

THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
OFFICIAL REPORTS

[Volume 7]

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE FIRST SESSION OF THE NATIONAL
ASSEMBLY OF THE THIRD PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE
CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA

216th Sitting 2 p.m. Thursday, 17th April, 1980

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (63)

Speaker

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

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

Prime Minister (1)

Cde. L.F.S. Burnham, O.E., S.C., (Absent – on leave)
 Prime Minister

Deputy Prime Minister (1)

Cde. P.A. Reid, O.E., (Absent)
 Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of
 National Development

Senior Ministers (11)

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

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

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

Cde. C.V Mingo,
 Minister of Home Affairs

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

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

*Cde. F.E. Hope, (Absent)
 Minister of Finance

*Cde. G.B. Kennard, C.C.H., (Absent – on leave)
 Minister of Agriculture

*Cde. M. Shahabuddeen, O.R., S.C.,
 Attorney General and Minister of Justice

*Cde. R.E. Jackson, (Absent - on leave)
 Minister of Foreign Affairs

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

*Non-elected Ministers

Ministers (2)

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

Ministers of State (10)

- Cde. F.U.A Carmichael
Minister of State – Regional (Rupununi)
- Cde. P. Duncan, J.P.,
Minister of State – Regional (North West)
- 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)
- Cde. J.R. Thomas, (Absent)
Minister of State, Ministry of Education,
Social Development and Culture
- Cde. R.H.O. Corbin, (Absent)
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, (Absent)
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. John, C.C.H., (Absent)
Parliamentary Secretary, Office of the
Prime Minister, and Government Chief Whip
- Cde. E.L. Ambrose, (Absent)
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture
- Cde. M. Corrica, (Absent- on leave)
Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of Education, Social Development and Culture
- Cde. E.M. Bynoe,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Trade and
Consumer Protection.

*Non-elected Ministers

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

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

Other Members (15)

Cde. W.G. Carrington, C.C.H. (Absent- on leave)
Cde. S.M. Field-Ridley
Cde. E.H.A. Fowler
Cde. J. Gill
Cde. W. Hussain
Cde. K.M.E. Jonas (Absent)
Cde. P.A. Rayman
Cde. A. Salim, C.C.H.
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, J.P.,
Cde. L.E. Willems
Cde. M. Zaheeruddeen

Members of the Opposition (16)

(i) People's Progressive Party (14)

Leader of the Opposition (1)

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

Deputy Speaker (1)

Cde. Ram Karran,
Deputy Speaker

Other Members (12)

Cde. J. Jagan
Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud, J.P., Opposition Chief Whip
Cde. Narbada Persaud
Cde. C. Collymore (Absent- on leave)
Cde. S.F. Mohamed (Absent)
Cde. I. Basir
Cde. C.C. Belgrave
Cde. R. Ally
Cde. Dalchand, J.P.,
Cde. Dindayal
Cde. H. Nokta
Cde. P. Sukhai

(ii) Liberator Party (2)

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

Mr. M.A. Abraham

OFFICERS

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

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

PRAYERS

1980-04-17

2:10 – 2:20 p.m.

2:10 p.m.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

MOTION

APPROVAL OF ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 1980

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply to resume consideration of the estimates of expenditure for the financial year 1980.

Assembly in Committee of Supply.

The Chairman: Page 201.

DIVISION XXIII – MINISTRY OF WORKS AND TRANSPORT (WORKS)

Question proposed that the sum of \$39,173,602 for Division XXIII, Ministry of Works and Transport (Works) stand part of the Estimates.

Cde. Nokta: Subheads 1, 5, 16, 37, 38 and 46.

On subhead 1, Georgetown Approaches, I notice here quite a tidy sum is being sought and the legend states “To provide for the purchase of miscellaneous equipment for the Demerara Bridge”, but the subhead states “Georgetown Approaches”. I am not quite clear on this. What is really meant? I notice that in 1977 a little more than \$1 million was voted. In 1978 it was also a little more than \$1million. In 1979 there was a decrease. A little over \$3 million was approved but only \$350,000 was spent and how we are asking for \$2.792 million.

First, I want to find out what is really meant by this term “Georgetown Approaches” when they are talking about the Demerara Harbour Bridge. Perhaps I can ask the Minister to tell us whether it means miscellaneous equipment for the Bridge or whether it is to construct roads approaching the Demerara Harbour Bridge. I would also like to know how much money has already been spent and how much more it is intended to spend to complete this project.

Subhead 5, Access Roads. I notice that in 1977 a sum of more than \$2 million was spent. In 1979 the sum of \$500,000 was approved but it was revised to a sum of only \$225,000 and now we are asking for \$1.9 million. I would like to ask the Minister to tell us where these roads are being built and whether they are all-weather roads. We have been hearing much about farm-to-market roads and we would like to have some information on these roads. I would like to know how many of the roads that were started in 1977 have been completed and how many are still to be completed.

I now turn to subhead 16, Upper Mazaruni Road Project. The legend states “To continue maintenance work on the road Project”, that is, the Upper Mazaruni Road Project. I am a bit puzzled by this. In 1977 the sum of \$9.767 million was spent and every

year more money is voted. Now we are asking for another million dollars. I would like the Minister to tell us, having already spent \$9 million in 1977 and having spent so much during the other years, how much of this Upper Mazaruni Road Project has already been completed and what more is left to be completed.

Subhead 37, Pure Water Supply. It states “Water Supply (Force Account)” and the legend states “To provide for the extension of Pure Water Supply facilities.” I should like the Minister to tell us if this is an extension of water supply facilities, in what areas of Guyana pure water supply is being extended right now, what are the specific areas where pure water supply is being extended, if work has already been started, how far have they gone with work in these areas and when do they estimate that work will be completed on the extension of pure water supply in the various areas.

Subhead 38, Water Supply (Contracts). The legend states: “To provide for the digging of wells to supply potable water countrywide.” Here again I want to ask a question. It says “(Contracts)”. First, I should like to find out whether these contractors are local people or foreign. I should also like to find out from the Minister specifically where these new wells are to be dug. Also, I want to ask a question specifically to have a good answer on this: Whether a feasibility study will be carried out on the various sites before digging commences.

