

**THE  
PARLIMENTARY DEBATES  
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**[VOLUME 7]**

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

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**201<sup>st</sup> Sitting**

**2 p.m.**

**Thursday, 20th December, 1979**

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**MEMBERS OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (63)**

**Speaker**

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

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

**Prime Minister (1)**

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

**(Absent – on leave)**

**Deputy Prime Minister (1)**

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

**Senior Ministers (11)**

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

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

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

**(Absent – on leave)**

\* 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

\* Cde. R.E. Jackson,  
Minister of Foreign Affairs

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

### **Ministers (2)**

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

**(Absent)**

### **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  
(Mazaruni/Potaro)

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

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

Cde. J.R. Thomas,  
Minister of State, Ministry of Education,  
Social Development and Culture

\*Cde. R.H.O. Corbin,  
Minister of State for Youth and Sport,  
Ministry of National Development

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

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

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

\*Cde. H. Rashid,  
Minister of State,  
Office of the Prime Minister

### **Parliamentary Secretaries (6)**

\*Cde. M.M. Ackman, C.C.H.,  
Parliamentary Secretary, Office of the  
Prime Minister, and Government Chief Whip **(Absent – on leave)**

\*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. **(Absent – on leave)**

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

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

\*Cde. J.G. Ramson,  
Parliamentary Secretary,  
Ministry of Works and Transport

**Other Members (10)**

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

**Members of the Opposition (16)**

**(i) Peoples' Progressive Party (14)**

**Leader of the Opposition (1)**

Cde. C. Jagan,  
Leader of the Opposition (Absent)

**Deputy Speaker (1)**

Cde. Ram Karran,  
Deputy Speaker

**Other Members (12)**

Cde. J. Jagan (Absent)  
Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud, J.P., Opposition Chief Whip  
Cde. Narbada Persaud  
Cde. C. Collymore  
Cde. S.F. Mohamed  
Cde. I. Basir  
Cde. C.C. Belgrave (Absent)

**\*Non-elected Ministers**

Cde. R. Ally  
Cde. Dalchand, J.P.  
Cde. Dindayal  
Cde. H. Nokta  
Cde. P. Sukhai

**(Absent – on leave)**

**(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.

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

20.12.79

National Assembly

2.05 – 2.15 p.m.

2.05 p.m.

## PRAYERS

### ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

#### Leave To Members

**The Speaker:** Leave has been granted to the Cde. Prime Minister, to the Minister of Economic Development and Co-operatives, Cde. Hoyte, and to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Cde. Jack, and to Cde. Nokta for today's sitting.

### PUBLIC BUSINESS

#### MOTIONS

#### APPROVAL OF FINANCIAL PAPER NO. 3/1979

“Be it resolved that the Committee of Supply approve of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 3/1979 – Schedule of Supplementary Provision on the Current and Capital Estimates for the period ended 12<sup>th</sup> December, 1979, totaling \$14,138,280. [**The Minister of Finance**]

*Assembly in Committee of Supply.*

**The Minister of Finance** (Cde. Hope): In accordance with article 80 (2) of the Constitution, I signify that the Cabinet has recommended for consideration by the National Assembly the Motion for the approval of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 3 of 1979, Schedule of Supplementary Provision on the Current and Capital estimates for the period ended 12<sup>th</sup> December, 1979, totaling \$14,183,280, and I now move the Motion.

*Motion Proposed.*

**The Chairman:** We will now consider the schedule page by page. We will deal with Audit first.

**Cde. Ram Karran** (The Deputy Speaker): Your Honour, I wish to raise a simple question on item (1), also, I wish to speak on items (2), (3) --

**The Chairman:** No. We will deal with Audit.

**Cde. Ram Karran:** Very well. Item 1, Head 5 – Audit, subhead 4 – Miscellaneous. The legend here recorded is “To purchase snacks for officers working overtime”, and that this amount has been advanced from the Contingencies Fund. I remember that recommendations made from this side of the House suggested an increase in the Audit staff and increases were made some time ago in the number of qualified auditors.

### **2.10 p.m.**

One needs to ask the reason why overtime work is being undertaken by this expanded department and one needs to ask as well, since it is public knowledge that the work of the Audit Department- it has been no recorded by the Auditor General- why it is not up to date. He has given various reasons for this and this House must be astounded. I think the country, the nation, the people who contribute to the national coffers ought to know the reason why the report for the year 1970 was submitted by the Auditor General about five months ago.

We are living in the year of Our Lord 1979, soon to go to 1980. Is this extra overtime work which is being undertaken by the staff, intended to improve the situation in so far as the Auditor General's reports are concerned? From the report of the Auditor General it is my impression that it is not his office that is at fault but it is that the Ministries fail to supply the necessary information. They refuse to answer queries. They put queries into cubby holes and the queries never come out again. So why is this money being spent? What overtime work is going to be undertaken by the Auditor General and his staff, and when we are going to get the reports as they should be had, two, four, six or even twelve months after the year is ended? How long are we going to be troubled with a situation where our records are 10 years behind hand?

None of these hon. Gentlemen sitting here would allow their wives to run their homes and not give an account even though they account to themselves every week, every month or even every year. Which one of them, including the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, who is laughing, is going to operate his business and not keep a proper account for 10 years.

We are bankrupt, we are told from all quarters. If you look at the thing you will see how much we are indebted. We know we are indebted, but our bookkeeping is not up to date. This is such a serious parliamentary offence that in other Parliaments the hon. Minister- particularly the hon. Minister of Finance- would have a vote of No Confidence registered against him and he would be out of the House by his ears. What is he telling us? To come here to vote for more snacks for officers whose work is 10 years behind? How in the name of God are we going to get our country running on a proper financial bearing?

My Hon. Friend, the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, has been repeatedly making representations for the work of the Public Accounts Committee to be done. We sit here, we pass money and we cannot have an opportunity to examine how that money is being spent. This is almost criminal. For lesser offences than this, people are hauled before the Magistrates and before the judges of this country, yet in the highest forum in the country, in the Parliament, we cannot have proper accounting. We have all sorts of suggestions of misdemeanours on the part of very highly placed people. I would like my friend to explain if this is a proper way in which the country's finances should be conducted.

**Mr. M.F. Singh:** Mr. Chairman, in addition to supplementing what the last speaker said, I would like to state that certainly these officers in the Audit Department, as I happen to know, are very hard working, dedicated and devoted officers. I happen to know that the department is short-staffed and certainly if the officers work overtime they are not, as I know, paid overtime. If they work overtime, then I have no quarrel whatsoever with the voting of \$2,000 to provide snacks for those officers who work overtime. That is not the quarrel, but we must be fair to those officers. They are working overtime. We are asked to vote \$2,000 for them but we know for a



fact that the last Audit Report tabled in this honourable House is in respect of the year 1970. Therefore, on the face of it, it does appear that the Audit Department is not doing its work. On the face of it the Department is nearly 10 years behindhand – at least 9 years. That is why I said we must be fair to them. We cannot let the public go away feeling that these officers are being given snacks for working overtime and yet their work is so far behindhand.

What is the true position? Is it the fault of the officers that the last Report tabled here is in respect of 1970? Is this their fault? I know that was the Report that was tabled in Parliament. I want to ask several questions to be fair to these officers. What is the year of the last Report which has been sent in to the Government by the Auditor General? What is the year of the last completed account submitted by the Accountant General to the Auditor General? What is the year of the last completed account submitted by the Accountant General to the Auditor General? We have the 1970 Report but what was the year of the last Report sent to the Government? He may have sent another but we might not have received it. He must tell us what is the year of the last Report he has sent in to the Government which we have not yet received.

I am a member of the Public Accountants Committee and I know. I have sat at meetings and have heard the difficulties, the constraints, the lack of information forthcoming from the departments which prevent, and indeed, seriously hinder the Audit Department from doing its work. I happen to know also that there is a statutory time limit within which the accounts up to 31<sup>st</sup> December in any year should be submitted to the Auditor General for audit. I am not sure of the exact timing but I think it is about the middle of the year. We are at the end of 1979. Have the accountants up to the 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1978, been submitted by the Accountant General to the Auditor General for his audit as yet? If they have not been, I am sure that the statutory requirements are being contravened. I am positive about that. I don't want it to appear that these officers are being given snacks and their work is nearly nine years behindhand. Let us know whose fault it is. Let us know what is the year of the last Report submitted to the Government. Let us know whether the Accountant General has been submitting the accounts in time. Let us know, for example, whether the accounts for 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1977, have been submitted to the

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Auditor General for audit. We must have the answers to these questions in order to give the public a realistic position on the working of this department.

**The Chairman:** Cde. Minister.

**Cde. Hope:** Cde. Chairman, I wish to make the position with respect to the auditing of the Government accountants very clear at this stage. I think that because of a misunderstanding - or an apparent misunderstanding – on the part of the members who spoke, there is a good chance that the public and the rest of the House would in fact also be misled in terms of the nature of the auditing of the Government accounts. I want to say, first of all, very positively that Government accounts are audited continuously. It is on the basis of that continuous audit that the Auditor General can send audit queries practically daily to different Ministries with respect to spending **[Interruption]** The members say they know that, but for a moment, as they spoke, I suspected, or felt, that they did not know that and what they probably were doing was trying to mislead the public.

**2.20 p.m.**

There is and there has been for many, many years an audit section, a section of the Auditor General's Department, a section of the staff, resident continuously in the Treasury, carrying out continuous and daily audit. What is involved at this stage is the annual account, the balance sheet which is really a summary of all their spending, and the vouchers which the Auditor General has already seen, so it is wrong to believe that because the annual audit is not ready, Government accounts are not being audited. I want to make this point very clear. The auditing of Government accounts goes on daily.

As of now, Cde. Speaker, the Auditor General has received annual accounts which, as I said before, were really a summary of the various audited vouchers seen throughout the year. We have received the annual accounts for 1971, 1972, and 1973. I suspect the annual accounts for

1974 were with him during the course of this same week. So there are a few years outstanding. *[Comrades (Opposition): "That is against the law."]* In the meantime, Cde. Speaker, the 1978 monthly accounts have been completed: January right up to December. The 1979 monthly accounts have been completed up to November of this year. As of last week, the monthly accounts for 1979 were completed up to November, 1979, so what has been happening, Cde. Speaker, is that there has been a backlog, but the backlog has been tackled, and is being tackled, but at the forward and the end. We are bridging the years up to date, and we are keeping the current years up to date.

Part of the problem as we all know, is the fact that the Government certainly, and I think we need to understand that very clearly, inherited a backlog since 1964 when this Government came into office. It is true, you might say, the Government ought to have completed that backlog already, but the fact is, Cde. Speaker, that it was not easy to catch up on the backlog which was left by the P.P.P. when it was in power - **[Interruption]** - and, at the same time, keep the accounts up to date. We are now trying to do that, but we must make that very clear, that part of our present difficulty is that backlog which we inherited in 1964 when we came into power. **[Interruption]** Those are the facts and they need to get hot about it.

In the meantime, Cde. Chairman, we have been improving on the computer, we have installed faster pieces of machinery in the computer room and indeed, in order to expedite the proceeding of this information, and I think we need to tell the nation what we are doing, we have, in fact, installed faster pieces of machinery in the data processing division from the periodic blackouts and outages which have been taking place over the last few months, we have installed a piece of stand-by generator, which is guaranteeing that the data processing division gets continuous electricity, gets continuous power.

Thus, in summary, Cde. Chairman, I wish to say that, I will recap very quickly; the accounts of the Government are being audited continuously. The latest report on the Government

accounts which has been put out is for November, 1979. We prepare monthly accounts and then the annual accounts. [Comrades "That's a lie!"] – The annual accounts which really represent a synthesis of the monthly accounts have been completed, 1971, 1972, and 1973, and I think the 1974 accounts were delivered some time during the course of this week. All the other years are in various stages of completion. The Auditor General has been working on these reports and it is in order to facilitate the rapid conclusion of his work that the officers have been required to work overtime. Since they are not being paid overtime, we have in fact decided to provide them with snacks when they work overtime. No one is saying, Cde.Chairman that the fault lies with the Auditor General. No one will say that, but we are doing everything possible to expedite the completion of the audit report.

I wish to finally end on this note, that we must not, if we know better, seek to mislead the House, we must not seek to mislead the nation. The auditing is taking place continuously in all the departments. There is a standing section of the Auditor General's staff, continuously resident in the Treasury, continuously doing the Treasury audit. **[Interruption]**

**The Chairman:** I don't want any further misleading. Item 2. There is nobody to speak on item 2. Item 3. **[Interruption]** No, because you are all arguing and don't want to listen to me.

