Cde. C. Collymore, M.P
Cde. S.F. Mohamed, M.P (Absent- on leave)
Cde. I. Basir, M.P
Cde. C.C. Belgrave , M.P
Cde. Dalchand, J.P, M.P

(ii) United Force (2)

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

OFFICERS

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

with

Cde. C.G Pompey, Hansard Editor, performing the duties of Deputy
Clerk of the National Assembly, in the absence on account of
illness of Cde. M.B. Henry.

Senior Official Reporter, Cde.V.V. Sydney

Official Reporters- (Cde. S. Wharton
(Cde. E.R Cox, M.S.

Sergeant –at-Arms, Cde. K.C. King

30.1.81

2.00 -2.10 p.m.

2.00 p.m.

PROCLAMATION SUMMONING THE SESSION OF PARLIAMENT

The Clerk: Comrades and hon. Members, it is now time for the Session of Parliament to commence in accordance with a Proclamation which was made by the President and which I will now read.

“PROCLAMATION

GUYANA

No.4 of 1981

Seal No.33 of 1981

By the President of the co-
Operative Republic of Guyana

L.F.S. Burnham
President

WHEREAS by Proclamation dated the 24th October, 1980, issued under article 70(2) of the Constitution, Parliament was dissolved on 25th October, 1980;

AND WHEREAS it is provided by article 69 (1) of the Constitution that each session of Parliament shall be held at such place within Guyana and shall begin at such time, not being later than four months from the end of the preceding session if Parliament has been dissolved, as the President shall appoint by Proclamation;

NOW, THEREFORE, in pursuance of article 69 (1) of the Constitution, I do hereby appoint the Parliament the Chamber, Public Buildings, Georgetown, Guyana, as the place where a session of Parliament shall be held as aforesaid and 2 o'clock in the afternoon on the 30th day of January, 1981, as the time when such session shall begin.

Given under my hand and the
Seal of Guyana at Georgetown,
Guyana, 27th day of January,
1981, and in the eleventh year
Of the Republic
By the President's Command
(sgd.) C.E. Douglas

Permanent Secretary to the Office of the President.”

ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS

The Clerk: I will now call the names of those persons who have become Members of the National Assembly. Will members please answer as their names are called.

Members who were elected following the elections on 15th December, 1980,

And whose names were announced by the Elections Commission on 28th December, 1980;

PEOPLE'S NATIONAL CONGRESS

Donald A. Ainsworth
Mohamed Ally
Milton Armogan
Agnes Bend-Kirton
Bissoondai Beniprashad
Basdeo Bhaggan
Joseph B. Caldeira
Ranji Chandisingh
Allan A. Chin
Joshua Chowritmootoo
Oscar E. Clarke

Robert H.O. Corbin
Malcolm Corrica
Elinaine B. Davidson
Harry Dooby
Abel Benjamin Felix
Eugine H.A. Fowler
Patricia Fredericks
Roy Fredericks
Eugene F.Gilbert
Joyce Gill
Hamilton Green
Hugh D. Hoyte
Urmia Johnson
Jean N. Maitland-Singh
Albert McRae
Joyce M. Munroe
Shiv S. Naraine
Seeram Prashad
Ryburn N. Primo
Bishwaishwar Ramsaroop
Philomena A. Rayman
Ptolemy A. Reid
Sallahuddin
Chintaman Sharma
Harold L.B Singh
Sydney H. Sukhu
Bidiawattie Tiwari
Calvin Vandenburg
Huldah B. Walcott
Robert E. Williams

PEOPLE'S PROGRESSIVE PARTY

Cheddi Jagan
Ram Karran
Janet Jagan
Reepu Daman Persaud
Narbada Persaud
Clinton Collymore
Sheik Feroze Mohamed
Isahak Basir
Cyril Belgrave
Dalchand

UNITED FORCE

Micheal Anthony Abraham
Marcellus Fielden Singh

As their names were called, the members answered, with the exception of the following, who were absent at the time of the call:

Cde. Elaine B.Davidson
Cde. Clinton Collymore
Cde.Sheik Feroze Mohamed

The Clerk: Persons who are not elected Members of the National Assembly, who have been appointed as Ministers or Parliament Secretaries and whose appointments were announced on 1st January, 1981:

Hubert Oliver Jack
 Franklin Eleazer Hope
 Mohamed Shahabuddeen
 Rashleigh Esmond Jackson
 Joseph Adolphus Tyndall
 Jeffrey R. Thomas
 Stanley Moore
 Christopher Anthony Nascimento
 F.U.A. Carmicheal
 Ralph Van Sluytman
 Frank Campbell
 Harun Rashid
 Yvonne Hardwood –Benn
 Richard Van West Charles
 Conrad Wright
 Edith Bynoe

As their names were called, the Members answered.

The Clerk :Persons who were elected by the Regional Democratic Councils on 17th January, 1981, and whose names were announced by the Elections Commission on 20th January, 1981:

Kenneth Jones
 Khelanand V. Jairam
 Cora A. Singh
 Walter Bipat
 Howard London
 Issac Chowritmootoo
 Nellie Charles
 Dianne Abraham
 Abel Dorrick
 Denzil Hinds

As their names were called, the Members answered, with the exception of Cde. Denzil Hinds, who was absent at the time of the call.

The Clerk: Persons, who were elected by the National Congress of Local Democratic Organs on 26th January, 1981:

Rudy Bishop
 Bhagmatee Latchminarayan.

As their names were called, the Members answered

ELECTION OF SPEAKER

The Clerk: The National Assembly is now required to elect a Speaker and I invite nomination for the office.

The Prime Minister: (Cde. Dr. Reid): Cde. Clerk, I wish to nominate Cde. Sase Narain as a fit and proper person to be Speaker of this Assembly.

The Vice-President, Parliamentary Affairs and Party/State Relations (Cde. Ramsaroop)
Seconded.

The Clerk: Comrades and hon. Members, there is one nomination. Cde. Sase Narain has

2.10 p.m.

[The Clerk contd.]

been proposed by Cde. Dr. Reid, the Prime Minister. The nomination has been seconded by Cde. Ramsaroop, Vice-President. There being no other nominations, I, in accordance with the Standing Orders, declares Cde. Sase Narain to be Speaker of the National Assembly. [Applause]

I will now invite the Proposer and the Seconder of Cde. Sase Narain to escort him to the Chair.

[The Prime Minister and the Vice-President, Parliamentary Affairs and Party/State Relations (Cde. Ramsaroop), escorted the Speaker to the Chair.]

The Speaker bowed to the Assembly and invited members to be seated.

[The Speaker in the Chair.]

ELECTION OF DEPUTY SPEAKER

The Speaker: Comrades, and hon. Members, the duty of the Assembly now is to elect a Member of the National Assembly to be Deputy Speaker. May I have nominations, please.

The Prime Minister: Cde. Speaker, I beg to nominate Cde. Ram Karran as a fit and proper person for the office of Deputy Speaker.

Cde. Ramsaroop: Seconded

The Speaker: Are there any other proposals? There being no other proposals, I declare Cde. Ram Karran duly elected Deputy Speaker. [Applause]

OATHS

The Speaker: We are all now required to make and subscribed the Oath and this will be administered by the Clerk in accordance with the Standing Orders.

The Oath of office was administered to and made and subscribed by the following members:

Cde. Sase Narain, O.R., J.P., Speaker
 Cde. Ram Karran, Deputy Speaker
 Cde. Dr. P.A. Reid, O.E., Prime Minister
 Cde. S.S. Naraine, A.A., Vice-President, Works and Transport
 Cde. H.D. Hoyte, S.C., Vice-President, Economic Planning and Finance
 Cde. H. Green, Vice-President, Public Welfare
 Cde. B. Ramsaroop, Vice-President, Parliamentary Affairs and Party/State Relations
 Cde. R. Chandisingh, Minister of Higher Education
 Cde. O.E. Clarke, Minister of Regional Development
 Cde. R.H.O. Corbin, Minister of National Development
 Cde. F.E. Hope, Minister of Trade and Consumer Protection
 Cde. H.O. Jack, Minister of Energy and Mines