This is the last one. Subhead 46, Bartica-Issano Road. As I said in the Budget Debate, the Bartica Road is in a very bad state and I have seen that \$250,000 is being voted. I should like to ask the Minister, in view of the fact that nearly 236 miles of road have gone bad – I am subject to correction - whether he thinks this amount is enough to put that road back into good shape. I understand that it is so bad that even Government trucks cannot ply the area.

The Chairman: A Government truck is different from anybody else’s truck? I just want to know.

Cde. Nokta: A Government truck is a Government truck just as a private truck is a private truck. There is a difference. One difference is that Government trucks are not insured and they have to carry passengers on the Bartica Road much to the detriment of the lives of the people. When we had a bad road all the trucks were at a stage where only one truck was operating. We are told that a new one is now put into service. I am afraid that by the time the road is repaired we might have a road but no truck. I want to ask the Minister if he hopes that the road will be completed with this vote of \$250,000 and put into good shape or whether it will be subject to a long drawn out state of repairs and then we may not be able to make use of it.

Mr. M.F. Singh: I am going to be short because some of my questions have been asked by my colleague. Subheads 1, 5, 16, 17, 20, 37, 38, and, lastly, subhead 1 on the next page. Sir, in respect of subhead 1, Georgetown Approaches, it does say “Georgetown Approaches” but the legend says, “To provide for the purchase of miscellaneous equipment for the Demerara Bridge. U.K. Govt. Loan”, so that even though it says “Georgetown Approaches” all this money, according to the legend, is going to be spent on the Demerara Bridge - \$2,792,602.

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2:20 p.m.

I realise that the bridge – and we acknowledge that the bridge is a tremendous advantage for the Guyanese people generally but I think we are also entitled to know the cost and the cost factors involved. This is a capital sum and we would like to know what other capital expenditure is envisaged in respect of this Demerara Bridge in addition to this capital expenditure. It would be interesting to know what it is costing to maintain and what are the toll collections, how much more capital is it envisaged, as I said, will be spent over the years on this bridge, well, in the foreseeable future. It is a new bridge. I know that there will be cost of maintenance but what is there to complete the capital work? Also, could the Hon. Minister give us an idea of what the progressive maintenance charges would be? It is a floating bridge, there will be corrosion, there will be costs involved in maintaining the pontoons because the sea water comes in, there is salt and all those floating pontoons will start corroding at some time or the other, so could we have some sort of progressive estimate as to what monies are involved here?

Subhead 5, Access Roads. To provide for the rehabilitation of roads, \$1,900,000. I merely ask for details of that, sir.

Subhead 16, Upper Mazaruni Road Project. A sum of \$1 million is requested for this year. The legend says, “To continue maintenance work on the road Project”. Now, I note that this is for maintenance, this million dollars. It is not capital, it is maintenance. To my mind, it should not really be capital but I may be wrong. Perhaps the Hon. Minister would like to invite me to go and see this road. He knows and I know that I do know something about road building. He was with me when I was Minister at one time looking at the Linden Highway, so perhaps I would be in a better position to appreciate what these maintenance works are like if he does invite me to visit the road. But in the meantime he can tell me exactly why it is necessary – a million dollars for maintenance and this road is a new road recently constructed so that I would not have thought maintenance costs would be so high.

Subhead 17, Coastal Feeder Roads - \$5,600,000 requested to provide for the Associated Institution Building. U.S.A.I.D. Loan. Could the Hon. Minister shed some light on this? I know it seems to have been started in 1979 and even though a sum of \$3 million plus was in the Approved Estimates, the amount was revised to \$405,000 and now we are asking for \$5.6 million. What is it all about, this Associated Institution Building?

Subhead 20, Government Buildings, \$2,200,000 to provide for the completion of public buildings. Could we have some details on this?

Then I move to Subhead 37, Water Supply (Force Account). This is merely to supplement what the last speaker said. The legend is for the extension of Pure Water Supply facilities. Could we have some details on this? He has asked some supplementary questions which I would have asked myself.

Subhead 38, Water Supply (Contracts). Here again the amount requested is \$2.7

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million to provide for the digging of wells to supply potable water countrywide. Netherlands Grant. Let me say how grateful we are to the Netherlands Government for having made \$1.9 million available to us to provide for this digging of wells countrywide. I really would like to know that because there are some areas in the country where there is an acute shortage of pure water supply and I would really be very pleased to hear what the countrywide programme is. And also to supplement the last speaker's request, how are these contracts to be awarded and to whom or on what basis?

On the very last one, sir, on the next page, subhead 1 --

The Chairman: We have not gone to that yet.

Mr. Feilden Singh: Thank you, sir.

Cde. Ram Karran: May I ask a question, sir, on subheads 43 and 44? Will the Hon. Minister give some indication to this House as to the final cost of this workshop, when it is completed? And can he explain to us what is this Phase II of this Workshop? What does it imply? What does it involve? And does it envisage any further expenditure on the Phase II?

Cde. Ally: Cde. Chairman, on subhead 20, I have seen here New Amsterdam and Georgetown for the government buildings and to provide for the completion of public buildings. Sir, I would like to enquire from the Minister why work on the New Amsterdam court building was started and then stopped for such a long time until all the wooden material, thousands of dollars in worth, was left to rot? At present it appears to me as if work has been started again on the building. Will the Minister say who is the contractor? Did the same contractor start the work on the building? If not, who is the new contractor? Does the contract remain at the same sum of money which was agreed upon before work was started in the very beginning? If so, what was the sum and if a new sum of money was agreed upon, how much was that sum?

The Minister of Works and Transport (Cde. Naraine): Cde. Chairman, questions were asked about subhead 1, Georgetown Approaches. That project included certain roads done on the eastern part of Georgetown, namely, the four-lane highway. There were certain roads done within Georgetown, part of Sheriff Street, Ruimveldt Avenue, and some work was done on the East Bank, part of it not yet completed. There is a diversion through the Industrial Estate and as a part of this project, the Demerara Harbour Bridge approach was constructed. The location of that bridge originally was to be some where within the boundaries of Georgetown but the final location was out of Georgetown. Nevertheless, it was dealt with as part of this project because it had always been treated as part of the network of transport communications for the city.