**Cde. Collymore:** Item 2, Head 11 – Prime Minister – Guyana Defence Force, subhead 2 – Other Expenditure. Cde. Chairman, I rise to take a strong exception to this provision here in so far as it pertains to certain finances which were used to execute the military exercise which took place recently. The legend says that under Other Expenditure, Office of Prime Minister, the Defence Force is asking for \$3.75 million more in addition to \$14.67 million which was spent. Cde. Chairman, we know the Army has to exercise, it has to have military maneuvers, but over the years we have been observing that there are specific types of maneuvers, and we feel that these maneuvers should not be in a country where the Government says it is socialist and popular. Let us look at these maneuvers and when we analyze them, scrutinize them; we see that they are anti-popular. They are aimed at the people; they are aimed at the masses. For several

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years we have noticed this and on this occasion when the maneuvers were held in December of this year, we noted an intensification of this anti-popular nature of the military maneuvers. We rise, therefore, to take very strong exception, and to object to the financing of those maneuvers under item 2.

Cde. Chairman, we see the Government misusing the Army in the same way that it is misusing the Police Force. This is very bad for a country that says it is socialist. The Government is actually projecting the Army as the enemy of the people. Let me give you one instance of what happened.

At the Bourda Mall, there was a military exercise. They were pretending that there was a big demonstration and the demonstration got out of hand and it was anti-Government. The Army, the police, all the security forces, combined military and para-military forces, went into action and stimulated action, letting loose real tear gas. They also discharged fifteen rounds of ammunition, blanks, of course.

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Cde. Chairman, the point is this. The tear-gas actually affected people and if the rounds of ammunition were live, fifteen people would have been killed because the bullets were discharged, "bam-bam", at the people. We object to this. This is the reason why I rise here to say that the Government should change its military maneuver style and instead should use one which would defend the territorial integrity of the nation and the sovereignty of this Republic. Cde. Chairman, that is all I have to say on this.

**Mr. M.F. Singh:** Again, Mr. Chairman, I am in the position where I have to supplement what was said by the last speaker.

**The Chairman:** Now, it is supplementary estimates too, you know.

**Mr. M.F. Singh:** I am glad you noted that, sir. That is the problem. We have got too many supplementaries around here. We should do away with the supplementaries. What we would like is for this estimate to be adhered to by and large. We know that it can't be an exact thing because it is an estimate. But should it be mere guesstimates instead of estimates? Now, these estimates were passed in March this year. When they were passed in March this year the considered opinion of the Government was that they would need for the Guyana Defence Force \$14,672,427. They thought that that was what they would need and they asked for that and that is what was passed.

Now, unless they were deliberately trying to mislead this House then something radical must have happened to cause them now to come to this House and ask for 25 per cent over and above what they originally asked for. They are not only asking for the original \$14.7 million but they are asking for an additional \$3¾ million. The legend says, "Voted provision inadequate." What does that mean? When you are talking about \$3¾ million more isn't that really an insult to this honourable House that after March this year, when you told us you wanted \$14.7 million approximately, now in December you are telling us that you have already used up \$3¾ million because it has been advanced from the Contingencies Fund? It has already been spent. What are you asking us here? To rubber-stamp it? Of course, that is what they are doing. They are asking us to rubber-stamp it. They have got the majority.

I think this thing has come to be a farce now. It has really come to a ridiculous state of affairs where an original estimate has been given. Over 25 per cent has already been spent and now we are being asked "put your rubber-stamp on it." What has it been spent for? Why has it been necessary to ask for this \$3¾ million more? I don't know that it is for personal emoluments? I think even for personal emoluments they have frozen the increments. So what is it for? Is it for guns? Is it for arms, ammunition? It is an insult merely to tell the House that what had been asked for was inadequate. We are entitled to an explanation. We are spending so much on the Army while the rest of the population, they are suffering from so many shortages. We are

suffering from so many long lines. We are suffering from a lack of spare parts.

Since July last year my car was in an accident. My car was in GUYNEC. I am still waiting for spare parts from July last year to now. I am still waiting for spare parts to make my car work properly and efficiently while so much money is being spent in other sections. I think it is unfair. The least we are entitled to is some proper explanation for this additional sum. Was it unforeseen? If it was unforeseen, what is it for? Why do you think that in March you need "X" and now you want "X" plus 25 per cent? Why? Guesstimates, not estimates.

**The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Development** (Cde. Reid):  
It is unfortunate that my friends on the other side do not follow the simple happenings in this House. I want to deal first with the Contingencies Fund. There is a Fund called the Contingencies Fund which is usually passed by the House. There is a reason for that. During the course of expenditure there will be expenditure that will go in such a way that you would have to make use of that and so you separate it in advance to prepare the ground for this kind of expenditure. That is the need for Contingencies Fund. I don't see why the last speaker should emphasize this supplementary that has come, having been spent from a Fund that has been approved by this House. That is the first thing. I suppose that will be a lesson for him for all time.

In these days, if you plan anything, even if you are building a house, on any calculation in the estimates you put 10 per cent for contingencies. In normal times, not when the price of oil rises every morning. Now, these days, every other month you experience an increase in the price of petroleum and yet my friends speak without giving any indication that it is understood by them. Since that is so, and the Army is an army because it has to be mobile, it has to use trucks, jeeps, cars, motor-cycles, all sorts of moving vehicles, and as the price of petroleum goes up that expenditure must change. The same can be said for the spare parts, and I am talking now of spare parts for those moving vehicles. I am sorry that my friend is suffering from lack of spare parts. But that is another matter. The boots, the shoes, the cost to prepare the clothes that they wear, all these are affected as the price of petroleum goes up, so we have this kind of expenditure under

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“current”. If this were under “capital”, then I would have been seated already because there would not be much to say about it because there is no point coming here to say how many guns we have and so on. That’s not the part of the explanation of a serving army, and if you are a national and you believe that we must be in a position to defend the integrity of the borders of this country, then you will agree that we cannot expose any secret matters. I want to assure him that the Army is not only providing us with experiences that my friend has, because you have to do research and things like that. You have to do normal maneuvers so that the Army can be equal to the task that the Army must do. But the army is also an Army that produces and you must never forget that. It is unlike many other forces because it is producing. Many can see the areas of production of the Army. Hence when we come for \$3.7 million for contingencies, I think it is really reasonable.

I am not too interested in the questions that they ask but it gives great dissatisfaction and irritation on to this time, after so many years, that after they plant detonators in my yard I was not jailed.

**2.40 p.m.**

**The Chairman:** Item 3.

**Cde. Ram Karran:** Head 16 – Ministry of Foreign Affairs, subhead 34 – Contribution to African Liberation Movement. Item 3 is an old item, one with which this House has expressed agreement although it was initiated, as you all recall, Cde. Chairman, outside of this House without its sanction. However, subsequent to that, it was brought to this House and had, as far as I remember, unanimous approval, so there is no question of querying the increase on the original amount. What I do wish to say, however, is that I have made enquiries about the expenditure of this sum of money and I have been unable to find out exactly where this money goes. I have spoken to nationals of South Africa who are foremost in the liberation struggle against white apartheid and I have spoken to comrades from Zimbabwe. They are prominent people in the



leadership of the movement but both of these groups are unable to say where this money goes. I understand that this money might be sent to the O.A.U., the Organisation for African Unity, and I would like my friend, the honorable spokesman for this subject, to tell us exactly where this money is sent so that Members of this House, or the public, would be able to trace it.

I say that particularly because at one time the T.U.C., of which I have honour to be a member, had made a sizeable contribution for the African Liberation Movement and when an attempt was made to trace where the T.U.C. money went – I speak here without fear of contradiction – it was found that that money went into the coffers of the P.N.C. Whether the P.N.C. had sent money to that organisation or not I do not know but I questioned the position then and I question it here because I think the House is entitled to know exactly where this money is sent and who benefits from it.

There is another observation I would make in these hard times when foreign exchange is so difficult to get and when the needs of our comrades in South Africa are so great. Has the Government examined whether it would not be possible to send them some produce? It may be rice or it may be sugar. The Freedom Fighters who are engaged in battle in Zimbabwe and in South Africa are stationed miles away in Tanzania and while it is true that they need guns, I think they also need food and the Government can examine the possibility of sending instead of sending foreign exchange which is hard to get. Or perhaps they can send some of the obsolete equipment, the names of which my friend the hon. Deputy Prime Minister does not want to reveal in this House. Maybe all those guns which they are keeping to shoot down Guyanese can be sent.

**The Chairman:** Cde. Ram Karran, I will not have you say that - that the guns are being kept to shoot down Guyanese.

**Cde. Ram Karran:** Who are being shot by guns here?

**The Chairman:** That has no relevance to this.

**Cde. Ram Karran:** The Guyanese are the people who are being shot down by the guns.

**The Chairman:** Please proceed with your questions.

**Cde. Ram Karran:** Whom are they going to shoot with them? I want the Government to examine the possibility of sending either food to this value or some of the equipment which our African brothers can use against the white apartheid bastards in South Africa.

**The Chairman:** Cde. Jackson.

**The Minister of Foreign Affairs:** (Cde. Jackson): Cde. Chairman, first of all I would like to invite this House to pay tribute to the members of the Patriotic Front comprised of ZANU and ZAPU who by their valiant and persistent armed struggle over the last seven years have brought victory to the people of Zimbabwe. Secondly, I would like us to recognize that through the resolute and unstinted support which the Government had given to the Patriotic Front we have made a contribution to that victory.

After we initiated the contribution to African Liberation in 1970 it was the practice for several years to pay the amount to the Liberation Committee of the Organisation of African Unity. We have said from the beginning that it is not for us to dictate to the Freedom Fighters the use to which they should put those resources. They were in the front line of battle and they were therefore in the best position to know how to utilize that amount. Because of the closeness of the victory of the Patriotic Front we took a decision this year to make our contribution entirely to ZAPU and to ZANU and I would hope that the wisdom of this decision is recognized by all Members of this House.

The People's National Congress remains committed to the liberation of all of South Africa and we would hope that from next year we will be able to devote more resources to the people of

Namibia led by SWAPO and to the people of South Africa who valiantly oppose the racist apartheid regime installed in Pretoria.

I would have thought that the seriousness which the question of African liberation evokes would have been a sufficient deterrent to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition from making scurrilous and insinuating remarks about the final destination of funds. Indeed, I am so appalled that I think he does not even deserve the formality of a reply and I leave him to wallow in the mess in which he has enmeshed himself.

**The Chairman:** Items 4, 5 and 6. Items 7, 8, 9 and 10.

**Cde. Ram Karran:** The sum of \$5,000 is a negligible amount.

**The Chairman:** Please tell me which item.

**Cde. Ram Karran:** Item 9. Head 22 – Ministry of Home Affairs – Police, subhead 21 – Prevention and Detection of Crime. The legend carries the usual statement: “Voted provision inadequate on account of increased activities.” Will the hon. Minister say what is this for? This is not travelling. My friend said that the price of petroleum has gone up. What is the increased activity? It is a small amount but nevertheless one is very concerned about the prevention and detection of crime. “Hoarding”, my friend said from his seat. I do not know if we can take the answer to be adequate. Will he please tell us what this increase is?

**The Chairman:** Cde. Collymore. You do not want to speak? If you do not pay attention I will pass on. Please proceed. Cde. Ram Karran has taken his seat a long time ago.

**Cde. Collymore:** I rise to speak on item 9, Provision and Detection of Crime and item 10, Head 22 – Ministry of Home Affairs – Police, subhead 28 – Security Precautions. At item 9 we note that the sum of \$5,000 is being requested and this, in our estimation, is a very small amount. We note that in view of the increased prices and costs the sum of \$5,000 appears to be very

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**2.50 - 3 p.m.**

insignificant where prevention and detection of crime is concerned considering the spiralling syndrome in this country. On many occasions I have had to ask the Minister, or ask this honourable House, to provide this House with a report on the crime situation. On the last occasion we had a report for 1974, that is, five years ago and the Minister on several occasions said that subsequent reports would be forthcoming. We are still waiting for these reports, taking into consideration the fact that the last report is five years old.

**2.50 p.m.**

The next aspect we would like to bring to your notice is the misuse of the Police Force in the case of political meetings. Cde. Chairman, certain things are happening in this country. When Opposition political parties propose political meetings and they get permits from the police department, if our friend on the opposite side, or their agents do not want those political meetings, they organize coverage and they break up those meetings, and in spite of the fact that the policemen are there, they do nothing. It's a most disappointing thing. The policemen are there and they allow the meetings to be broken up and they do nothing. Cde. Chairman, this casts a sad light on the Police Force of the country, and we are financial national taxpayers. We deserve some sort of protection and service.

I would like to bring to your attention on more recent event. On the 13<sup>th</sup> of this month there was a meeting called by an opposition political party at Cove and John, East Coast Demerara, and about ten minutes after it started, two jeep loads, trucks, came from the direction of Belfield, which is just one mile away, and that meeting was broken up. And the police, who were there, adequate number of police, did nothing, absolutely nothing. Another fact that we should take note of is that the policemen who were there had no numbers. They were unidentifiable for any practical or legal purposes. We should also note that these events took place in the midst of the United Nations' Human Rights Day and our friends on the opposite side are saying that they are advocates of human rights. If they are such, let them send in reports to the United Nations for the observance of human rights in this country.