Cde. Dr. M. Shahabuddeen, O.R., S.C., Attorney General and Minister of Justice
 Cde. R.E. Jackson, Minister of Foreign Affairs
 Cde. S.A. Tyndall, A.A., Minister of Agriculture
 Cde. S.A. Moore, Minister of Home Affairs
 Cde. J.R. Thomas, Minister of Education
 Cde. J.P. Chowritmootoo, J.P., Minister, Environment and Water Supply, in the Ministry of Public Welfare
 Cde. U.E. Johnson, Minister of Co-operatives
 Cde. J.N. Maitland-Singh, Minister, Consumer Protection, in the Ministry of Trade and Consumer Protection.
 Cde. S. Prashad, Minister, Crops and Live Stock, in the Ministry of Agriculture
 Cde. Sallahuddin, Minister, Finance, in the Ministry of Economic Planning and Finance.
 Cde. R.E. Williams, Minister, Fisheries, in the Ministry of Agriculture
 Cde. C.A. Nascimento, Minister, Mechanical Equipment, in the Ministry of Works and Transport
 Cde. F.U.A Campbell, Minister of Information
 Cde. F.U.A. Carmichael, Minister, Forestry, in the Ministry of Agriculture
 Cde. Y.V. Harewood-Been, Minister of Public service
 Cde. H. Rashid, Minister, office of the President
 Cde. R.C. Van Sluytman, Minister, Draining and Irrigation, of Public Welfare
 Cde. R.A. Van West Charles, Minister, Health, in the Ministry of Education, Social Development and Culture
 Cde. M. Corrica, Minister of State for Culture, in the Ministry of Education, Social Development and Culture
 Cde. C.E. Wright, Minister of State for Construction, in the Ministry of Works and Transport.
 Cde. A.W. Bend-Kirton, Parliamentary Secretary, Women's Affairs and Housing.
 Cde. P.A. Rayman, Parliamentary Secretary, Office of the Minister
 Cde. E.M. Bynoe, Parliamentary Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister
 Cde. D.A.N. Ally
 Cde. M. Armogan
 Cde. B. Beniprashad
 Cde. B. Bhaggan
 Cde. J.B. Calderia
 Cde. A.A. Chin
 Cde. E B. Davidson
 Cde. Harry Doobay
 Cde. A. B Felix
 Cde. E.H.A. Fowler
 Cde. P. Fredericks
 Cde. E.F. Gilbert
 Cde. J. Gill
 Cde. A. McRae
 Cde. J.M. Munroe
 Cde. R.N. Primo
 Cde. R.N. C.G. Sharma
 Cde. H.L.B. Sukhu, M.S
 Cde. B. Tiwari
 Cde. C. Vandenburg
 Cde. H.B. Walcott, J.P., Government Chief Whip
 Cde. R. Bishop, M.S.
 Cde. B. Latchminarayan
 Cde. K.N. Jones
 Cde. K.V. Jairam
 Cde. C.A. Singh
 Cde. W. Bipat
 Cde. H.I. London, M.S.
 Cde. I. Chowritmootoo
 Cde. N.R. Charles
 Cde. D. Abraham
 Cde. A. Dorrick
 Cde. D. Hinds

Cde. Dr. C. Jagan, Minority Leader
Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud, J.P., Minority Chief Whip
Cde. N. Persaud
Cde. C.C. Collymore
Cde. Cde. I. Basir
Cde. C.C. Belgrave
Cde. Dalchand, J.P
Mr. M.F. Singh, J.P
Mr. M.A. Abraham

[Absent –Cde. S.F. Mohamed.]

3.15 p.m.

PRAYERS

The Clerk read the following Prayer:

“Almighty God, we, who are here gathered together, do most humbly beseech thee to guide us in all our consultations, so that we may together build a land where knowledge is free, where the mind is without fear and the head is held high, and where words come from the depth of truth.