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Cde. Chairman, you will observe that in 1979 a sum of over \$3 million was approved and in fact, it was revised down. The reason for this was that although the bridge was completed structurally and put into use, there were certain items of additional equipment which were ordered out of a British loan.

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This comprised of some spare parts for the bridge, navigation lighting, permanent lighting on the bridge itself, cathodic protection against corrosion. In fact, it is not cathodic protection, it is an induced current system of protection. Some of this equipment started to come in 1979. We hope that some more will come in 1980. Now, if they all come in 1980 and the various installations are completed, then there will be no need for this kind of capital expenditure in 1981. If however, all the equipment does not arrive in this year and installed, it may very well be that a sum would have to be carried forward for 1981.

Cde. Chairman, Mr. Singh raised the question about the bridge maintenance. In fact, it is in operation, maintenance, security, lighting, for all of that a sum of \$1.4 million has been provided under the Current Expenditure. The projected revenue earning for this year should be \$3 million; for last year it was slightly below that. On the question of subhead 5, Access Roads --

The Chairman: Cde. Minister, I do not propose entering into this debate, but it would appear to me that if the people who prepared these estimates spent a little more time to correlate the legend with what is put there, a lot of problems would be avoided. Here it has "Georgetown Approaches" and then in the legend it has "To provide for the purchase of miscellaneous equipment for the Demerara Bridge." How do the two things go together? It just shows that a repetition is put down and nobody cares. You come here and then we have got to do all the changes and waste time explaining them.

Cde. Naraine: It is unfortunate --

The Chairman: Well, the whole thing is unfortunate, several of the legends.

Cde. Naraine: It has been like this for many years now.

The Chairman: Yes. It just shows what work they are doing.

Cde. Naraine: The question raised on the access roads, these are roads that were done in years gone by like the Mahaicony road that was improved, the Branch road, Burma road. There was a bit of road in the Berbice area but there is a programme for access roads and farm-to-market roads being put as a part of the whole developmental thrust. This sum is for a road to be constructed at Clonbrook. Now I should say, Cde. Chairman, that this item has to be looked at very closely in relation to subhead 17 because as a result of certain work being carried out at subhead 17, the decision on the type of road, the final amount of money that will be spent will have to be taken a little bit later, but this sum of money is intended for that particular road.

The next subhead was 16, Upper Mazaruni Road Project. The reason why this maintenance work is kept on this head, is because the Upper Mazaruni road in total was not yet completed. It comprised totally about 220 miles of road. Clearing was done and a road was constructed to about 180 miles but the 180 miles of road were completed in various stages. The portion of road to Puruni can be traveled on but about one-third of that would be called all-weather road, the remainder would be a fair weather road. The other part from Puruni to Mazaruni, a clearing was done and that road can only be used

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after some additional capital input had been put into it.

Now, the length of road is rather considerable and we are allowing the capital already spent to conserve the conditions of the road after the work was stopped. Money has to be spent to do that and this is why this was put as capital because it is not ordinary maintenance of road necessary to keep traffic on the entire road. It is being spent to maintain capital already put there and in fact, every time you spend money here, you are adding to the capital because you are improving on it and you are doing additional work which will amass towards the final year product.

The Coastal feeder roads, subhead 17, I said this must be looked at in relation to the other roads, that is, the access roads. This project in fact, comprises of the construction of a laboratory for testing materials to be used on the roads and also for the testing of soils so that one can get a design prepared of a road. It also includes for the extension of the Ruimveldt workshop, the rebuild workshop, so those are the institutions, one for the maintenance of equipment to be used on the roads, the other is for the design and control work to be done on the various roads. It also includes a sum for the purchase of equipment both for the laboratory and the purchase of spare parts to repair a certain number of items of equipment that will be used on the road construction process.

The Chairman: Did what you say there have any relation at all to this item? I mean it just shows the kind of preparation that they bring to you.

Cde. Naraine: Well, Cde. Chairman, I hope that with this explanation, we will all be a bit wiser of what its all about.

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It also includes a sum for the engagement of consultants who are here to assist on the design of the road but more particularly for the training of about 1,400 technicians in various fields, starting from small contractors training in management and going right on to operatives and mechanics for the operation and maintenance of the equipment. The foreign part of the payment of the consultants is by way of a grant of \$4 million. I hope, Cde. Chairman, that would give some light into what that project is about.

The Chairman: We have to be very grateful to Cde. Nokta and to the Hon. Member Mr. Singh. If it had not been for them, we would not have been any the wiser. We would have gone away in ignorance.

Cde. Naraine: On subhead 20, Government Buildings, Cde. Roshan Ally raised the question about the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court building is going to be completed and the expenditure on that building will be taken from this head. I do not think that the work will be finished this year. The contractor on this job will be Guyconstruct. It is going to be a negotiated contract and the contract sum has not yet been finalised.

The question by Cde. Roshan Ally on Building Consortium --

The Chairman: He also asked the question whether the contract price, the original contract and the new contract, if there is going to be any variation and, if so, how much.

Cde. Naraine: We are not going to know that until the price is obtained.

The Chairman: Is it accurate to say that work is actually being carried on now as Cde. Ally said?

Cde. Naraine: Work has been started.

The Chairman: And you have not arranged the price?

Cde. Naraine: Work has been started on the cost basis but that will be overtaken by a negotiated lump sum contract. The other job to be done from this subhead will be the Customs Building on Main Street. Work has already started there as well and that building should be finished some time next year.

In addition to those two buildings, work will be completed on the Attorney General's Office and a building in the Agriculture Compound will be extended and made into an office. Subhead 20. We have finished that.

The Chairman: Subhead 37.