Still speaking under Prevention and Detection of crime, we note that the Government newspaper, the **Chronicle**, this rag is very useful for toilet paper, says here “Praedial larceny frustrating farmers.” This is Tuesday, December 18, 1979. What does this report say? It says East Bank Berbice farmers are complaining about rampant stealing farm produce. Many claim that they are frustrated in their efforts to step up production. Recently, two farmers, Cde. Thomas Dillard and David Dowlatt reported the loss of scores of bunches of fully- grown plantains from their farms. Another farmer said that apart from peanut crops, many young oranges, pineapples and water coconuts are being wantonly destroyed. Even as I quote, people also want an increase in the number of policemen in the districts. Cde. Speaker, there is just one small paragraph, but I will not go on to quote it. What I want to tell this House today is that our friends on the opposite side of this House are doing very little to prevent Praedial larceny.

Some months ago there was an incident up the Demerara River at a farm, at a place called Alliance, and the police at Timerhi arrested a person who was seen removing materials and produce from that said farm. Cde. Chairman, do you know what happened, the person who was arrested got his father and his relatives to make representation to a person in the Prime Minister’s Office- I am not saying the Prime Minister was involved- but a person in this office and that person in Mr. Burnham’s office rang the Timerhi Police so as to let go the case, release the man, and the man was released. But the police protested. Cde. Chairman, I bring this to your notice so that the Minister can take note of it because the person who was instrumental in securing the release of the alleged thief has been promoted. He is now here in this House. He is a Minister of State. This is the reason why I am saying that our friends on the opposite side do not seem to be interested in controlling crime. This is why things like this have to happen and they can’t give reports on the crime situation. I don’t want to call his name. **[Interruption]**

Cde. Chairman, now we have another case where Ministers are being killed on the streets and nobody can say what is happening. Where is the killer? Is any investigation going on? We wish to say that we feel that absolutely no investigation is going on, despite the fact that a

Minister has been killed and we have information as to where he was killed and who killed him. They know. They do not want to bring any evidence. They do not want to investigate because it will embarrass them.

Another thing, Mr. Chairman, is further misused of the Police Force. In some cases, political cases, policemen have been instructed to shoot first then ask questions. We rise here to take strong exception and to condemn the assassination of W.P.A activist, Omi koomah. Cde. Speaker, we feel that this assassination was cold blooded murder. We know who killed him and it is very bad on behalf of the Police. *[Interruption]* Yes, we know who killed him. Cde. Chairman, why do we have to make these observations?

Quoting from this piece of toilet paper, I mean the **Chronicle**, this is 12<sup>th</sup> December, 1979, the Police Commissioner, Lloyd Barker, who was addressing the 27<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Guyana Police Association, said that the Police Force continues to enforce law whenever the occasion demands it. It is not a responsibility that the Force could abdicate. Why is it they cannot control properly a political meeting? Why is it they cannot control street violence? So we that we could take from this that the Police Commissioner is saying that he will restore law and order when he feels like doing it and it depends on who, of course, is committing the offence.

Here is why we say it is political now. I do not see why sometimes you are stopping it and sometimes you are not stopping it. Now here is the report in which he said:

“If some people care to establish their headquarters in Tiger Bay, then we have to have a squad to deal with them in that area.”

That is why Omi Koonah was shot down like a dog in the street, dead with a rifle that was fired at him. It was believed that he had guns.

Cde. Speaker, one other point that I would like to make pertains to the City Constabulary. No doubt, the Minister had jurisdiction because the Police Commissioner is close to the Constabulary. We are asking here formally, for an investigation of the City Constabulary. There

is a lot of corruption going on and people, especially in the municipal markets, are because nearly every night there is a break and entry in the place, and then the goods move from one stall to another stall, so that we could know why these things are going on, why it is they cannot end. Therefore, the Constabulary is corrupt and the people are asking for an investigation of the City Constabulary as early as possible.

The next and the final item relates to the complaints we are getting from the Police Force about failure to pay the allowances. We have a letter from a Police source claiming that since July, 1979, a report was published in the police newspaper, **The Copper**, and also guaranteed by the top police administrative personnel, that meal allowances and other allowances would be paid, but since that time, no allowances have been paid and the force in this particular respect is very much concerned and disillusioned. They are, therefore, asking that the allowances be paid immediately, particularly in view of the rising cost of living and the other pressing economic strictures.

**3 p.m.**

**The Minister of Home Affairs** (Cde. Mingo): Cde.: Chairman, I must say the comrade has suddenly begun to take particular interest in the welfare of the Police. With respect to the allowances, we do not have to wait on him to tell us to pay allowances to our workers, and if he perhaps enquires a little more carefully he will find that the allowances have already been paid in many respects.

Now, Cde. Chairman, Cde. Ram Karran questioned the activities with respect to the \$5,000 requested under item 9, Prevention and Detection of Crime. I wish to let him know that the activities relating to the detection of crime are surveillance, and that type of thing. With respect to the remarks made by Cde. Collymore in relation to praedial larceny and that type of thing, I would promise that we will have that investigated to see really how much truth there is in the allegations that he has made today.

It is interesting, to note the interest the comrade takes in the incident involving Kooham; it is interesting to note the interest the comrade takes in a man who was found carrying illegally very heavy arms in the city of Georgetown.

With respect to the City Constabulary, this too, I promise to have investigated.

**The Chairman:** Item 11

**Cde. Dalchand:** Item 11, Head 29- Ministry of Agriculture, Lands and Surveys, subhead 13- Black Bush Polder Land Development Scheme. Cde. Chairman, the Minister this afternoon is asking Parliament to approve an additional \$500,000 to meet expenditure of works in certain areas in the Black Bush Polder Land Development Scheme. Earlier this year Parliament approved a sum of over \$896,392 to do this work. The Minister, I hope, is aware—

**The Minister of Agriculture ( Cde. Kennard):** If the member could only read his Notes. It is to meet arrears of drainage and irrigation charges.

**The Chairman:** This is much better in the sense that they would not have a roving commission as in the other

Cases. If the other Heads of Departments would take care and put down exactly what it is, they would not get the roving commission they have been getting to ask all sorts of questions.

In this item, it is particularized “To meet arrears of Drainage and Irrigation Board fixed charges owed by Black Bush Polder”, so, we will have to limit our discussion on that aspect of the matter.



**Cde. Dalchand:** The point I want to make to the Minister is that the charges here mean charges for services, and the services include the maintenance of the work. This is what it is,

Cde. Chairman. The point I want to make is that large sums of money have been approved in this House to carry out the work but the work has not been done. For the past two years there has been total neglect in doing the work in the Black Bush Polder. I am not quarrelling for the money to be approved but I am saying that although Parliament approves the money, the work is not being done. Farmers are suffering. In times of rain, there is flooding. Production is falling. I want to ask the Minister to pay special attention to these areas to see that this work is done when Parliament approve this money.

**Mr. M.F.Singh:** Yes, Mr. Chairman, my notes are here and they don't need any changing because as an old soldier they are very relevant. I am dealing with item 11, Black Bush Polder Land Development Scheme. That's all there is in the legend. It does not say "and other schemes" at all. But when I look and I see in the notes, "To meet arrears of Drainage and Irrigation Board fixed charges owed by Black Bush Polder and other Land Development Schemes", it may be the Minister may not be very relevant on this in that they are talking about Black Bush Polder Land Development Scheme. But the notes talk about other land development schemes.

Mr. Chairman, let us be specific about this now. Now, this is worrying me and I take the note, and the government is always hiding behind this red book. It contains estimates. I know that. I know they are only estimates but what is the position here? The amount being asked for is approximately 70 per cent of the original amount. I understand and I appreciate what the Deputy Prime Minister said. If you are building a house, you put aside 10 per cent for contingencies something more that will come up and so on. But this is not 10 per cent. It is approximately 70 per cent, so we take it out of the realm of estimate and we take it into the realm of guesstimate.

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**3 - 3.10 p.m.**

What I want to ask is this. It says, "To meet arrears of Drainage and Irrigation Board fixed charges".

Maybe there is another explanation, and I always have the greatest respect for this particular Minister. Perhaps he will tell me the reason why this was not originally estimated for because it is a lot of money. It is half a million dollars, and if you put in an extra half a million dollars to \$700,000, it is a lot more money to ask for in relation to what was originally asked for. It really seems to make guesstimates out of these estimates and I would like to know the reason why it was not foreseen even though the money is for arrears. One would have thought that arrears would have been foreseen. Why was it unforeseen and what are these other land development schemes.

Maybe we should amend this to put not only Black Bush Polder Land Development Scheme but Black Bush Polder Land Development Scheme and other schemes, because you are also asking for arrears for other schemes. The note says so.

Efforts will be continued to collect these outstanding arrears to enable the drainage and irrigation rates to be paid but, in view of the default of the farmers concerned, we had to come before this House to seek this additional provision to enable the irrigation system to work.

**3.10 p.m.**

**The Chairman:** Item 12. Items 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17.

**Cde. Ram Karran:** Sir, item 13, Head 36 – Ministry of Works and Transport, ( Works ) subhead 1 – Personal Emoluments. I like to follow these legends very closely. I beg your pardon. May I speak on item 12?

**The Chairman:** No. We have passed 12.

**Cde. Ram Karran:** We have here that the voted provision was inadequate and the additional provision is also required to meet the cost of implementation of the 44 hours work week. It is not only my intention to deal with that question of the 44 hour week but I think this House is entitled to have these two provisions shown, separately. The 44 hours a week implementation is an exercise that should have been done since 1977, at the time when the decision was made for the payment of an increased minimum wage of \$8, \$11 and \$14 a day respectively for the years 1977, 1978 and 1979. The Government stands condemned as having reneged on the latter part of that agreement in respect of 1979. One wants to know why it is that at the tail- end of the period which this agreement was made to cover we have to reduce from 48 hours to 44 hours and what is the amount required for that exercise.

Why does the Minister of Ministry of Finance hide these figures? I suspect that this money is inadequate. The sum of \$2.2 million for the Ministry of Works and Transport to reduce their working hours from 48 to 44 is inadequate especially since sums of money are going to be taken out to add to Personal Emoluments as the voted provision on was inadequate.

Is the Minister in a position to identify to this House the amount for each exercise so that we can understand and so that we may be able to point out that the provision here is inadequate for that?

**Mr. M.F. Singh:** You are going up to 17, sir?

**The Chairman:** Yes

**Mr. M. F. Singh:** I would like to say just a few words on item 15, Grant to National Parks Commission. I think item 12, National Development, Expenses of, has passed already. Can I go back to item 12 at all?

**The Chairman:** No. You can go back to item 13.

**Mr. M.F. Singh:** You passed so quickly over item 12 that I never realized that it had passed. It is a very important item. I really am very perturbed about that. The future of our children is at stake in that one.

Dealing with item 15, Head 36 – Ministry of Works and Transport (Works), subhead 40 – Grant to National Parks Commission, this is what I want to say. This is a grant to the National Parks Commission. The sum of \$150,000 was approved. An additional sum of \$20,000 is now being sought. There are questions coming but before I ask a question I want to say this: I want to publicly in this House commend the National Parks Commission, and particularly the Chairman, Mr. Bunny Fernandes, for the wonderful work they are doing in respect of the National Parks Commission. I have absolutely no objection to an additional amount of \$20,000 being voted. I think that this National Parks Commission is doing a tremendous job at great sacrifice to the members of the National Parks Commission.

To run this National Parks Commission on \$170,000 is a magnificent achievement when you have million being spent on so many other things. I do not have a hat but I take my hat off to them and commend publicly, from the roof top for a job really well done. I know that they raise their own money. I personally attended a Rodeo Show at the National Park and I thought it was very well organized and very efficiently run. While I sat there and saw the organization and how smoothly it went, I said to myself: “What a wonderful thing it would be if other Government organizations could do the same thing and be run just efficiently as this organization. I suggest that the others take not one leaf but several leaves out of the book of efficiency of the National

Parks Commission so that other Government organization can be run as nearly perfect as this is being run. I commend them for it.

**The Chairman:** Cde. Minister, item 13.

**The Minister of Works and Transport** ( Cde. Naraine): Cde Chairman, I am sorry I will not be able to give a breakdown of the \$2.2 million in relation to the 44 hour week payment and the other requirement but I would like to assure this House that this sum asked for is adequate and what in fact has happened is this: At first there was some confusion between the T.U.C. and the Public Service Ministry as to whether workers who had previously worked beyond a 44- hour week should continue to be paid the minimum based on the hours they worked previously. However, that was sorted out and it was decided that all workers will now come under a 44-hour week. That decision having been taken, it became necessary to pay in the form of overtime pay for those hours beyond the 44 hours. The calculations were made and the workers were paid whatever sums were due to them. If Cde. Ram Karran would like to know that exact sum which we paid, I would be happy to give him that figure.