Grant us, O God, this aid and guidance, so that we may deal justly with the several causes that come before us, laying aside all private interests, prejudices and personal preferences, so that the result of our counsels may be to the glory of thy Blessed Name, the maintenance of true religion, the preservation of justice, the safety, honour and happiness of the President and the peace and prosperity of Guyana.

Grant us, O God, the vision so to lead, that all the people of this fair land may enter into that state of brotherhood and unity, where the mind is led forward by thee into ever widening though and action.”

REMARKS BY THE PRIME MINISTER

The Speaker: Cde. Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: (Cde. Dr. Reid): Cde. Speaker, I wish on behalf of the People’s National Congress Government to congratulate you on becoming elected to this very high and very responsible office in this Assembly. [Applause]

Some elections are plagued with uncertainties and anxieties but I am certain there could have been no doubt about your election. You have become one who has been able to bear the heat and burden of the day and carry the joys and satisfactions of being Speaker in past Parliaments. I am certain it is agreed by all that you are not only good steel but tempered steel. [Applause]

Cde.Speaker, I therefore heartily congratulate you on this very distinguished honour which has come to you and wish you a very successful term of office. Knowing you as I do I have every confidence that you will discharge your onerous duties with distinction to yourself and in the service of this Assembly and the people of Guyana. Our dear Executive President is not a Member of the Assembly but I am sure how he would have warmed your heart is extending congratulations to you if he were present. I wish, however, with your permission to include him in this compliment.

Cde. Deputy Speaker, I congratulate you and wish you no less if not no more and state that we expect from you the same kind of service in the name of the Assembly and the country and people of Guyana. [Applause] It is indeed my privilege not only to congratulate you both on behalf of the Minority Party, the People's National Congress, and the Members of this Assembly but also to promise you our unstinted support so that your term of office will be marked by effectiveness and by excellence in general.

Cde. Speaker, again in congratulating you and your Deputy and in wishing you a fruitful term of office, may I crave you indulgence and the indulgence of this Assembly to express a few thoughts. The first is the need for us to appreciate and accept the new role which we as individuals, as parties, and as a body must play in order that there will be service to all Guyanese and promotion of nationwide development –physically, intellectually, socially and culturally through greater and higher productivity in this country of ours.

In the history of Guyana, the year 1891 seems like yesterday. However, it is actually 90 years ago-almost a century. It was under the Constitution of that year that the first Guyanese to enter this House as a Member.

Since then so much has happened to change not only the complexion of this Assembly but also its very purpose so that among the many results we Guyanese have been able today to choose the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of this Assembly and to choose such distinguished Guyanese to hold these positions. I am, therefore, very happy to underline that there is no one in this Assembly today, whether as Prime Minister, Speaker or Deputy Speaker or ordinary Member who is not a Guyanese citizen either by birth or naturalization.

Cde. Speaker, a while ago I mentioned the year 1891. It might be useful at this first meeting of this new Parliament to remind ourselves that the colonial system was based on metropolitan control. Local activities in policy matters was grudgingly granted and sparingly exercised. Emancipated slaves bought villages and established rules of governance. This was the establishment of a constitutional system albeit not legally recognized by the colonial Government. But that a practical level there was a valid and organized system of village government is clearly indicated by Allan Young's reference to the fact that the 1845 Ordinance for the village of Queenstown on the Essequibo Coast was far better than what was in existence by the British for it included among those who had the opportunity to vote, the privilege to vote, a female shareholder. And as we look around this Assembly, it is adorned with so many females.

3.35 p.m.

The system of village Government which the emancipated slaves established must thus be deemed worthy of consideration on an occasion like this. The freed slaves, as Barkley pointed out, were also interested in having a say in the policies created by the central Government. On December 27th 1845, the reform meeting held in Mahaica and organized by the villages, passed a resolution calling for the disallowance of legislation which was seen as having a direct tendency

to destroy the liberty of the subject and to place power in one class to tyrannize and oppress the other. Such has been our history.