Cde. Naraine: Water Supply, subheads 37 and 38. Details were asked on those I think the details were given in the debate but I shall give them again. New wells are

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scheduled for Airy Hall Sands, Perseverance, and a replacement well at Huist T’Dieren, Best on the West Demerara, Hubu on the East Bank Essequibo, St. Cuthbert’s Mission, Ithaca and Seafield, No. 69, Letter Kenny, Springlands, and the extension of pipelines. At Calcutta there will be 1,000 feet of 8-inch pipelines and 1,200 feet of 6-inch pipelines. There will be pumps and motors at Haslington, Better Hope. At Enmore there will be 2,000 4-inch pipelines; at Timehri 2,850; a surface pump at Hubu; Best Hospital – 2,000 4-inch pipelines; motors and pump at Land Plenty, Walton Hall, Free and Easy, Perseverance; pump stations at Land of Plenty, and Free and Easy. Those are the details for the subhead 37, Water Supply (Force Account).

Subhead 38, Water Supply (Contracts). The project is for 46 wells to be done in the Rupununi – 20 of those are completed – and a pump station and water treatment facilities to be put at Bartica. Those are the details for the contracts.

The Chairman: I think Cde. Ally or somebody else asked if the contract was given and, if so, to whom.

Cde. Naraine: This water supply that is marked here to be done by Contract apparently this contract is really the Agreement between the lending agency and the Government, rather than giving it out to contractors because we do not do well work by contractors in the country. Force Account is the work that we do. The Hon. Member Mr. Singh will remember that when he was a Minister there were two types of projects, one was Force Account and the other one was by contract. The contract work was subsequently taken over by GUYWA and the two projects were both done by Force Accounts and continue like that. One related to a job that is foreign financed and the other one that is done completely out of local funds. They are both done by GUYWA. That is subhead 38.

The Chairman: Subheads 43 and 44.

Cde. Naraine: Subhead 43, Melanie Damishana Mechanical Workshop Complex. The final cost of the workshop, Phase I, will be \$19 million. One subhead 44, final cost of Phase II is \$11 million. This sum of \$250,000 will be to start Phase II much later this year. Phase 1, the workshop, will be used for the repairs of German equipment that has been purchased in the country but will also be used for other types of equipment. This workshop will also have the capability of making spare parts so when the workshop is completed we should have a reduction of expenditure of foreign currency on the importation of spare parts. Phase II of the project will be concentrated principally on agricultural equipment, draglines, tractors and similar types of equipment.

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Subhead 46, Bartica Issano Road, the \$250,000 shown here is not for the complete rehabilitation of the road. This will carry out the beginning of the rehabilitation and what in fact this sum will be used for is to do what is know as the sub-

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base of the roads, the white sand, and in the very bad areas where there may be ditches and where sand clay will be filled while that portion is finished, an estimate is being prepared for the improvement of the roads up to the base level, but it will not be a bitumen road, it will still be either a lateritic or sand clay finish. But we will probably see more about that in next year's estimates. Those are the answers to the questions asked.

Division XXIII, Ministry of Works and Transport (Works) - \$39,173,602 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Page 202.

DIVISION XXIV – MINISTRY OF WORKS AND TRANSPORT (WORKS)
IBRD/IDA PROJECTS
WEST COAST DEMERARA ROAD PROJECT

Question proposed that the sum of \$278,000 for Division XXIV, Ministry of Works and Transport (Works) – IBRD/IDA Projects – West Coast Demerara Road Project, stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. M.F. Singh: Mr. Chairman, Subhead 1, Road Improvement. In 1979, the revised figure was \$5,463,184. The amount requested this year is only \$100,000 and it says here in the legend: "To continue work on the West Demerara Road." Well, in my experience, \$100,000 would not take you very very far; it would not take you any way at all in respect of continuing works on the West Demerara Road. I wonder if the Hon. Minister will tell us exactly is the position. It does not say, to finish the work on the West Demerara Road. It merely says to continue it. What is being continued? This is the fourth month in the year and perhaps the \$100,000 has been spent already because \$100,000 isn't any money at all. Within less than one month you can spend \$100,000 on road building. So what has that \$100,000 done or what is it intended to do? And what will be the position in respect of this road, when will it be finished? Because, again I am going by the legend. That is the problem with these legends, if they are not correct, they could be completely misleading. If it is to continue work and not to complete it, then there must be some work still left to be done. When will it be complete? Work on this road has been going on for a long time now. Years. Yes, we have had contractors and we have had traumatic experiences with the contractors on that road. You know what that means? It is associated with hospitals and so on, sickness, so that we want to know exactly what is the state of affairs.

Cde. Ram Karran: I would like to examine the two following items, subhead 2, Weigh Bridges and subhead 3, Consultants' Services. I remember the Minister had dealt with Weigh Bridges last year, but we see these things appearing, re-appearing, and we see no Weigh Bridges. What is the policy, what is the programme for Weigh Bridges, where are they going to be installed and what are the returns one gets from these Weigh Bridges? We all see the one at Mon Repos, which is on the road, reserved as an obstruction to traffic, and I have never seen that thing in use. I do not know when last it was used and what purpose it serves. Where are these going to be? I would like to know how this money is to be spent.

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Sir, to speak on the third item, subhead 3, we have been told in this House over and over again that the policy of the government is attracting Engineers. We have so many of them. We have got aid, we have all sorts of things and we still see consultants' fees mentioned in these things. We were told that the Ministry of Works and Transport was self sufficient, it had eminently qualified people to supervise all the construction and so on, and yet we see, and I assume that these consultants are foreigners, the use of foreign exchange involved in the consultants' fees throughout the estimate. What is the position with the Engineers? I know we have one wasted here, who is sufficiently experienced to undertake this type of work if he had, not the ability, but the determination to work in his profession. What is the position with the consultants? Why do we have consultants littered all over the estimate?

Cde. Naraine: I think the question on subhead 1 is in keeping with the comments you have made. Maybe a bit misleading, but I would like to explain what the money is for. The road was finished and opened, but there is some road marking to be done and this has to be done after the surface has aged a bit so that you can have the painting done to last longer on the bitumen surface. This work has to be done and also some road signs to be put up; there are also some liabilities to be paid, so really, in terms of continuing work, there is very little work that is left to be done.