**The Chairman:** Items 18, 19, 20 and 21. Hon. Member Mr. Abraham.

**Mr. Abraham:** Mr. Chairman, item 18, Head 41- Ministry of Education, Social Development and Culture, subhead 25. The subhead says: “Grant Towards Operation of St. Ignatius Hostel.” If we observe, the voted provision was \$7,200 and we are now asking for \$18,300 which is roughly seven times the original amount. What I would like to know: is this operation of St. Ignatius Hostel covering the extension of the hostel, increase of staff and intake of new students, or the day-to-day running of the Hostel?

**The Chairman:** Anybody else? Mr. Fielden Singh.

**Mr. M.F. Singh:** Thank you Mr. Chairman. Item 20, Head 42 – Ministry of Education, Social Development and Culture, subhead 10 – Maintenance of Cultural Centre and Regional Cultural Centres. The voted provision was \$90,000 and supplementary provision being asked for is way above the voted provision. It is \$163,232. The note reads “Voted provision inadequate due to rehabilitation of lighting equipment, improvement of stage facilities by provision of flame-proofed curtains, air-conditioning of lighting and sound studios, the V.I.P. lounge and office of the National Cultural Centre.” Most of it seems to be devoted towards the National Cultural Centre, even though the Head deals with other cultural centres.

### 3.20 pm

Sir, what perturbs me is to see that apparently it is only now or within recent times that flame-proof curtains have been provided for the National Cultural Centre. My information from having travelled is that in any place, anywhere in the world, like the National Cultural Centre, flame-proof curtains are indeed *sine qua non*. You have to have them, or else you cannot operate the place. Am I to presume that until these flame-proof curtains were installed that our great National Cultural Centre was indeed a fire hazard? It is really alarming to think that that was in fact the position.

We have spent not only thousands, but millions of dollars on this National Cultural Centre and we are now spending more money on it and I am just wondering where it will all end, so that in addition to asking about the flame-proof curtains, I would like to know whether this is fact the end and whether there would be any further expenditure necessary for things almost capital. This seems to be a capital expenditure, more than anything else – flame-proof curtains. I am not talking about regular maintenance. Is the Cultural Centre really completed now, or are we still needing to spend more money on it?

**Cde. Dindyal:** Cde. Speaker, I just want to list one item. Head 41 – Ministry of Education, Social Development and Culture, subhead 47 – Contribution to West Indian Students' Centre, U.K. I want to ask why do we have to pay \$39,350 to this centre? How would Guyana benefit from this country? To what extent would Guyana benefit? I would like to know something about it. How come at the end of 1979, we have come to realize that we have got to make contributions to this centre for 1978 and 1979? Should this not be known before? If it was known, then, why was no provision made before?

Coming back to item 20, blending into Cultural Centre and Regional Cultural Centre, I notice that this Head is heavily subsidized and the supplementary provision now sought, \$163,232, is about 181.6 per cent in excess of the voted provision. Are the people obtaining the benefit corresponding to the huge sum of money spent on the National Cultural Centre and, further, what is the yardstick used to fix charges to artistes and cultural groups who help to make cultural presentations so much better?

We have heard complaints, sir, that the charges have been too exorbitant and in fact this prevents the full utilization of the centre. Because of these exorbitant charges, entrance fees are very costly and are only for the rich, not the masses of the population. In view of this, will the Minister of Education consider reducing the charges so as to encourage, first the use of the centre by as many other organisations as possible, and secondly, a reduction in the entrance fees to see films at a cost that the working people can afford to pay.

I want to deal now with item 21, Head 42 – Ministry of Education, Social Development and Culture, subhead 25. This is Carifesta 1979. I notice that this is a new provision coming in at the end of the year. Will the Minister say why some provision was not made for this, considering that we knew about Carifesta 1979 long before the presentation of the 1979 budget?

Will the Minister say whether the accusations are true, that those artistes selected to represent Guyana at Carifesta were selected on the basis of political patronage? If it is not so, can the Minister say or explain how the selection was done.

**The Chairman:** Any other member?

**Cde. Ram Karran:** On item 21, Carifesta 1979, this is a new item, I want to ask the hon. Minister whether this type of honest visit -- **[Interruption]**

**The Chairman:** The same thing Cde. Dindayal asked. It's the very same question you are asking. If you are paying attention -- **[Interruption]** I am not interrupting, but it is the same question he asked.

**Cde. Ram Karran:** Yes, more strongly. It is true that he asked the question, but I had to ask the question in order to put over my point. **[Interruption]** I cannot understand how this House is being run. Your Honour runs over the point so very quickly that members have not got a chance to think about it. We are meeting at about forty times for the year -- **[Interruption]**

**The Chairman:** Will you please proceed?

**Cde. Ram Karran:** Yes, the Hon. Minister will get up and say that this provision is adequate and that is all. Why was it not foreseen when the last supplementary estimate was being taken and what justification is there for this? We have, a practice, the tradition in this House to have these estimates shown piece by piece, head by head, where under this one, we have \$200,000 for mass games; we have here \$150,000 for Carifesta. The people want mass games. They are getting mass games already at Jonestown. The people want "bittle", the people want food. I am not saying it is not important to have sports. We have just spent a lot of money on



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parks and things like that for recreation. This Head is important and we want to satisfy ourselves that it is important. We want a proper debate. Let the Ho. Minister of Sports and Culture, acting he is now taken up with other activities at Non Pariel – in his new capacity, tell us how this amount is going to spent. It's so very important. I reserve what I have to say, Your Honour, until after I have heard the Hon. Minister who, I know, was strongly congratulated on his elevation to his new position, having regard to his activities at Non Pariel.

3.30 p.m.

**The Chairman:** Would somebody answer items 18 to 21, please.

**Cde. Hope:** Cde. Speaker, I will answer the questions relating to items 18 and 19 and then one of my colleagues will answer the remaining questions on items 20 and 21.

Cde. Speaker, with respect to item 18, St. Ignatius Hostel, the expenditure was designed to meet an effort to better equip the schools in terms of staff, and to provide more fully for the residents of the hostel through increased purchases of food-stuff. For instance, there is going to be an additional care taker at the hostel. All of this is designed to make the hostel function more effectively for the purpose for which it was set up.

With respect to item 19, the contribution to the West Indian Students' Centre, Cde. Chairman, I think that practically all students who have passed through higher education in the United Kingdom would testify to the fact that the West Indian Students' Centre has over the years served a very useful and integrating purpose among the students. The situation is that the whole future of that centre was under review, and during the time that that was under review, we had not, in fact, paid the subscription. However, I think what has happened very recently is that there is an agreement on the basis of which the student centre will be taken over by some of the other States of the West Indies and Guyana will not be one of them. We will have an interest in

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the sale of the assets to those States, and to the extent that the sale comes off as we expect it will, Guyana's interest will be about \$30,000 and so will be our contribution to the concern, in which case we will not have to pay this amount. This amount will be used in a set off against the amount which will be coming to us.

The student's centre is, in fact, as it has been for many years, being wound up. Guyana will be removing its financial interest in that centre and to the extent that we will receive a refund from the money earned by selling that centre, we will use that money as a set-off for this amount which is being requested here.

**The Chairman:** Who will answer items 20 and 21? Cde. Thomas.

**The Minister of State, Ministry of Education, Social Development and Culture** (Cde. Thomas): Cde. Chairman, in answer to the question relating to the voted provision of \$90,000 being increased by \$163,232, I wish to state that this request is being made particularly since the cost of equipment necessary for the improved lighting facilities has increased over the period, and in addition, because of the urgency, we are really trying to maintain the facilities in a manner which suits a building of that type.

In so far as item 21 is concerned, the answer is simple and straightforward. Political patronage was never a consideration in so far as the selection of troupes and participants to Carifesta 1979 was concerned. The troupes and participants came from the National School of Dance and other professional groups within the society.

**The Chairman:** Items 22, 23, 24, 25.

**Cde. Ram Karran:** May I, sir, speak on item 25, Head 75 – Ministry of Health – Palms, subhead 1 – Personal Emoluments. I observe that we are going to spend very nearly 33 per cent

increase on this Head, which no one begrudges, no one quarrels, because it is for the dietary at the Palms. One expects that the standard would not only be maintained but it would be improved. But I want to ask the Hon. Minister, who has charge not only of Health and Housing but also of Labour, if he recognizes that the increased cost of food has gone up by two thirds and to ensure that the wages of workers reflect the same percentage increase.

**The Chairman:** Cde. Ram Karran, will you deal with 26 at the same time?

**Cde. Ram Karran:** I am just thinking so.

**The Chairman:** Very well.

**Cde. Ram Karran:** My friend ought to bear in mind, sir, that if the cost to Government which purchases things in bulk – when the cost ought to be cheaper than to the man who goes and buys a penny's worth of this and a pound and a half of the other – if the cost to the Pals has gone up by nearly 33 per cent, that the same percentage is reflected in the cost to the worker, and would he agree that the same percentage ought to be reflected in the minimum wage of workers in the country generally?

May I move on to item 26, Head 76 – Ministry of Labour, Subhead 19 – (New) Central Recruitment Agency, Your Honour, and to ask the Hon. Minister if he does not think that it is unfair and it is indecent for him to put such a major item, the Central Recruitment Agency, this sounds like central thuggery, in the Ministry of Labour to meet the so-called preliminary expenses incurred in the setting up of this monstrosity. Why is it necessary for us to set up such a thing when we have the Employment Exchange? I presume that this will be doing some sort of thing. We have identification in this House before that the employment agency was indulging in a sort of rascality which could not bear examination, and the documents were handed to the Clerk, the very Clerk who is sitting there, not his predecessor. When it was drawn to the attention

of the House that the two parties then involved in the Government, the P.N.C. and the U.F., were engaged in the rascality of engaging people on the basis of their party affiliation. Therecord is full of that, sir. At that time, we had the system of recording in Hansard. [**Interruption.**]

**The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House** (Cde. Ramsaroop)

*rose –*

**Cde. Ram Karran:** But, sir, it is a very serious thing. My friend has just said, the Hon. Minister of State, that no party partisanship is involved in sport. I would like to believe him. I would also like to believe that this thing, that is being set up here, needs to be examined on all four sides, as well as inside, before we can give approval to it, if the Hon. Minister will try to persuade us that this is not another attempt to elevate personnel on the basis of their affiliation to their political organisation or to relationship with somebody with influence or some such thing.

The production and productivity in this country have suffered and are suffering and will continue to suffer no matter how much production is introduced in the newspaper by my friend the Hon. Minister of Agriculture, or by anyone, and it is no use bemoaning the fact that production is bedeviled and productivity is going to the devil if what I suspect is going to take place under this new Head continues.

**3.40 p.m.**

The Hon. Minister of the Government must recognize that we can only move forward in this country if the country's problems are tackled on the basis of national unity and this certainly is not national unity. This should never appear here before discussion with the parties engaged in this Parliament. It should never be introduced arbitrarily like that without some sort of introduction. We ought to know and I hope that at this late hour the Hon. Minister will attempt to

assure us that this is not some sort of rascality as has been practiced by this Government and its concubines some time in the past.

**Mr. Abraham:** Item No. 23, Head 73 – Ministry of Health – Hospitals and Dispensaries, subhead 18 – Conveying sick persons from Interior to Hospital. This is a very laudable item asking for \$15,000 more because it is a matter of life and death for those people who live in the interior, but what I would like to say a word on is the situation as it obtains in the community of Moruca. Moruca is the largest Amerindian community in this country. It has roughly 8,000 people and it has been deprived for about two months now of a dispenser. There was a Medex service for quite a while and all of a sudden the dispenser was recalled to Georgetown. I would like to know how early we will have another Officer going to Moruca. It is no point bringing people out to Georgetown if they are dead or dying.

**Mr. M.F. Singh:** Mr. Chairman, I think you were dealing also with item 26, Central Recruitment Agency. There may have been something in the newspapers about it and I may have missed it but I certainly would like to have some information as to what this Central Recruitment Agency is all about. I know there is an Employment Exchange and I am wondering why the Employment Exchange could not be extended to do the work of whatever this Central Recruitment Agency is going to do. I am taking the meaning of the word literally. If it is to do recruitment, will the Employment Exchange be also doing recruitment? Where is the Agency? In Street or at the Sea Wall Flats? I wonder if we can get some explanation about this so that we can be satisfied that it is not another agency like the Ministry of National Development.

**The Minister of Health, Housing and Labour** (Cde. Green): Cde. Chairman, I was not quite clear what response to give to the member from the United Force who asked about ---

**The Chairman:** There is no such party here. There is no such party as the United Force in the Parliament.

**Cde. Green:** The limb of the Liberator Party. I would say that I did not know that the people who go in to do rescue work could decide when a person is dying. That is the preserve of the trained physician. We have attempted, wherever possible to save people's lives in very difficult circumstances and in the very difficult terrain that we have in this country.

With respect to item 26 –

**The Chairman:** I think you ought not to be so harsh with the Member from the Liberator Party. Basically he is paying interest in the people in the Interior and he is seeking to enquire, through an oblique way, when a Medex will be put into the area.