But, Cde.Speaker, the demand by the villagers for a voice in Government was taken up by the middle class, composed of professionals and merchants, and by 1891 the stage was reached where constitutional reform was enacted and thus came into being the 1891 constitution which brought elections in January 1892. It is worthy of note that the result of the 1892 elections returned every old financial representative to the new House and even the idol of the proletariat, Patrick Dargan, lost in those elections. It was not until four years later, 1896 that Patrick Dargan obtained a seat and by 1900 A.B. Brown became, in reality, the first leader to sit in the Assembly. Then later came J.A. Luckhoo. They had an objective to operate in the interest of the broad masses. In more recent times, many of us would remember that sir Eustace Woolford was the first Speaker in Guyana's history. He was, however, nominated by the then Governor. And the dear lady, Mrs. Janet Jagan, was the first elected Deputy Speaker. This was 1953. In 1961, R.B. Gajraj, under a new self-Government Constitution, was the first elected Speaker of this House. I gave those facts as part of our history, useful I would think, for us who have to carry on in this Assembly.

Cde.Speaker, I am also very happy to state that this Assembly today involves our Guyanese people as never before. The election of the Members of the National Assembly for instance, involves several stages. It is just a few days ago that Guyana witnessed the last stage in the new election process for membership with the election at the national level of the two members to represent the National Congress of Local Democratic Organs. Shortly before that, ten Members of this National Assembly were elected by the ten regions into which our country is now divided making the direct representation for Local Government twelve. Previous to that action, as is now good history, fifty-three core Members of the National Assembly were elected through the general elections of 15th December, 1980 under that democratic system known as proportional representation. So the people of Guyana, we may truly say, have the votes in this National Assembly of 65 Members, not only the 12 of direct Local Government elections, not only the 41 of the majority People's National Congress, but the entire 65, including the 12 of the Minority Parties.

It would not be proper for me to take leave of the subject of your re-election to the high office of speaker of this National Assembly without remarking on the distinction which we all share, you as speaker, we, as members in sitting together in the most democratically committed legislature ever put together for this country. [Applause]

Since the dissolution of Parliament last October, three important popular elections have been held, namely, Presidential elections, general elections and regional elections. These expressions of the popular will have transformed the nature of our public life in important ways. In place of a single national deliberative institution, we now have three namely, National Assembly, National Congress of Local Democratic Organs, and the Supreme Congress of the People. Local Government interests are represented in all three of these bodies. It is, however, only necessary for us to speak here of the National Assembly. When Parliament last sat, the

National Assembly, excluding non-elected personnel, consisted of members elected nationally and belonging to three different political parties. National elections have continued. The multi-party system has continued. The two minority parties are still represented in this National Assembly. But as I said, in addition, we have others.

For the reasons given during the debate in the Constituent Assembly which framed this Constitution and by Cde. Vice-President Desmond Hoyte, Minister of Economic Planning and Finance, when moving the second Reading of the Local Democratic Organs Bill, the new Constitution had given express recognition to the importance of Local Government which is now seen as an integral and indeed all-pervasive element of the decision-making processes of the state. It is now seen as the basic apparatus for developing this country and for accelerating the transformation in all those manifold ways in which it must move forward if it is to achieve the socialist objectives set out in the second Chapter of our Constitution in which we have laid down the principles and bases of the political, economic and social system of the Republic. To achieve these objectives the Constitution has not merely enjoyed the construction of an entirely different system of local democracy with new goals and enlarged purposes, but has also provided for Local Government members to be elected to sit as Members of the National Assembly.

3.35 p.m.

As we know, one Member of the National Assembly has been elected by the members of each of our ten Democratic Regions, who have themselves been directly elected by the people. Each Regional Democratic Council having elected two of its members to the National Congress of Local Democratic Organs, the National Congress of Local Democratic Organs, has it turn, elected two of its members to sit as Members of the National Assembly.

In this way, we have amongst us today, the numbers I have said already. On behalf of the Government I welcome them most cordially to their seats in this chamber. [Applause]. We are sure that they will contribute in the same ample measure to the deliberations of the National Congress of Local Democratic Organs and the Supreme Congress of the People of which they are also members.