The Weigh Bridges, subhead 2, last year I gave a list of these bridges, they are built in all the counties and form part of this project. It was financed for the study of weight control on our existing roads. There is a lot of overloading on the road and what this study hopes to do is to, since it is virtually impossible to get rid of overloading on the roads, limit the overloading by the vehicles. And so the Weigh Bridges are required to pull vehicles off the road and to weigh them to see the degree of overloading and also to have some vehicles overloaded and run on the road to see the effects, the depressions and the flexing, of the road and so forth.[Interruption] They were not intended for that.

The Chairman: Cde. Ram Karran's point is that they are made and the feasibility studies are carried out and they are never used.

Cde. Naraine: They are used for this study and they will continue to be used because after the reports have come and we have decided on the level of overloading that will be allowed, then the weigh bridges will be used by the Police in terms of controlling the overloading and making sure that vehicles do not carry more than that which they are authorised or registered to carry. The bridges are also being used now for weighting quarry products, for example, the one at Riverstown is used extensively for this, every day, for weighing quarry products going to the contractors of the Tapakuma and also on the sea defence and other works. The same thing will happen for the M.M.A. Project and the Black Bush project. The bridges will not be wasted. They will be used.

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3:00 – 3:10 p.m.

3:00 p.m.

The other question about consultant services, this is in relation to this particular project and it is to pay . . . who were the consultants on this project. Well, Cde. Chairman, I have no quarrel with the remarks made by Cde. Ram Karran about consulting services coming from overseas, maybe sometimes very unnecessarily, and for the use of local consultants on a greater scale but the Government is encouraging the use of local engineers and consultants because in the beginning when these loans were given the foreign consultants brought all their professional people from outside. More recently, we have insisted that they must link with local consultants and local engineers and they will be allowed further to bring in foreign engineers to work with them only when there are no local engineers available and having the particular skill which they may be bringing in. We have been able to reduce quite considerably the number of foreigners coming to work in the country, but it still remains and it is something that we are discussing and trying to have changed at a different level.

The question on certain jobs is why they have to come at all. If we had to build the Upper Mazaruni Hydro Power Project, since we have never built one like this before and since we have very few engineers with that kind of speciality, we will have to bring consultants but certainly, things like road work and so forth, more and more we are able to do these things on our own and we think that the need for bringing foreigners will become less and less. However, the people who are lending the money to build these things, feel that they must also protect their interest and they feel that they, including East and West, must get the benefit of advice from probably their point of view and see that their policies are fulfilled. I was in Moscow, not so long ago, discussing the same matter. I would like to assure Cde. Ram Karran that we are very much aware of the situation. We are trying to do what we can to change it and everything is changing in the direction in which he has suggested.

Cde. Ram Karran: Having regard to the weigh bridges, I recall that the East Coast weigh bridge was built long before 1964 and if the Hon. Minister should go to the East Coast he would find that all the bends and turns on the East Coast which should have been straightened long ago are heavily rutted, destroying vehicles and destroying the road further. What has been, that is the question I would ask, the use of the Mon Repos weigh bridge if these people carry overload? Perhaps this is responsible for the rutting of these roads or perhaps they are not properly maintained or not maintained at all. These ruttings that you see and all the bends, not one, all the way right up to Mahaica, what is the Ministry doing in respect to these things? It is a white elephant; it has not been used for the purpose --

The Chairman: I will not allow a debate on that.

Division XXIV, Ministry of Works and Transport (Works) – IBRA/IDA Projects – West Coast Demerara Road Project - \$278,000 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Pages 91 and 92.

1980-04-17

3:00 – 3:10 p.m.

HEAD 36 – MINISTRY OF WORKS AND TRANSPORT
PLANT MAINTENANCE AND HIRE DIVISION

Question proposed that the sum of \$5,050,010 for Head 36, Ministry of Works and Transport – Plant Maintenance and Hire Division stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: This is a completely new Head.

Mr. M.F. Singh: In fact, not only that but Mr. Steve Naraine, the present Minister, was my adviser at that time.

The Chairman: That is why he is such an excellent Minister.

Mr. M.F. Singh: His advice was always good. I have never had cause to question his advice even though I know some of his colleagues on the other side did.

The Chairman: Even Cde. Ram Karran accepts that.

Mr. M.F. Singh: Mr. Chairman, this as you said is a new Head and I would like to ask – we have nothing to compare it with and that is why we will have to ask for more explanation and details about it, rather than anything else. Will the Hon. Minister tell us about it. What is the rationale for setting up this new division, the reason for it? There must have been a lot of deep thinking, I would hope, that went into the decision to set this up as a separate division. Could we hear some of those reasons? I noted when I looked at the legend that some of the offices have been transferred from other heads but a lot of the other offices are new offices created. Let us look at page 91. The legend from 9 to 19 --

The Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Feilden Singh, we understand that. I also have to bear in mind the time left to run through the other Heads. It's a new Ministry and I think you have asked a very pertinent question: What is it all about? And give us details. That should take into account all the questions.

Mr. M.F. Singh: Yes, sir. Since they are new heads created, there will be more jobs and more expenditure and I wonder how this will be justified or recouped, this additional expenditure which is involved in the new jobs.

Cde. Ram Karran: The Hon. Minister ought to have been courteous enough to get up and tell us what it is all about before we had an opportunity to go into it. And as I am on my feet, I notice that a number of items seem to have been brought back from what used to be the Drainage and Irrigation Department. May I ask the Hon. Minister if it is the Government's intention now to bring these two under works again or is it something altogether new, a new-born baby when it is going to be baptised? When are we going to have the details? Is it something that requires some sort of paper so that the Members of the House will be able to follow rather than to take things for granted? A White paper or something?

The Chairman: Minister, let me hear you.

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3:10 – 3:20 p.m.

3:10 p.m.

Cde. Naraine: I believe two years ago in the Budget Debate, Cde. Nascimento spoke very exhaustively on the whole mechanical arrangements in the country in the various Ministries as well as in the Corporations; and at that time it was intimated that a new organisation would be set up in due course based on certain studies for the rationalisation of mechanical maintenance in all the Government Ministries and also for setting up of certain systems whereby the purchase of equipment can be done using criteria of standardisation and the consolidation of maintenance facilities so that these facilities can be better staffed and so that the equipment in the various workshops could be put to better use while both can be better supervised.