**Cde. Green:** You are much more perspicacious than I am. On item 25, Dietary, my good friend the Hon. Deputy Leader said nothing that requires a reply except to assure him that he will have an opportunity tomorrow evening in his other capacity to discuss this matter when I meet along with my colleague the Minister of Economic Development and the T.U.C. I think he will get all the answers to the questions that he tried to introduce here.

I want to assure him that there is no rascality with the Central Recruitment and Manpower Agency but, as he put it quite rightly, the rascality came to an end in this area with the removal of the People's Progressive Party.

Our legacy of bad planning and lack of effective manpower data and information to feed into the labour system has resulted in a number of persons in our society not being properly placed. The intention of this Central Recruitment and Manpower Agency is not a maxi-, as has been suggested, Labour Exchange, but it is intended to be a mechanism that will identify, both for the present and for the future, the manpower requirement in our society. We are hoping to go towards a highly sophisticated, perhaps computerized system that will permit us not by guessing

but by a fairly scientific method to place our young people and to place those with identifiable skills in slots where they can best serve this country.

We have, at the moment, a number of needed skills in our society but we do not have a central agency that can help us to place those people effectively and people have been literally doing their own thing in some circumstances. In fact, with the expanded Government role in the economy, we have a number of corporations and agencies which have their own personnel sections that apply different criteria. This agency is intended to ensure that we apply a single set of criteria. We are not, as I said, dealing with a Labour Exchange which was seen in terms of the public as merely recruiting people to do manual and semi-skilled jobs. This is going to deal with the whole gamut of professional people and technical people and, as I said, it is intended to make our manpower system meaningful in our society.

**The Chairman:** Items 27 to 34.

**Cde. Ram Karran:** Sir, if I may speak under item 27, Head 81 – Ministry of Finance – Accountant General, subhead 17 – Compensation claims, I would like to ask the Hon. Attorney General who, presumably, will answer this, how it is that the State Solicitor has the power to award claims? What are these claims totaling at the time of preparation of these Estimates, what the amount will be. That is why I do not query this amount.

**The Chairman:** It is a typographical error. Undoubtedly what they mean is: Judgments awarded by the Courts which the State Solicitor has to pay.

**Cde. Ram Karran:** Thank you very much for that observation. May I at the same time ask the Hon. Attorney General -- **[Interruption]** It is not awarded by the State Solicitor; it is awarded by the Courts. His Honour has corrected it. I want to know whether the system, insofar

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**3.40 – 3.30 p.m.**

as it affects people, who are involved in the accidents with Government vehicles, can go to Court as if the Government were a private person, and the corporations were private persons, without having to get a fiat as was required some time ago.

Only recently I heard the Hon. Attorney General arguing a case before the Court. He placed the Government in the same position as if the Head of State was in the position of Her Majesty the Queen as the Head of State. In other words, one could not bring an action against the Queen and even though this is a secular State and a Republic, that anachronism still remains in the laws of our country. I would think that the time has come, especially since there is a large number of people who suffer as a result of coming into collision with Government-owned vehicles or Government vehicles coming into collision with them.

Only today, one person who was in this House in another capacity suffered an accident from one of those vehicles owned by a corporation and one wondered whether the stage has been reached, although applications have been made repeatedly inside this House and outside this House, for the dispensation of the requirement. For us to beg the question and to hide behind the anachronism that has been the argument in the English Courts whether people can go to the Courts –

**The Chairman:** Hon. Member, Mr. Ram Karran, under the new Constitution which we are drafting, we are taking care of that.

**3.50 p.m.**

**Cde. Ram Karran:** We are not there yet, and we are not sure we are going to have that.



**The Chairman:** Any further questions? Cde. Narbada do you have any further questions? [*Paus.*] Cde. Hope. We are going on to item 34. There is really nothing else except item 28 and I do not think you would miss that. Cde. Hope.

Cde. Hope: Cde. Speaker, the situation really in respect of items 27 and 28 is that -- **[Interruption]** Sorry, from time to time, persons, citizens make claims against the Government for various reasons. It may be, for instance, an accident as the comrade pointed out, in which a Government vehicle is involved. It may be a claim arising, perhaps, over some dispute with one of the Government's servants and in those circumstances, the State Solicitor in discussing with the lawyers representing the persons concerned, come to a settlement and it is for these settlements that we are providing in item 27; they are not necessarily settlements arising out of Court proceedings. They are settlements arising out of agreement between the Government and lawyers, and lawyers with the State Solicitor.

**The Chairman:** Capital Estimates, item 1 Yes, Hon. Member Mr. Singh.

**Mr. M. F. Singh:** Mr. Chairman, Division VIII – Public Service Ministry, subhead 5, deals with Scholarships and Training Courses – Local. The original amount voted was \$9,459,000 and we are now being asked to vote for the \$49,017. I do not object to the additional amount being asked for. Indeed, I do not object to the voted provision at all. I think that training is very important and is very commendable and we in Guyana, indeed, are in dire need of trained people because we find so many of our trained people leaving or being forced to leave these shores and to go to other countries. Nevertheless, one would expect that there would be intensified activity in this area in order to fill the gap in which is being created by these people leaving. Because this matter bothers me so much, the lack, and I have heard managers and supervisors and people in executive positions complain bitterly about the lack of trained personnel, I wonder whether we could get not only a great dossier, but perhaps a brief report of what is being done to meet this serious gap of trained personnel in the country at the moment.

Some time ago, it was announced that public servants would be allowed to go to the University of Guyana and they would be trained there and if they were admitted, they would do their training and they would also receive their salaries. I don't know, I am subject to corrections, but I understand that that position has now been changed and they will no longer continue to receive their salaries as civil servants if they go to the University of Guyana. In fact, the University of Guyana is closed now so I would like to have some sort of up-to-date position in respect of what is happening in this area to fill the void, whether civil servants can still look forward to going to the U.G. and being paid their salaries while they are being trained.

**The Chairman:** Cde. Hope? Dr. Reid?

**Cde. Reid:** Cde. Chairman, the item supplemented is a small one, simple to explain, since there is always more and more training taking place because there are more development opportunities opened and in very recent times, a new course has started at the Government Technical Institute, namely, High Speed Writers' Course so as to improve efficiency of our workers. Twenty-six students are registered for this course. The course will cover a period of two years. It is because of this new course that this supplementary is requested. The cost will include lecturers' fees and payment of local allowances to certain students.

Also, in this small sum of money is included some local allowances to students learning Spanish because from time to time, there are opportunities to study in foreign countries. In this specific case, there is such an opportunity to study foreign countries. In this specific case, there is such opportunity to study in Cuba, but if the students are to make full use of such opportunities, they will have to know Spanish hence, that course has started here in the preparation of those students so that when they arrive in Cuba, they would be familiar with the language which they are being taught.

Other matters relating to the University of Guyana do not come under this specific provision that is being sought.

**4 p.m.**

**The Chairman:** it is now 4 o'clock. Do we take the Suspension or do we proceed? Is it agreed that we proceed?

*[Comrades and hon. Members indicated in the affirmation.]*

**The Chairman:** Items 2, 3 and 4.

**Cde. Ram Karran:** It is a small question under item 2, Division XXII – Ministry of Works and Transport (Works), subhead 22 – Purchase of Equipment. This sort of recording on this Financial Paper is going to bring about further allowances to be paid to auditors and others. Why do we have two different items shown here for \$164,477 for oil extraction plant and for a new motor-car for Minister Campbell? Why do we have such a situation? Why aren't these sums shown separately? How much are you going to spend for the oil extraction plant and what is all this about oil extraction plant? Are you going to take oil from pumpkin seeds, as Minister Green told us we were going to do, or we should do, some time ago? How much is going to be spent for that?

How much are you going to give as a bonanza to my friend the Minister – I nearly said August, again – Campbell. Why has it got to be shown separately and why do we have to give a car to this man who gets a fat salary? Do all of you get free cars? I have to buy my own car and everybody has to buy his own car. Why do you have to give him a job which he is hardly qualified to do and on top of it you are going to give him a car? That's not fair.

**The Chairman:** No, Cde. Ram Karran. I cannot have you saying that he is not qualified to do the job.

**Cde. Ram Karran:** I am saying that.

**The Chairman:** No you cannot say that.

**Cde. Ram Karran:** I am saying, sir, that I have had to be with him across the table and if Your Honour comes here I will tell you whether you are qualified to do it or not.

**Cde. Dalchand:** Cde. Speaker, item 4, Division XXIII – Ministry of Works and Transport (Works) IBRD/IDA Projects, West Coast Demerara Road Project, subhead 2 – Weigh Bridges. I would like the Minister to say when and where these weigh bridges will be installed. If you notice, the expenditure so far on these weigh bridges has already exceeded \$1 million. In 1976, we spent over \$250,000. In 1977, we spent \$78,000. Last year we spent over \$285,000 and now you are saying you are going to spend this year \$594,000, plus. I would like the Minister to say when and where these weigh bridges will be constructed.

**Cde. Naraine:** Cde. Chairman, the question raised by Cde. Ram Karran seems plausible and logical but I would like to explain how this item was put in this particular way.

When the Trade Mission visited the German Democratic Republic, a contract was entered into between the various corporations there and the Government of Guyana, and in that contract, the Ministry of Works and Transport was designated as the agency that would deal with all the items. Under that contract the oil-extraction plant, the trucks, motor rollers and a number of other items were included, for example, the workshop now being constructed at Coldingen on the East Coast. The actual cost of the oil-extraction plant is not shown here. It is given as a loan which is to be repaid over a number of years. However, the Government had to pay the cost of insurance,

freight handling and so forth and as normally, for equipment coming in for the Government, the Ministry of Works and Transport carries out these functions under the Central Stores. I think Cde. Ram Karran would understand this because he himself was a Minister of Works, and probably had to deal with similar types of transactions. If he does not, well, I could not be responsible for that. But for these reasons the freight charges and the insurance and other charges are paid from this Head.

I would like to explain about the car. Ministers are entitled to cars supplied by the Government in order to carry out their official duties. If the car is not provided, the Minister can own his own car and he is given an allowance of \$350 per month, and the Clerk of the National Assembly makes payment monthly to the Minister as a car allowance. Some Ministers elect to own their own cars and receive the allowance. Those Ministers, who do not elect to own their own cars but to use the government-owned cars, they can do so. Cde. Campbell came in as a new Minister and it was necessary to provide him with a car because he elected to have a car supplied to him by the Government to be used when he is on his official duties and therefore, a car had to be purchased for his use, and this money had to be voted for that purpose.

On item 4, Cde. Chairman, the weigh bridges have been constructed at a number of places, at No. 78 on the Corentyne, Adventure, Canje, Burma on the East Coast, Crane on the West Coast, Anna Regina in Essequibo. The only one that is not finally completed but work is still in progress on it, is the one at Anna Regina. I wish to explain what this item really involves.

When the loan was given for the West Demerara Road Project, a sum of money was provided in that loan agreement for the construction of weigh bridges at the localities that I have just mentioned, but the weigh bridges were also to be used in relation to the study on the roads of the country. That study involves such things as weigh-control on the roads, the revision of a transport plan which was done some years ago, and the updating of road-construction materials requirements. That is in relation to capital works and maintenance to be done throughout the

country. The work was started last year, as said by Cde. Dalchand, and we have reached the point where, as I have said, all the weigh bridges except one have been completed, and the consultant, Frederick Harris who was employed under this agreement by the World Bank and the Government of Guyana, has completed the studies on the various aspects I have just mentioned. A draft report has been submitted both to the Government and to the International Bank for

**4.10 p.m.**

Reconstruction and Development, and it is being studied. So, I think that covers the points raised by Cde. Dalchand.

**The Chairman:** Items 5 and 6.

**Cde. N. Persaud:** Item 5, Division XXXI – Ministry of Finance, Subhead 17 – Capital Contribution to the I.A.D.B. The sum of \$2.2 million is being sought. The legend states: “To meet part payment of capital contribution.” I wonder if the Cde. Minister can tell us what is the full payment of the capital contribution.

Item 6, Division XXXI – Ministry of Finance, Subhead 28 – (New) Transfer and Loans to Public Corporations and Entities. During the last Supplementary Estimates the sum of \$870,000 was sought and there again the legend stated that it was to meet a debt owed by the Guyana Agricultural Products Corporation. I wonder if the Minister can say whether the amount of money now being sought became due after October when the last Supplementary Estimates were being debated. If not, why was this sum not included with the \$870,000 which was sought by that same corporation to pay debts?

**Mr. M.F. Singh:** Mr. Chairman, item 6. This is a new subhead, Transfer and Loans to Public Corporations and Entities. The sum being sought is \$54,333. The legend states: “To meet

payment outstanding account to Charlestown Sawmill on behalf of the Guyana Agricultural Products Corporation.” I would like some clarifications as regards what this amount is for. Is this sum of \$54,333 the cost of the acquisition of something? Has G.A.P.C. acquired something for this sum of \$54,333? If so, what? Is it the cost of goods and materials which were taken? I am not sure whether it is the cost of acquisition, or for payment of bills in respect of goods and materials taken. What is it for? Is it a transfer or a grant or a loan which the corporation is expected to repay? If it is for that nature, when will they be required to repay?