It is our duty, Cde. Speaker, to carry out the business of this Assembly in such a way that all Guyanese and all Guyana will benefit greatly from our discussions and decisions. It is for this reason, as the history of our country attests, that we sought the taking-over of this House of Assembly, and even though painfully and slowly, succeeded in doing so. Cde. Speaker, if we do not now spend the time in this Assembly working only for our people and our country, we will not only be throwing away our grains but also be leaving the people very disappointed and our country would suffer.

On behalf of the Government I would also like to extend a friendly welcome to Members of the Minority. [Applause] I wish to assure them of the deep desire of the Government to profit from their counsels both inside and outside of this Assembly. I would correspondingly invite them to tender their counsels with the constructiveness and sense of creativity intended to be

emphasized by the new Constitution, when I choose the expression “Minority Leader” in preference to the older and often misunderstood expression “Leader of the Opposition.”

The right of a minority Party to advance its views as vigorously as it considers necessary is fully respected both by the Constitution and by this Government. Opposition for the sake of opposition is another thing. That is mere obstruction and mere obstruction is always a negative thing. We hope to see, instead of obstruction, the growth of a more positive relationship between the two sides of this Assembly with a view to advancing the common weal of the people of Guyana. Indeed, I would welcome, and for my part, encourage the cultivation on all sides of more flexible responses and the corresponding elimination of all traces of reactionary behavior. I would hope to see the policies of the Government examined and examined closely but helpfully by members of all parties on all sides in the Assembly.

Without wishing to belabor this matter, Cde.Speaker, I crave your continued indulgence to remind ourselves how very destructive conflicts have been to us in the past. We must become aware, if we are not yet aware of the sources of those conflicts, for they were created, they are not natural. The people, who wanted us to be in conflict, have today been physically removed from our midst, but their systems, their institutions and teachings, and their influences are still in our minds and midst, in cases invisibly but all tellingly. We must therefore be wise enough to prevent those erstwhile rulers and exploiters from succeeding in their absence. Today we have PEOPLE’S POWER, and should use it effectively. We must therefore know PEOPLE’S POWER FOR WHAT. It calls for a new kind of understanding as to what this National Assembly now stands for, calls for and cannot tolerate.

I wish, Cde.Speaker, to make mention of a few Articles from the People’s new Constitution Chapter II, Article 9:

“Sovereignty belongs to the people, who exercise it through their representatives and the democratic organs established by or under this constitution.

The right to form political parties and their freedom of action are guaranteed. Political parties must respect the principles of national sovereignty and of democracy.

Local government by freely elected representatives of the people is an integral part and of democratic organization of the state.”

Those are taken from the Constitution.

It is for this reason that I will suggest to mark this occasion that we resolve to have a library for Parliament as well as a Reading Room so that the cut and thrust of debates would remain essential and lively, and sensibly in this Assembly. There will be, of course, lapses, that all of us must reflect on, as you have heard some lapses a while ago but they do not last, they are just passing.

What could do permanent damage to the development of our parliamentary institution is the growth of a spirit of intolerance. I urge that all within these walls be ever mindful of our roles and work earnestly towards their realization.

I would earnestly invite all members, Cde.Speaker, to pledge themselves to a new spirit of

understanding and co-operation. In the last analysis that must be the foundation of the nation, to set out to build and we must begin by laying the cornerstone in this very Chamber.

Finally, may I once again congratulate you, Cde.Speaker, on your election, and you Cde. Deputy Speaker on your election, and wish you and all members of the National Assembly a satisfying and constructive term of office at the beginning of this new and important era of the history of this country of ours. [Applause]

3.45 p.m.

REMARKS BY THE SPEAKER

The Speaker: Comrades and hon. Members, as I accept this high office, I pledge myself to maintain to my utmost capacity the ideals and objectives of the constitution from which our Parliament derives its existence and authority.

As Speaker of this First Assembly under our Constitution, I conceive of my role as being the servant of those who serve. It is in this spirit that I accept the high office to which you have elected me. Gratifying as it is to be elected to the high office of speaker, I am conscious of the unique opportunity which it will provide me to serve once again the people of my country through their Parliamentary representatives.