The outcome of all this work is what we see here presented in the Estimates in the form of various provisions. It is not a complete exercise as yet because in the present exercise, or in the present phase we have reached, this organisation is a division in the Ministry of Works and Transport. In terms of overall policies, the Office of the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister himself have certain controls because when all the equipment now will be maintained by a single organisation, then there cannot be major differences of opinion and conflict in terms of priorities of repairs and use of equipment by various Ministries and so certain policy decisions will be effected by the Prime Minister, but the day-to-day running of the organisation and the responsibility to do work will come under the Ministry of Works.

This division will also have a number of additional institutions to assist it in doing its work. There is a Committee headed by Minister Nascimento, the Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister, and there will be representatives from various organisations. They will be looking at various aspects of development of these systems, the work of the various workshops, the review of the work of the workshops so that we can have effective maintenance of equipment and that we can make sure that the money that will be spent will be spent in the best possible manner. Also they must make sure that maintenance is done in such a manner that the projects which have to be done by the various Ministries would be effectively served.

The two main Ministries that will be affected will be the Ministry of Works and Transport and the Ministry of Agriculture. Therefore, what has been done is that the mechanical staff of these two Ministries have been brought together, the workshop facilities have been brought together and the equipment for the Ministries divided under two categories. One category will be equipment that will be permanently allocated to Ministries and used in the day-to-day maintenance and other operations. The other category of equipment will be all the other remaining equipment and a programme has been established for its rehabilitation. We will see later in the Capital Estimates that a sum of money has been provided for this purpose, the rehabilitation of equipment. This equipment, when rehabilitated, will not be permanently allocated to the Ministries but will be hired to Ministries. The hire rate will be such that, out of that hire rate, monies will be kept in a fund so that the continuation of the maintenance and rehabilitation can be pursued. This was something not done in the past because equipment in many cases was run right down to the ground and every time you had to do a project you had to seek new money to acquire the equipment before the project was started. This is roughly what it is all about and how it will work.

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3:10 – 3:20 p.m.

What we hope also is that there will be better cost control on the various activities in this Division. There will be information kept so that you can have a policy on equipment established in terms of type of equipment to be used, in terms of replacement of equipment. This is necessary because, if we take a dragline, if it is run to the ground, you may find that the economic life of that dragline, abused and run to the ground, may be five to ten years. If it is properly maintained, rehabilitated from time to time, reconditioned, it may have a life of up to 20 years. And so we have to start a new system, new controls, greater supervision.

The training of personnel, technical and managerial personnel, will be an important aspect of this exercise and that is why in the Melanie Damishana Workshop there will be facilities for the rehabilitation of equipment, for the manufacturing of spare parts, and later on there will be a training school for mechanical staff, both operational staff and managerial staff.

This, we feel, is going in the right direction and it may be that after it has been running as a Division for a number of years a decision may be taken whereby it may be made a corporation but we have not reached that stage as yet. The present stage is for it to work within the Ministry. We can have close ministerial supervision and observation so that we can be better equipped later on to make some other decisions.

I hope that has explained some of the enquiries that have been made.

The Chairman: I will now put the Question.

Cde. Ram Karran: Before you put the Question, I should like to make some observations on the Minister's statement. He told us that arising out of a previous Budget Debate – I think it was a Budget Debate when Mr. Nascimento was supposed to have made some reference to this proposal which we now see before us and on the basis of that Hon. Members are going to swallow it and accept this as a means of improving the situation with respect to maintenance of vehicles in the Ministry of Works and in the Ministry of Agriculture.

I take the view, a very considered view, that this is another attempt at the extension of Parkinson's Law, that this is all rubbish and this is not going to help the government. In fact, it is a means of throwing money down the drain. What is the use? You have training at the Technical Institute. You have it duplicated at the University of Guyana and now Government is going to take training under the workshop at Melanie Damishana or under the Ministry. The Government must know that for a business enterprise to be effective, it ought to be done through a corporation rather than through a Government department, one of the most ineffective, one of the most cumbersome and one of the most incompetent of organisations.

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3:20 –3:30 p.m.

3:20 p.m.

For the Minister to tell us that this organisation is going to be masterminded by Mr. Kit Nascimento, going to be supervised by the Prime Minister, going to be supervised by the Ministry of Works, that it is going to bring in the Ministry of Agriculture is all nonsense. It is not going to help one bit in streamlining anything. Sir, the present system is that if the Works Ministry has something to do – as I understand it – it is put up by several other Ministries; whatever is to be done is put up by several other Ministries. Something is put up there. The Ministry of Works does not take the responsibility. It has to co-ordinate with all the other Ministries to see which of the jobs given to it has to be done first depending on priority, depending on this, perhaps sometimes depending on the influence of the person who speaks to it.

I do not think that the debate allows us enough time to bring in all the points and all the weaknesses of the Hon. Minister's suggestion in this Budget. I think it is most unfair for him to spring a think like this on us and to have the Heads taken. I would like, for instance, to ask a question and the question is, will the Hon. Minister tell us how many of these posts shown in these Estimates are at the moment available? How many of them are going to be filled now? He said that after some time they are going to think and to see how this thing works whether it works and balances and so on, and then they are going to make it into a corporation. How many of these officers available from other Ministries or from his Ministry are in their positions?

The Chairman: Do you mean: how many of the posts are already filled?

Cde. Ram Karran: Are already filled or how many are there?

The Chairman: Yes, Minister.

Cde. Ram Karran: Before he goes on to that, what period of time he has ahead, he anticipates that this monstrosity is going to remain --

The Chairman: Yes, Cde. Ram Karran, we are "going good" up to now.

Cde. Ram Karran: This is a Dougla, this is not a pure blood.

The Chairman: Maybe like you and me.

Cde. Ram Karran: Anyway, there is some money in the --

The Chairman: Yes, Minister. He has not really got anything to ask.

Cde. Naraine: Cde. Chairman, let me go backwards. The total number of persons that we require to work in this organisation now would be 844.