**The Chairman:** Cde. Hope.

**Cde. Hope:** Cde. Chairman, speaking from memory, the contribution to the Inter American Development Bank would be of the order of about \$10 million spread over four of five years. I think it is five installments and this is the first of the installments. It arises out of the expansion of the capital structures of the Inter American Development Bank amounting to about \$8 billion all told. This is our part of the contribution.

Incidentally, all of this money is not necessarily paid in cash immediately because we have the option, which we have in fact exercised, of placing a non-interest-bearing promissory note in the Central Bank to cover this contribution and it is all in Guyana dollars.

With respect to the questions raised on item 6, Transfer of Loans to Public Corporations and Entities, it just is possible that this amount was not included in the last S.P schedule when, as I said, it might have been possible to include it. Unfortunately, if that was the case it was not included in that S.P. Schedule. However, this amount is to pay for the debts owed to Charlestown Sawmill by the Guyana Agricultural Products Corporation which corporation was wound up during the course of the year but the Government obviously undertook to pay the debts of that corporation owed to private firms. That is why it appears as a transfer because we regard it as a transfer to the public corporation which is used to pay the private creditor.

**The Chairman:** This completes consideration of all the items.

*Question –*

That the Committee of Supply approve of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 3/79 – Schedule of Supplementary Provision on the Current and Capital Estimates for the period ended 12<sup>th</sup> December, 1979, totaling \$14,138,218.

*Put and agreed to.*

*Assembly resumed.*

**Cde. Hope:** I beg to report that the Committee of Supply has approved of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 3 of 1979 and I now move that the Assembly doth agree with the Committee in the said Resolution.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

*Motion carried.*

**The Speaker:** Who will deal with the next item? Cde. Tyndall.

**APPROVAL OF EXTERNAL TRADE BUREAU  
(DISSOLUTION) ORDER 1979 (No. 94)**

“Be it resolved that this National Assembly in accordance with section 63 (1) of the Public Corporations Act, Chapter 19:05, approve of the External Trade Bureau (Dissolution) Order 1979 (No. 94), which was made on the 6<sup>th</sup> December, 1979, and



published in the Gazette on 8<sup>th</sup> December, 1979.” [The Minister of Trade and Consumer Protection on behalf of the Prime Minister]

**The Minister of Trade and Consumer Protection** (Cde. Tyndall): Cde. Speaker, I rise to move the Motion standing in the name of the Cde. Prime Minister. But before formally doing so, I wish to avail myself of the opportunity of making a few brief but pertinent remarks. The External Trade Bureau, as it now stands and operates, was established as a public corporation on 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1973, under section 46 of the Public Corporations (External Trade Bureau) Order No. 53 of 1973, Section 63 (1) of the said Order makes provision for the dissolution of any corporation established under the Order and for the vesting of property and the transfer of the assets and liabilities of such corporations that are being dissolved.

I should mention that the Guyana National Trading Corporation, the corporation to which the assets and liabilities will be transferred, has the authority under its Memorandum of Association, Clause C 71 an 168, to acquire the E.T.B. as provided for in the Dissolution Order. At any extraordinary general meeting of the Board of the G.N.T.C held on November 14, 1979, a special Resolution was passed accepting the assets and assuming the liabilities of the E.T.B and agreeing to carry on the E.T.B.’s business with effect from January 1, 1980.

The Dissolution Order applies to the transfer of assets from E.T.B. to the G.N.T.C., for compensation to be paid to the Government for the assets to be transferred, the transfer of the liabilities, and for the maintenance of contractual arrangements that were entered into with the E.T.B. It also provides for legal proceedings involving the E.T.B. to be continued by or against the G.N.T.C. and finally provides for the security of employment of the employees of the E.T.B. in the transfer process.

The dissolution of the E.T.B. is part of the process of rationalizing the activities of the trading corporations in the interest of increased efficiency and greater cost effectiveness in their

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**4.20 – 4.30 p.m.**

foreign procurement functions. It is a development that became inevitable with the acquisition by Government of a number of trading corporations since the establishment of the E.T.B. The E.T.B. was the first venture of the Government into the field of State trading in so far as import functions are concerned if we were to exclude the minor procurement activities of certain Government agencies.

Since July 1973, the Government has acquired *inter alia* Sandbach Parker & Co. Ltd., Guyana Gajraj Ltd., S. Wreford and Co. Ltd., Bookers Stores, Sproston, Bookers Manufacturing Drug Company. With some adjustments in the nature of product rationalization, these corporations continue to carry on their foreign trade activities where they had such activities, in the traditional way, with the inevitable result that there was an undesirable degree of duplication. There was some overlapping and in some cases less than optimum utilization of managerial and other resources in the system.

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The dissolution of the E.T.B. and the incorporation of its functions within the G.N.T.C. constitute the first stage in the process of the rationalization of the State trading activities of the Government. No right-thinking person would question the desirability, the effectiveness, the functionality of State trading institutions as an instrument of development and the move contemplated in this Order should be quite obvious to all. It is a move in the right direction. It is therefore, with great pleasure, Cde. Speaker, that on behalf of the Cde. Prime Minister, I move that this National Assembly in accordance with section 63(1) of the Public Corporation Act, Chapter 19:05, approve of the External Trade Bureau (Dissolution) Order 1979 (No. 94), which was made on 6<sup>th</sup> December, 1979, and published in the Gazette on 8<sup>th</sup> December, 1979.

*Question proposed.*

**Cde. N.Persaud:** Cde. Speaker, I think a little longer than a year ago, this House was asked to ratify or to dissolve the Small Industries Corporation. When that Motion was introduced into the House, it was stated that because of malfunctioning that existed, and based on two reports put forward by experts, that corporation was being dissolved. We have been told this afternoon, and as far as I gathered from the Minister's introduction, that the reason for this Motion before the House is to rationalize the activities, which, according to the Minister, will increase efficiency.

The Cde. Minister stated that the corporation was established on the 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1973. The External Trade Bureau, however existed since 1971 and operated as an agency or arm of the Ministry of Trade until 1973 when it became a corporation. Comrades will recall when that Order was made, Order, No. 53 of 1973, on page 49, Volume IV, Chapter 19:05, it stated at 4(1)(a) "to organize and effect imports of commodities particularly for the purpose of securing a sufficiency of those commodities essential to the well being of the community, their equitable distribution and their availability at fair prices;".

When the corporation was established, the Order stated as I have read, but Cde. Speaker, during the years of the existence of the corporation, that is, from 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1973, to now, we can safely say seven years, 1<sup>st</sup> January next month would have completed seven years, we have had a number of casualties. I speak of casualties at the very top, including all the General Managers. All the General Managers were fired. Cde. Speaker, not only General Managers were fired, but a number of top officials, pharmacists, etc, were also fired. One asks the question, why was every single manager of the External Trade Bureau fired, starting from the time when it was not even a corporation? Neil Chan. Now I don't want to go through the names. Why was he? When the External Trade Bureau became a corporation, one manager had already been dismissed. Obviously, it proves that things were not going correctly and then a second General Manager came.

Cde. Chairman, I don't know if I am permitted, but I happened to be in his office once on a business transaction when a telephone call came in for him from Trinidad inviting him to the Hilton Hotel. Perhaps it is not correct for me to go into the details of that. He is no longer there. I am sorry, but, Cde. Speaker, the point is that things were not right because of maladministration, because of gross inefficiency, because of bad planning, because of fraud and because of every conceivable ill one can think of, which is applicable not only to the corporation, but to the Government as a whole. It is a clear reflection of the People's National Congress of the Government.

Cde. Speaker, if we talk about sufficiency as is stated in the book from which I quoted, one cannot say that we have had for a number of years, despite all the efforts and despite all the firing of managers, the level of sufficiency that one would have expected. Goods are not available. I am not talking about those items which are banned and are not considered to be essential items are not in sufficient quantity in this country.

I am raising these points, Cde. Speaker, because according to the Order, the functions, the employees, the assets, and everything, will be transferred to the Guyana National Trading

. I am raising these points in order to point out all these inefficiencies so that those assets, those functions, those employees who are involved will at least attempt to remedy the situation now that they have gone under a new Corporation with a new Chairman, a new Secretary -- **[Interruption]**

**The Speaker:** Well, Cde. Harbada, they said the assets and the liabilities. They will be taking over the inefficiencies as part of the liabilities too.

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4.30 p.m.

**Cde. N. Persaud:** Well that is my fear, Cde. Speaker, that they are going to take over the liabilities that have caused the corporation to work to the failure it has reached at this point.

Fair Prices. This Government is good at bringing documents to this House, bringing papers to this House with very nice wording. All these things, fair prices. It is the External Trade Bureau that brought soap, for example, as was stated in the **Mirror** only last week, from the German Democratic Republic at 15 cents per cake and sold it here at 46 cents per cake. Can we talk about fair prices if the Government Corporation brought goods from the German Democratic Republic and put on a maximum of 600 per cent?

Now we are being told they are going to rationalize. What are they going to rationalize? The inefficiency, the mismanagement, the corruption, the fraud, the extravagance? They can't do it. They still had to close down the Small Industries Corporation. In spite, of all their efforts, they couldn't rationalize it. It was completely shut down.

Cde. Speaker, now, I spoke about corruption. Let the Minister say whether it is not a fact that persons employed at the External Trade Bureau go around to the merchants, to the traders, and ask them to pay bribes. I have raised this question with him already. Those who are incorruptible refuse to pay bribes and so their names do not appear on the list, and they are not given quotas. This matter was raised with him. The Leader of the Opposition and I spoke with him about it. Absolutely nothing was done and it continues. The value of the bribe is 5 per cent of the total of whatever goods the merchant requires and they are so bare-faced as to tell the merchant that they have to share it, going right up, because those who are at the top are responsible. They only go to collect the order. They have to take the order with the bribe and those at the top are responsible for distributing and allocating the goods and they have to share the money. So, if you do not give the bribe, your name does not appear on the list, and no goods are given to you.

Two-by-two stalls in the market, because the owners are prepared to pay the bribe, receive goods to the value of large sums. They pay the 5 per cent. Now, those very incorruptible traders, if I may deem some of them that, they have to exist. If they want to continue in business they now turn around and are forced to buy the goods from those people and pay prices taking care of that 5 per cent that these people have paid there. All these were mentioned to the Cde. Minister, Cde. Speaker, but absolutely nothing was done.

When the External Trade Bureau removed and it went down to Water Street, I happened to go there to make representations on a certain matter. The Manager, who claimed that he had taken over two months, previously said he was going to stamp out all the irregularities. I brought to his attention all these matters and he did not deny. He said he was going to ensure that those persons on whose behalf I was making representations would have adequate supplies of all good whenever they come into this country, so long as they have a licence to sell such goods.

**The Minister of Economic Development and Co-operatives** (Cde. Hoyte): “You did not mention Gimpex.”] Cde. Speaker, Gimpex is a reputable firm. If you have to mention it, mention it.

Now the time came when the Government saw that it would have to stop in some way or the other or at least attempt to stop. But the same discrimination, the same favoritism, the same corruption that exist until this day in the External Trade Bureau will only be transferred, because the same people will be there. Of course, they dismissed at a meeting of the General Council at Sophia a few months ago, the last Manager. Millington was fired. The last General Manager of the External Trade Bureau was fired about four months ago. A political decision was taken. Not by a Guystac Executive Chairman or whatever they are, but at the meeting of the General Council of the People’s National Congress, the decision was taken to fire this man.

It is very nice, and I want to state here that the principle of having an agency like the E.T.B. to control, monitor, import, and export in the interest and for the benefit of the people is a good one, in relation to sufficient essential goods, equitable distribution, and fair prices. But anything that this Government puts its hand in has corruption, starting from the top, because it

has stolen a whole Government, and in all the corporation there is this type of stealing. The thieving must go on and because of this, year after year it will find itself in great difficulty.

Cde. Speaker, we must understand that in spite of all the Managers who have been fired, we have not reached the stage where we have had the wishes of the small man in the community, in the interior, in the rural areas, fulfilled. The External Trade Bureau has a set of bureaucrats who sit one night or lie one night in their beds and decide that they must order barbed wire or some kind of wire from China. I still think thousand of rolls are lying somewhere on the wharf in Water Street, which they can't get off, and this is the type of thing. Thousands of rolls, millions of dollars. Then items that one really needs, I am not talking about consumer items; I am not talking about food items, but many items that people need in the various parts of the country are not available for the people. The wishes and the needs of the people are not being met.

Cde. Speaker, I think it is a shame. It is a shame that this External Trade Bureau which existed since 1973 as a corporation has suffered so many casualties, as I said, and despite every effort, how genuine it was, I do not know, on the part of the Government to have the External Trade Bureau cleansed from all those inefficiencies; it has failed miserably. The Government has come to the conclusion today that the trade bureau must be dissolved and that its functions must be passed over to the Guyana National Trading Corporation.