As we look towards the new era which will be shaped by this potent instrument of Parliament it may not be amiss to look back at the way we have travelled. I had then, too, the opportunity of observing the role of Parliament from the vantage point of the office of speaker to which your predecessors had elected me. It would be untrue to say that the preceding Parliament of our old Constitution was ineffective, as indeed it had initiated and presided over fundamental changes in our political development and in our economy, but it was reflective of the values and traditions of a society quite different from our own. It was for this reason that we move to a Republican Constitution reform. It was soon clear that what was needed was not an amendment or patch-work but a completely new constitutional instrument fashioned in our own image and immediately responsive to our needs and aspirations.

It was in implementation of this perception that the Constituent Assembly, of which I had the privilege to be the Chairman, was established. The processes of consultation leading up to the drafting, adoption and promulgation of the new Constitution are well known and need not be repeated here.

The test of a new Constitution is in its effectiveness and in its provisions for an instrument which is responsive to the aspirations of a people within a situation of accelerating change. It can only function in this way if its chief component, the parliamentary organ, is truly representative of the people in all their varied situations. As we look around at the membership of this Assembly it cannot be disputed that it is truly representative and more so than any Assembly or legislature which has hitherto met in the history of our country.

Thus the new Constitution has already met triumphantly the supreme test in providing us with a representative Assembly reflective of every shade of opinion and circumstance of our country.

I wish to suggest that your contributions in this honourable Assembly should not be abusive and acrimonious as these tendencies destroyed the fabric of a society. Let your contributions be without hatred and be constructive. We owe it to our nation, ourselves and to our children. We should not descend to the level of making remarks derogatory of members. No one will respect institutions of our creation unless we, the authors, do so. I seek your co-

operation to uphold the high ideals and traditions of the Assembly and I undertake to effectively enforce the rules and discipline of this Assembly.

I again seek the co-operation of the Deputy Speaker, Clerk and Deputy Clerk and all members of staff and remind them that without their unstinted support which they have always readily rendered in the past, the exacting responsibility of my office would be indeed a heavy burden on my shoulder.

To the communication media I wish to say that the duties of responsible journalism in this new era of our nation's history demand impartiality, integrity and accuracy and I would exhort and rely on them to keep our people informed of the deliberations of this august Assembly.

I wish to thank my proposer and seconded for nominating me and the Assembly for approving my election as Speaker of the National Assembly. I feel honored and grateful for the remarks so kindly made by the hon. Prime Minister and first Vice-President and assure him and this honourable Assembly that I will not betray the confidence reposed in me, and will display the same qualities to which he has referred in his congratulatory remarks and will not depart from the traditions that pertain to the high office of Speaker.

To the Cde. Prime Minister and First Vice-President, to all other Vice-Presidents, Senior Ministers, Ministers, Ministers of State, Parliamentary Secretaries, Leader of the Minority Party, Deputy Speaker and all other members of this Assembly, I extend congratulations, and I wish you good health, success and God's blessings in your future endeavors and deliberations.

On behalf of the Assembly and on my own behalf, I am sure you will wish me to offer warm and sincere congratulations to His Excellency the President, Cde. F.L.S. Burnham, on his election by the nation as the People's first elected President. [Applause] of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana and wish him continued health, strength and wisdom to guide the destiny of our nation. To his charming, dedicated and noble spouse, whose support to His Excellency has been a pillar of strength, we extend our best wishes for good health and happiness.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Appointments

The Speaker: I would like to announce, for the record, the following appointments.

- (i) Appointments made by the President with effect from 1st January, 1981:

Prime Minister

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

Other Vice-Presidents

Cde. S.S. Naraine, A.A., Vice-President, Works and Transport

Cde. H.D. Hoyte, S.C., Vice-President, Economic Planning and Finance

Cde. H. Green, Vice-President, Public Welfare

Cde. B. Ramsaroop, Vice-President, Parliamentary Affairs and Party/State Relations