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3:20 –3:30 p.m.

That is on the Fixed Establishment as well as on the Open Vote. Our staff now is 714 so there are about 130 persons still to be recruited. I do not know if I did not say this, maybe I did not, but I thought I did, but after Minister Nascimento made that speech, a very detailed study was done – not by Cde. Nascimento. There were people brought in from various places, corporations like Guytrac, Guyana Stores and the various Ministries, from Agriculture and so forth. And it was after a very detailed consideration including the consideration of the State Planning Commission that this decision was taken.

Head 36, Ministry of Works and Transport – Plant Maintenance and Hire Division - \$5,050,010 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Page 203, Division XXV, Ministry of Works and Transport – Plant Maintenance and Hire Division. That is the capital expenditure.

DIVISION XXV – MINISTRY OF WORKS AND TRANSPORT
PLANT MAINTENANCE AND HIRE DIVISION

Question proposed that the sum of \$1,200,000 for Division XXV, - Ministry of Works and Transport – Plant Maintenance and Hire Division stand part of the Estimates.

Cde. Naraine: Cde. Chairman, you were personally making remarks about the legend. Actually this is restricted here --

The Chairman: But really, Cde. Minister, don't you think that whoever prepared these Estimates, when you are sending in their annual returns, should have some comment on them?

Cde. Naraine Well, I do not handle that.

The Chairman: I mean, one will well understand one or two times, but it seems it is a continuous pattern.

Cde. Naraine: Cde. Chairman, with you permission – I know you have been very tolerant on this matter but I myself hope that there will be some improvement next year after all these remarks.

Purchase of equipment, Cde. Chairman, that really should read, rehabilitation of mobile mechanical equipment.

The Chairman: Questions, please. Mobile Mechanical Equipment.

Mr. M.F. Singh: Could we have some details, please.

The Chairman: Minister, the details of these things.

Cde. Naraine: Yes, comrade. It is proposed this year to rehabilitate 166 pieces of equipment.

Division XXV, Ministry of Works and Transport – Plant Maintenance and Hire Division - \$1,200,000 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Pages 93 and 94.

HEAD 37 – MINISTRY OF WORKS AND TRANSPORT
(TRANSPORT)

Question proposed that the sum of \$1,010,386 for Head 37, Ministry of Works and Transport (Transport) stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Singh, I see you are making up for yesterday.

Mr. M.F. Singh: Yes, sir, I do know about this Ministry. I will be brief on the others. Subhead 1, items (3), (6), (7), (9) and (19).

Subhead 1, Item (3), Assistant Secretary (General). The sum revised for 1979 is \$16,945, the sum being sought for 1980 is \$1,700 and that is being sought in respect of three posts. There seems to be something wrong here. Except you have done away with these officers, it does not look to me as though \$1,700 could go very far or pay even one of these three officers very much in the year 1980. Why is it \$1,700 when we spent approximately \$17,000 last year? Where will these officers be put and what is the position here?

In respect of subhead 6, sir, - really I want to speak on subhead 7 but I am making reference to subhead 6 also. Subhead 7 says “Deputy Project Manager”. The sum being sought is \$12,000 more --

The Chairman: Do you mean item (6)?

Mr. M.F. Singh: Item (6). I am sorry, sir. Items (6) and (7). Let us take them together. Item (6) provides one dollar for the Project Manager and item (7), Deputy Project Manager, \$12,756. I merely want to ask – it does not appear as though we have a Project Manager because there is only one dollar being voted – how then could we have a Deputy Project Manager? Maybe. I do not know how it is being worked --

The Chairman: If we have a Deputy, it does not have to be filled.

Mr. M.F. Singh: I see. Well, that is what I wanted to know, whether the Project Manager’s post is going to be abolished.

The Chairman: I am not answering the question, I was merely answering you by saying how you could have that post. The Minister will answer.

Mr. M.F. Singh: Yes sir, Well, I am asking the Hon. Minister why he is providing only one dollar, whether it is the intention of scrapping or abolishing the post?

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3:30 – 3:40 p.m.

3:30 p.m.

Going on to subhead 9 on page 94 – Electricity, in the 1979 approved estimate, the sum reflected is \$20,000, the revised estimates reflects only \$2,017. The 1980 estimate reflects \$20,000 being requested for 1980. What happened in 1979? If it was envisaged that you would need \$20,000 for electricity, why is it you revised it to only \$2,017? It seems to me that there must be a backlog of electricity bills to be paid for 1979. Now, if that is so and the 1979 estimated figure was \$20,000, the figure for 1980 should be more than \$20,000 because electricity charges will go up by one-third of the 1979 December rate. Whatever you paid in 1979 December, add one-third to that for the whole year because that is what the Budget Speech says. Definitely it would appear as though \$20,000 would not be enough when you take the arrears for 1979 and the increase for 1979. Why is there such a backlog of bills to be paid in 1979?

Subhead 19, Maintenance and Operation of Vehicle. The 1979 approved estimate was \$14,000. In the revised estimates, there is nothing listed and in 1980 the sum being requested is \$5,000. The legend says the vehicle has not yet been acquired. Well, if you wanted \$14,000 in 1979 and you did not spend anything at all and the Ministry still keep going without this vehicle, maybe we do not need this vehicle at all and what is now being requested is \$5,000 not \$14,000. I wonder, when is the vehicle going to be acquired? Is it really necessary? What was being done in the interim for the whole of last year when you expected this vehicle but it was not available?

Cde. Dalchand: Cde. Speaker, page 94, item (2), Transport and Travelling. Last year \$15,000 was voted, they spent \$18,000 plus; this year they are asking for \$30,000. Cde. Speker, the question I want to ask the Minister is why is this increase. I notice today in this House to build an audience --

The Chairman: Comrade, do you wish to ask a question? Well, ask the question.

Cde. Dalchand: -- important Government employees are being transported from as far as Essequibo, who are supposed to be serving these people are here building an audience in this House --

The Chairman: Cde. Ram Karran, do you wish to speak?