Guyana Gajraj, Guyana Wreford, Guyana National Trading Corporation, and if I am not mistaken, the External Trade Bureau, those four form the Trading Group I. It has been pointed out that they will be rationalized. But Cde. Speaker, I don't understand how they are going to rationalize. While they are saying they are going to close down the External Trade Bureau, Guyana Gajraj still imports certain items, if my information is correct, information received today, which the E.T.B. imports, and which the G.N.T.C. imports. The point is that the Ministry of Trade, under which all these trading corporations and trading arms are supposed to come, has

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become impotent because the Bank of Guyana gives the man a quota; he applies for a licence and the licence goes to the Minister. He approves and when you go to the commercial bank, the commercial bank has to send it again to the Bank of Guyana and it is held up there.

I applied for a small licence based on a quota given to me by the Bank of Guyana for \$60,450 to buy spare parts for a printing machine from West Germany. The licence was approved by the Minister and when I went to buy the draft to send \$452, it was seized and sent to the Bank of Guyana. A couple of months have passed and I cannot get it. The licence has now expired. When I go back to the Minister he will tell me that I have to get a new *pro forma* and with things going up I have to go through the whole thing again. The machine lies down there.

This is the type of thing that is going on in this country. The Minister approves, the Bank of Guyana holds it up. The Minister gives it; the E.T.B. does not give you any goods. This is how the whole thing is operating in this country. Because of the seriousness of this matter, because of the allegations I have made of corruption and bribery and fraud, I call on the Minister now, before the Government dissolves the E.T.B., to set up an enquiry. I called for an enquiry when the Government was dissolving the Small Industries Corporation – not Justice Crane; he had a promotion recently.

We must know this type of black marketing that they practice. The mark-up of \$500, 600, 800 per cent which is put on goods must stop. The cost of living in this country is climbing day after day. If the small man does that, he is hauled before the courts, but the Government is free.

A sales tax of 10 per cent was included in the I.M.F. Agreement that was signed. The Government perhaps was afraid and so did not implement the sales tax but what did it do? The External Trade Bureau put 10 per cent, raised the handling charges, received the 10 per cent,



raised the cost of goods and so the small man does not know that he is already paying that 10 per cent. The 10 per cent sales tax was one of the demands if the I.M.F. but the Government has not yet put it there. It has gone into hiding. That type of dishonesty must stop and if this Government is really interested in the welfare of the poor man, as it claims to be a working-class Government, a socialist Government, then it must, by way of deed, by way of action, show that it is interested in the small man's affairs and it must stop putting on exorbitant profit margins and mark – ups, and try to reduce the profit margin, the 300, 500, 600 per cent mark –up on goods coming in.

The members of the Government say they are socialists. They give socialism a bad name because when one sees that soap is coming from the German Democratic Republic, where we have been told that goods are cheap, and that soap is bought there for 15 cents and sold for 46 cents, then obviously the people say, "This is socialism. We have been getting soap for 42 cents. Now it comes from a socialist country and we have to pay 46 cents. What type of socialism is this?" the Government is giving socialism a bad name and smearing the names of these socialist countries because it wants to get out of this economic crisis into which it put this country, a crisis of debt. `

As I said before, corporations must increase their surpluses and this is why they are putting on 300, 400, 500 per cent, thus facilitating the demands of the I.M.F.

**Mr. M. F. Singh:** Mr. Speaker, it is pretty obvious that there are certain disadvantages in not being the first speaker. In any case, let –

**The Speaker:** Supplement what he had to say.

**Mr. M. F. Singh:** Thank you very much for your supplement, Mr. Speaker. Let me first of all, congratulate my good friend the Hon. Minister of Trade and Consumer Protection on his contribution, his first contribution in this August Assembly, the highest forum of the land. I have

the greatest respect for his expertise and I certainly would like to wish him all the very best in his future Parliamentary career. However, the unfortunate part is that he is not only an expert in

Parliament but he is also a politician; and that is the unfortunate and perhaps regrettable part. Sometimes it is very difficult and indeed hazardous to reconcile the position of a politician with that of the expert that he is but I am sure that he will be able to do it.

Getting back to the matter in hand, I think the whole country will be happy to bury this particular Government organisation, the External Trade Bureau. If I may change the words of the Hon. Minister a bit, no right-thinking person would question the dissolution of the External Trade Bureau which organisation has been alleged to have been responsible for putting so many people out of business and causing such untold hardship to the Guyanese people, hardship which we have heard enumerated by the last speaker. We were told when the E.T.B. was set up that, by eliminating commission agents and so on, the ordering of goods would be rationalized and prices would come down. Instead, what we say was chaos, confusion, things going haywire, shortages. Indeed, shortages seem to have become an almost everyday occurrence and prices, instead of going down, went spiralling.

We have heard from the last speaker and, indeed, I know of it, of thefts, of fraud, of senior personnel having to be fired from the External Trade Bureau. Now, in this Order we read that the assets and the liabilities of the External Trade Bureau will be taken over by the Guyana National Trading Corporation. Let me add that the Guyana National Trading Corporation was formerly in the hands of private enterprise. I think everyone in this House knows I have the greatest respect for persons in private enterprise as being very efficient in the way they handle their business because, if the private firms do not make surpluses, or profits, call it what you like, they go out of business. For years private enterprise has been doing a wonderful job in this country. It is true that the private firms have been making profits or surpluses, but it is also true

that they were providing a very valuable service to this country before the advent of the virtual state monopoly, which we have existing today. Now that the assets and liabilities are being taken over by the Guyana National Trading Corporation – I have the greatest respect for the people from private enterprise who are involved in the Guyana National Trust Corporation – this is the question I want to ask: what is the position as regards the assets and liabilities that are going to be taken over?

I have been in this honourable House since 1966 and I remember after the establishment of the External Trade Bureau in 1973 asking for a statement, particularly after there were so many allegations of fraud and the firing of senior personnel and the rest of it. I remember asking in this honourable House for a statement of accounts, for a report on the E.T.B. to be supplied to the Members of this House so that we could know what is going on. It may well be that the law does not provide for that to be done but I think as parliamentarians here, with an organisation as vital and important as the E.T.B. appeared to be at that time, it was not without some justification that I asked for accounts to be presented to this honourable House.

It may be that I have missed them, but as far as my recollection goes I have never seen accounts in respect of the E.T.B. I have never seen any statements; I have never seen any books or reports in respect of the External Trade Bureau and I am very fearful as to what we are doing here in respect of the Guyana National Trade Corporation. I do not know what the debts of the E.T.B. are. I have read of various people being fired and I know that there are various allegations of malfunctioning but I think this is important. I would like this entire House to be aware of this and I would like the entire House to be told what the liabilities of the E.T.B. are.

Are we, perhaps, putting a millstone around the neck of the Guyana National Trade Corporation? The Guyana National Trade Corporation has problems of its own at the present moment. Do we want to saddle it with more problems? Are we putting a millstone around its

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neck? Are we going to put that stone so that it will sink instead of rising? What are the accounts? The External Trade Bureau was set up in January 1973 and we are entitled to know the financial position in respect of the Bureau. How much does it owe? I have never seen any books or accounts. We want to know all about the accounts. We are entitled to know about this.

I think that before we approve of this Order we should let the House know the entire state of affairs in respect of the E.T.B. The Government has the majority; the members of the Government have the power to approve of this Order and I make an appeal to the Minister: if the Government uses its majority and approves of this Order, I appeal to the Minister to lay the books and accounts, the financial state of affairs of the E.T.B. before this House, regardless of whether he is required by law to do it or not. Let him just do us the courtesy of informing us of the financial position so that we can know what is owed and what are the assets. All I see in this Order is a bald statement saying that the assets will be valued by agreement between the Ministry of Finance and the Guyana National Trade Corporation.

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**Mr. M. F. Singh:** We do not know what the value is. We do not even know what their liabilities are. We really do not know, I keep repeating. We really do not know whether we are putting a millstone around the neck of the Guyana National Trade Corporation. So, even if he is not required to do it, will the Hon. Minister please let us know the financial state of affairs of these people – assets and liabilities?

Lastly, sir, when I look at clause 6 of this Order, I see the Guyana National Trade Corporation may, as from the appointed day, continue to employ on such terms and conditions, etc. dealing with the employees, Guyana National Trade Corporation is under no compulsion to keep the entire staff of the External Trade Bureau. It may do so if it wants to, it may not do so if

it does not want to. I think the presumption by the last speaker was that it would not keep the entire staff. I am reading it here that it can exercise an option. It need not keep the entire staff. It can fire anyone it feels like firing; so that, I would like to know, whether it has looked at this at all, and if in fact there are people who will be fired.

We know that in the new Constitution there has been so much said about the right to work, so that even those people who have been fired, they will have the right to work. Is it that the G.N.T.C. will be keeping 50 per cent of the staff, 25 per cent or 30 per cent? Or is this to be worked out and to be gone into? There is not much time left. Come 1<sup>st</sup> January, the External Trade Bureau will be dissolved and the E.T.B. will have to go. Today is the 20<sup>th</sup>. There are eleven more days and those people should not be left in some doubt as to the future. It may well be that some of them are misfits and they should be fired. Nevertheless, let them know. The Hon. Minister should be in a position to tell us how many of the people will be kept and how many will be redeployed or whatever term is used. As it is written here, he could let us know what is happening. It is important that we get answers in respect of the assets and liabilities.

**The Speaker:** Cde. Minister of Trade.

**Cde. Tyndall** (replying): Cde. Speaker, I think I owe a sacred duty to this honourable body to reply to the remarks made on the subject under discussion. Many things have been said, to which I should like to respond, things to which I can respond effectively on behalf of my Ministry, but I do not think I should bother the House with a discussion of points of detail, notwithstanding, there are a number of points which I think merit very careful consideration, and I hope that my good friends in the Opposition will be receptive to what I say. The public will hear what I say and you will be able to know the truth. Let me begin with one of the many distortions- a serious distortion, a frightening distortion; and I call it a distortion only because I do not wish to show disrespect to my good friend, Cde. Narbada. This point characterizes the nature of all the distortions. I refer to the question of soap. I do not know whether I should

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consider it a typographical error in the computation received by my hon. Friend because he claimed that the price of the soap was 15 cents (Guyana) per cake but he didn't say for what size. For the information of this House, Cde. Speaker, I can give the details. *[Interruption]* The price per 3 ½ ounce cake of soap was 13.18 cents (U.S.) for some brands imported from one socialist country, and from another, it was 16.31 cents (U.S.). I will leave it to the House to judge. *(Interruption)* The price I quoted was F.O.B. to that we have to add import duty of 30 per cent.

We have to add consumption tax of 15 per cent, we have to add freight and insurance, in fact, before duty and consumption tax, and we have to add mark-ups. The final price to the consumer as published was 48 cents (Guyana) for each of the three soaps, Zora, Lily and Nautik. Was it a mistake on the part of Cde. Narbada?

5 p.m.

Cde. Speaker, I now wish to respond specifically to a number of points made first by the speaker of the major party in the Opposition, Cde. Narbada. Cde. Narbada. Was concerned about what he described as casualties. He was concerned about people being removed but at the same time he was concerned about the way the organization works, its efficiency, the need for disciplinary action. It seems to me rather conflicting that he should not associate some of the movement of personnel life with the constant search by the Government to find the management and to find personnel who would serve the best interests of the corporations and the best interests of the masses of Guyana.

Cde. Speaker, the spokesman for the Opposition mentioned the question of inequitable distribution of goods. Now, I want to make two points about this. In the first place, our concern in the distribution system is with the final consumer. That is not to say that we ignore the interests of the distributor, but they are the means to the end and the end is the service to the consumer. The fact is that our distribution system has developed over the years in a manner

which is dysfunctional with respect to the aim of providing the most effective service to the country. It is a fact that the distribution system has developed with most of the facilities located at certain centres and people came from all over the country to these centres to purchase their goods. This is rather inefficient. When transportation was cheap, when there was no fuel problem, it was not a matter of concern. It was not so much a matter of serious concern. It should be but it was not a major matter of concern. But when we are concerned with the logistics, that goods must be delivered to the consumer at the cheapest possible cost in so far as transportation is concerned, then we must try to restructure the distribution system.

The second point I which to make is that in Guyana we have a service sector which is 40 per cent of our gross national product and a distribution sector which is over 10 per cent. Now, this is a tremendous weakness in the structure of any developing country, and any Government must, as a matter of urgency, take in hand the development of a distribution system which best serves the economic development interests of the country. In structuring the distribution system, which would mean certain locational adjustments, it is inevitable that there would be interests involved in the system that may have to be induced to move into other productive activities. For what is of critical importance is not the expansion of a distribution sector; we do not want to develop a bazaar economy, we do not want to develop a country of shopkeepers. If that is what the major opposition party wants, that is how they see the process of developing Guyana, then I say that happy are the people of Guyana that they are what they really are. **[Interruption]**

The fact is, and let me give them this very simple information.

**The Speaker:** Comrades, you made serious allegations against the External Trade Bureau. Now you are getting a reply, you do not want to hear.