Senior Ministers

Cde. R. Chandisingh, Minister of Higher Education

Cde. O.E. Clarke, Minister of Regional Development
 Cde. R.H.O. Corbin, Minister of National Development
 Cde. F. E. Hope, Minister of Trade and Consumer Protection
 Cde. H.O. Jack, Minister of Energy and Mines
 Cde. Dr. M. Shahabuddeen, O.R., S.C., Attorney General and Minister of Justice
 Cde. R.E. Jackson, Minister of Foreign Affairs
 Cde. J.A. Tyndall, A.A, Minister of Agriculture
 Cde. S.A. Moore, Minister of Home Affairs
 Cde. J.R. Thomas, Minister of Education

Ministers

Cde. J.P. Chowritmootoo, J.P, Minister, Environment and Water Supply, in the Ministry of Public Welfare.
 Cde. U.E. Johnson, Minister of Co-operatives
 Cde. J.N. Maitland-Singh, Minister, Consumer Protection, in the Ministry of Trade and Consumer Protection
 Cde. S. Prashad, Minister, Crops and Live Stock in the Ministry of Agriculture
 Cde. Sallahuddin, Minister, Finance, in the Ministry of Economic Planning and Finance
 Cde. R.E. Williams, Minister, Fisheries in the Ministry of Agriculture
 Cde. C.A. Nascimento, Minister, Mechanical Equipment, in the Ministry of Works and Transport
 Cde. F.U.A. Campbell, Minister of Information
 Cde. F.U.A. Carmicheal, Minister, Forestry, in the Ministry of Agriculture
 Cde. Y.V. Harewood-Benn, Minister of Public Service
 Cde. H. Rashid, Minister, Office of the President
 Cde. R.C. Van Sluytman, Minister, Drainage and Irrigation, in the Ministry of Agriculture
 Cde. R.A. Van West-Charles, Minister, Health, in the Ministry of Public Welfare.

Ministers of State

Cde. M. Corrica, Minister of state for Culture, in the Ministry of Education, Social Development and Culture
 Cde. R.C. Fredericks, A.A. Minister of State for Youth and Sport, in the Ministry of National Development
 Cde. C.E. Wright, Minister of State for Construction, in the Ministry of Works and Transport.

Parliamentary Secretaries

Cde. A.W. Bend-Kirton, Parliamentary Secretary, Women's Affairs and Housing
 Cde. P.A. Rayman, Parliamentary Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister
 Cde. E.M. Bynoe, Parliamentary Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister.

(ii) Minority Leader

Minority Leader is Cde. Dr. Cheddi Jagan

(iii) Chief Whips

(a) The Government Chief Whip is Cde. H.B. Walcott, J.P.

(b) The Minority Chief Whip is Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud, J.P.

APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEE OF SELECTION

The Speaker: Our next business is to appoint the Committee of Selection. In accordance with our Standing Orders, the Committee is to consist of the Speaker as Chairman and not less than six or more than ten members to be nominated by the National Assembly. The Committee is to be so constituted as to ensure, as far as is possible, that the balance of parties in the Assembly

will be reflected in the Committee. It therefore means that if the Committee is to have ten members, eight must be from the People's National Congress and two from the Minority. I therefore invite nominations

Cde. Ramsaroop: I wish to nominate the following members for membership on the Committee of Selection:

Cde. O.E. Clarke
 Cde. Robert Corbin
 Cde. Urmia Johnson
 Cde. Philomena Rayman
 Cde. Eugene F. Gilbert
 Cde. Harold L.B. Singh
 Cde. Huldah B. Walcott
 Cde. Ramsaroop

Cde. Ram Karran: (The Deputy Speaker): I beg to nominate to the Committee of Selection, Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud

The Speaker: And yourself, Cde. Ram Karran

Cde. Ram Karran: Yes, Sir.

The Speaker: I therefore declare the ten persons duly nominated to be members of the Committee of Selection.

ADJOURNMENT

The Speaker: Comrades and hon. Members, we have come to the end of the business of this our first sitting of the National Assembly. I would like to thank all of you for attending and I invite you after the Adjournment to drinks in the Committee Room.

Resolved: "That this Assembly do now adjourn until Monday, 9th February, 1981, at 4:30 p.m." /The Vice-President, Parliamentary Affairs and Party/State Relations./

Adjourned accordingly at 3.55 p.m.