**Cde. Tyndall:** In the process of development, our country is in the early stages of development, the distribution sector or rather the service sector is very small. The primary sector

is usually very big. The industrial sector is, well, not so big, but it is usually second in size to the primary. In Guyana, we have the pernicious situation where the distribution sector is the biggest sector. I think any serious Government interested in restructuring the economy must take action which would reduce the size of the distribution sector without affecting the efficiency of the economy.

Cde. Speaker, the spokesman of the major Opposition mentioned the question that the External Trade Bureau was to set up to ensure that goods were available in adequate quantities and that we have not achieved that state of self sufficiency as envisaged at that time. It is a very simple matter. The External Trade Bureau was established in 1973; it was established in 1973 before the OPEC decision, which some may call catastrophic in so far as some countries are concerned. And the world has changed since then. In 1972, our imports of petroleum products constituted 7 per cent of our total imports, 7 per cent of our exports and less than 5 per cent of our G.N.P. In 1979, our oil imports constituted 27 per cent of our imports, 30 per cent of our exports and 21 per cent of our G.N.P. Take India, for instance, a country in economic distress. In India, it is said that their petroleum imports consist of 50 per cent of their total imports but their total import bill is 66 per cent of their G.N.P. Therefore, their oil imports constitute 3 per cent of their G.N.P. compared with Guyana's 21 per cent. This should drive home to the comrades opposite the magnitude of the problems which we face.

**5.10 p.m.**

And one can understand, therefore, why a country like Guyana cannot afford to buy all the things it would like to buy. And what we try to do is to ensure that our procurement takes care of the things that are essential for the welfare of the people and the development of the country and ensure that these things are distributed in an equitable way in the community.



And let me comfort the comrades of the Opposition that the distribution system is one which concerns us. We are not averse to criticism. This Government is not averse to criticism but criticism like that relating to soap is what we object to absolutely. A lot of the criticism which we heard today was soap criticism. We do not want soap criticism; we want constructive criticism because at least I am quite sure that I cannot match the speaker on the Opposition side in the vociferousness of his declamation.

I think it would be clear to all and it should be clear to all responsible politicians, whether they are members of the Government or members of the Opposition, that we live in a world that is in serious difficulties. The difficulties that are experienced in Guyana with prices, with supplies, are not unique to us. Let them deny that, and let them deny that there are also rising prices and inflation in socialist countries and let them deny that there is also mounting indebtedness in socialist countries. Let them deny and let them not revert to irrelevancies.

I think that is more than enough response to a statement which I wish was worthy of this House in terms of the constructive nature of its comments and criticisms. I wish to turn now to a few very pertinent comments made by the hon. member Mr. Feilden Singh. The hon. member Mr. Fielden Singh said that there is a danger that the dissolution of the E.T.B. will put so many people out of jobs. Let me comfort him by saying that in negotiations between the union, G.N.T.C. and E.T.B., agreement was reached to absorb all the employees of E.T.B. and in the Order the term “may” was used because we cannot compel the employees to accept the jobs. If they choose to transfer their services, then the G.N.T.C. shall accept them. I am sure with his legal perspicacity he will understand.

He speaks of spiraling prices but with developed countries facing inflation and with inflation in a number of socialist countries – in Eastern Europe over 30 per cent inflation in one year – with Guyana importing 76 per cent of the G.N.P., could we escape the spiraling prices of the outside world? I think it gives no consolation but one has to face realities, one has to accept

the fact and one must be realistic enough to introduce policies which would reflect an adequate response to the situation. Rhetoric will not solve the problem.

A question was asked about the liabilities of the E.T.B. Let me say that the E.T.B. has been turning in a surplus in every year of its operations and provision is made for transfer of assets, transfer of liabilities. I am quite sure that this is not too difficult for my comrades opposite because during any period before collection time and payment time you will have in your books liabilities and you will have in your books assets and these must be transferred, but the net position is a favourable position.

I wish to assure the hon. member Mr. Feilden Singh and his party and the major Opposition Party, I wish to assure all of them also by saying that as of today the accounts of the E.T.B. up to 1977, the audited accounts, audited by the external auditors, are already completed. They are available and the audited accounts for 1978, audited by external auditors, will be available within a week and we will be in a position – and I do not say “shall” - to present these during the first month of 1980.

I think that I have fully and adequately replied to all the points except, of course, matching the gesticulations of the spokesman for the main Opposition Party. I do not think that that is appropriate at this time. May I again formally move the adoption of the Motion standing in the name of the Cde. Prime Minister.

**Cde. N. Persaud:** Cde. Chairman, let me seek your permission to make one observation, a clarification of what the Minister said as regards the soap. He mentioned 13.1 cents (U.S.). According to my calculations, converting at \$2.56, 13 cents (U.S.) will bring us to 33 cents (G).

**The Speaker:** That is a far cry from 15 cents. I thought you would have got up to apologize. I am not allowing any debate on that.

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*Question put, and agreed to.*

*Motion carried.*

### **SYMPATHY TO CDE. KENNARD ON DEATH OF FATHER-IN-LAW**

**The Speaker:** Comrades and hon. member, a few days ago we learnt with some regret of the death of the father-in-law of Cde. Kennard, who is a Minister of the Government. I am sure you would like me to express our sympathy to him and his wife and sorrowing relatives in their loss.

### **BUSINESS FOR THE NEXT SITTING**

**The Speaker:** Comrades and hon. members, this concludes our business for today. Cde. Leader of the House, to what date do you propose to move the Adjournment?

**The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House** (Cde. Ramsaroop):  
Before I move the Adjournment-

**The Speaker:** I did not ask you that. I asked you to what date do you propose to move the Adjournment.

**Cde. Ramsaroop:** To the 27<sup>th</sup>.

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### **CHRISTMAS GREETINGS**

**The Speaker:** This is, therefore, the last sitting before Christmas. I take this opportunity, as is customary at this time, of extending my personal good wishes for a happy and peaceful

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Christmas to all the Members of Parliament and to their families and all members of our staff and their families, to the representatives of the Press and to their families, to the officials who are required to be here and to the visitors who attend our sittings and, indeed, to all Guyanese.

**5.20 p.m.**

As there will be another sitting before the year ends, I will leave my New Year wishes for that occasion. I would now like to invite all present Members, Staff, Press, and officials, to refreshments in the Committee Room after the Adjournment of the House.

**Cde. Ramsaroop:** Cde. Chairman, before I move the formal adjournment, as it is our hallowed tradition in this House, may you permit me, rather out of turn, to extend on behalf of the Government Benches, our sincere good wishes to all Members of this House, as we are nearing the yuletide season.

I wish, Cde. Speaker, particularly, to extend season's greetings to you, to your charming spouse, and to your immediate family. I am aware of the strains and stresses which have been added to your already onerous responsibilities this year with the addition of the work of the Constituent Assembly and I wish to say, certain that it will be endorsed by all Members of this House, that notwithstanding those additional responsibilities this year, you continued to discharge your functions with competence, decorum and with dignity.

Cde. Speaker, I also wish on this day, to extend congratulations to your staff of the Parliament Office and in particular to the Cde. Clerk of the National Assembly who also has been saddled with the additional responsibilities this year. No one can doubt the transparent efficiency that is manifest in the discharge of the duties of the Cde. Clerk of the National Assembly. He has kept this high position up throughout this year and I am certain for a long time to come.

To the Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly we extend also, season's greetings to him.

I know that he has been sharing responsibility the duties that attach to that Office and without the help that he has given to the Clerk, we would not have been able to dispose of as much business as we have done throughout the year.

To the reportorial staff of your Office, Cde. Speaker, I extend good wishes, too,, for Christmas. I know that this year they have labored under many disadvantages. Indeed, it sometimes staggers me to think that with these constraints, they have been able to cope with the expeditious documentation which accompanied the work of the Constituent Assembly. I can only put this down to the great sacrifice, to their resourcefulness and to the equanimity that they have all applied in the execution of their duties.

To our friends of the fourth estate, the press, Cde, Speaker, notwithstanding their innocuous inaccuracies on many occasions, I think we welcome every time their presence here. I know that parliamentary reporting is one of the most technical areas of reporting in the world and I think that they too, deserve a need of praise this year, for the splendid work they have done in translating sometimes the rather garbled incoherent accounts of the proceedings of this Parliament.

Also, Cde. Speaker, we tend to forget our technical staff, our good friend on the northern section of this Chamber, and also our messengerial staff, who in their respective functions, I think, do a good job. You know, in life we tend to overlook the small things, the messengerial staff, for example are very useful in getting documents for us in time and in attending to the small needs which go to make the effectiveness of our work.

Also, to the technical members who see to it that our recordings are properly kept in permanent form. We ought to extend our festive greetings to them.

Last and not least, may I single out too, our Sergeant-at-Arms, a man whose presence and whose demeanor and who's bearing on all occasions have always inspired respect, if not admiration, from all of us. I wish that he continues in this office for many years.

Also, we tend to overlook the members of the Police Force who are around. I hope that day will never come when their services are needed. It is always good to have them around and I see many of them around today. To them I extend festive greetings also.

This is a great Parliament, Cde. Speaker. For example, today we have seen the death of the External Trade Bureau and the birth of another great orator in this Assembly, Cde. Joe Tyndall. Where else in the world can we see a man of such wit as the Deputy Leader of the Opposition? No matter how much you disagree with him, he can never be disagreeable.

Cde. Speaker, with those words of greetings, may I finally extend to all of us here and to this nation, our wishes for a pleasant, for a prosperous, and for a restful Christmas. We shall be meeting again on the 27<sup>th</sup>, when you, Cde. Speaker, will permit us to look into the crystal ball to see what 1980 holds for us.

**Cde. Ram Karran:** Your Honour, I wish on this occasion, when generally we meet to exchange greetings at the end of the year prior to the holidays, without rancor, perhaps, to forget all the difficulties we faced during the year, to exchange in a sincere manner, with true sincerity, best wishes for the season. Since we are having a second bite at the cherry for the new year on the next occasion, I wish to add very briefly on this occasion my own quota.

In spite of the constraints referred to by my hon. friend, the Leader of the House, so many constraints which we face, not only those of us in the Chamber, but others throughout the country – shortage of toys to make our children happy, shortage of water, shortage of lights, shortage of newsprint, shortage of electricity, shortage of almost everything, - notwithstanding

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those difficulties, let us as people in a position to better appreciate the difficulties we face, not cast blame but let us try to see, very sincerely, even at this late hour attempt to put our heads together to bring about an end to the difficulties my friend, the rising orator, has referred to in his sparkling speech made just a few minutes ago.

**5.30 p.m.**

Let us look at it in the light that we are burying one casualty, the External Trade Bureau. Perhaps, other casualties should have been buried before but let us in the spirit of the season take the challenge of my friend to face these difficulties sincerely, without reference to our own individual interests, without reference to the interest of our individual groupings. Let us look at our problems very objectively and see whether we can come to some understanding as to how best we can solve the very, very serious difficulties that seem to surround us in every direction which seem to my mind, to be continuing and could engulf us and our children if we do not at this time take note of what is taking place and put an end to it. I think we can but we very sincerely ought to look at it in that light.

Many people, many Parliaments, many nations have gone down because they had not taken the trouble, because they had other things to look at. We are a new nation, a young nation just starting out, just a few years old. We ought not to make the mistakes that others have made and I wish to take this opportunity to suggest, particularly as the star of Bethlehem is now in the heavens, the time of peace and goodwill, that we ought not to prejudice or to submit our principles, we ought not to give up our principles, but we ought to look afresh, look again and see whether we can overcome these difficulties which seem to face us and which we all recognise.

I wish, Cde. Speaker, to extend to you, personally, to my colleagues on the other side of the House, who have been there for a long time, to all those who participate in the business of

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this House, to extend to them a very Happy Christmas rest, with some opportunity to think of the occasion, because this is the most pressing thing, to see how we can get our country out of the difficulties we face.

**Mr. M.F. Singh:** Mr. Speaker, maybe one of these days the last may be first. Mr. Speaker, may I, on behalf of the United Force, extend to you, to your charming spouse, to your family, to my fellow Members of Parliament, to the Clerk and his Deputy, our hardworking Clerk and his able Deputy, to the Marshal of Parliament, to the Official Reporters, charming and hardworking, very hardworking indeed, particularly with the Constituent Assembly this year, to those people who work so hard, staff of Parliament in the back rooms, unnoticed, to the technicians, to the members of the Press, in spite of the inaccuracies in their reporting sometimes, indeed, Mr. Speaker, to the entire Guyanese nation, wishes for a very Happy Christmas, very peaceful and prayerful. May I say it is my fervent wish that the Good Lord will shower His blessings and help to alleviate the sufferings of Guyanese at this festive season.

**The Speaker:** Comrades and hon. members, on behalf of my family and myself and also on behalf of the staff of the Parliament Office, I thank you for your good wishes. I hope to see you later on.

### ADJOURNMENT

**Cde. Ramsaroop:** I wish to move the Adjournment of this House to a date to be fixed.

**Adjourned accordingly at 5.35 p.m.**

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