Cde. Ram Karran: I would like to enquire in relation to this legend here at the foot of the page. The asterisk is alongside the item after the sub-total alongside the clerical establishment. The legend there says, "Forty-nine offices no longer required and one office of Registry Supervisor created." I do not know if this is redeploying or retrenching or whether these 49 people shown here are going to be put into this new Ministry. Of course, I do not see any significant change in this figure shown in the column but I cannot understand how they are going to do that and then at the same time increase the travelling vote. If they are going to dispose of, retrench or redeploy 49 officers and increase the travelling vote, it would seem to me that something has gone wrong. May I ask in addition to the question by Mr. Singh, what is the vehicle listed here under this subhead, Maintenance and Operation of Vehicle for \$5,000. What is it going to be used for?

Cde. Belgrave: Cde. Chairman, subhead 13, Contribution to West Indies Shipping Corporation. I see here that apparently we did not pay all the contribution in 1979. We have to pay \$100,000 taking into account the actual for 1979 is \$400,000. I would like to ask the Hon. Minister again if he is satisfied in relation to the working of this West Indies Shipping Corporation. It is going to cost us this year half a million dollars as a contribution. If he is satisfied, would he give some details showing that Guyana is benefiting from this type of co-operation taking into account my appeal last year in relation to goods coming in. We are paying a large sum, a tidy sum, \$400,000 as a contribution and against the background of government corporations who have been carrying out shipping for a number of years, private enterprise is enjoying the benefits of freight and other benefits in relation to this corporation. I would like the Hon. Minister to tell me again if he is satisfied with the running of this corporation and to explain what benefits Guyana at the moment is getting out of this deal, seeing that we have been making a tidy contribution in this period of our economic crisis.

Cde. Naraine: Cde. Chairman, again, I know you have been drawing our attention to these errors in the estimates and obviously the figure on item (3) is incorrect. In fact, with your permission Cde. Chairman, I would like that figure to be amended to read \$17,000.

The Chairman: No, it cannot be done. You have to go back to Cabinet and get approval. You will come back with a supplementary provision. It cannot be done that way.

Cde. Naraine: I will give an explanation on that. The sum, in fact, should have been \$17,000 and the other item on electricity, that is, subhead 9, should have been \$4,700 instead of \$20,000.

The Chairman: All the totals are wrong?

Cde. Naraine: The totals will remain right after that.

The Chairman: Cde. Minister, I cannot take your word for that. It is a very sad thing to say. How am I to know? I would have to add them up myself or get somebody to add them up. Everything is an error. If you deal with subhead 9, Electricity, it is \$20,000 under the 1980 Estimates. In the 1979 Revised Estimates, it is \$2,017. What should that be?

Cde. Naraine: I haven't got that figure but my understanding is that it should be just over \$4,000.

The Chairman: For the 1979 Revised Estimates?

Cde. Naraine: The actual expenditure.

The Chairman: That does not really affect the \$20,000. [Interruption.] If you make the \$20,000, \$4,700, would the total, \$732,830, be right?

Cde. Naraine: Then the \$1,700 will have to be changed to \$17,000. We will have to change it by way of supplementary provision.

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3:40 – 3:50 p.m.

3:40 p.m.

The Chairman: I understand what you are saying. You do not have to do that. \$20,000 will be \$4,000 now? What has happened is that there is a transposition of the comma or something there. The figure \$20,000 will be \$4,017.

Cde. Naraine: Yes, that's right.

The Chairman: Whoever prepared this thing should not prepare it next year. You either promote him up or promote him out. Now, what about item (6), Project Manager?

Cde. Naraine: The Project Manager, there is an officer holding the post of Deputy Project Manager but he is acting as Chief Transport Officer.

The Chairman: We are talking about Project Manager.

Cde. Naraine: The Project Manager. There is no one holding that post at the present moment and it may not be filled for some time.

The Chairman: Cde. Ram Karran's question: Where are the 49 people going?

Cde. Naraine: Do you remember when we made the Post Office a Corporation, there were a number of people and --

The Chairman: In this Ministry who were transferred.

Cde. Naraine: They went over and so we have taken them off.

The Chairman: The next subhead that is coming.

Cde. Naraine: About travelling.

The Chairman: Increased travelling.

Cde. Naraine: The increased travelling is for the Central Planning Unit. There is a Central Planning Unit. We have the Central Transport Planning Unit. There are a number of posts there that have been filled and those officials have to travel in the field to do their work and therefore we need more funds for travelling.

The question on the operation and maintenance of vehicles: The vehicle has not been purchased yet but this vehicle would be required mainly by people working in the Central Planning Unit to go out in the field to get information and to put up programmes for transport generally. They sometimes have to go in the hinterland on various roads, to visit airstrips and so forth.

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3:40 – 3:50 p.m.

The Chairman: You have Cde. Belgrave's question.

Cde. Naraine: As I said last year, WISCO is doing a very good job not only for Guyana but for the region and they have been improving their operations over the years. For instance, in 1979 they moved 112,000 tons of cargo. They project for this year 152,000 tons and we know that they will reach that because they have improved on their shipping. This corporation has been studied by the Caribbean Development Bank and other banking institutions and they are satisfied that it is a good institution for the region, for regional development, and they have lent this corporation millions of dollars to improve its fleet. It has been under intensive study in terms of financial and economic viability and we have the benefit of its use in terms of moving goods within the region. For instance, WISCO last year moved 40,000 tons of rice from Guyana to Jamaica and it brings goods in the other direction. A lot of the manufacturers of refrigerators and other things like that use WISCO to carry their goods to other places in the Caribbean.

The sum that is provided here will be required this year not so much for subsidising the corporation as has been done in many years gone by but towards equity, that is for the new assets of ships and so forth. We have some figures here in terms of performance of the corporation. In fact, in 1976 --

The Chairman: Again, Cde. Minister, if that had been simply put in "To increase the Government equity" nobody would have asked.

Cde. Naraine: Just to show us how they have been improving their financial viability in their business, 1976 they ran a deficit of \$4.1 million. That has been reducing year by year – 1977, \$2.5 million; 1978, \$1.8 million; 1979 three-quarters of a million and in 1980 no deficit whatsoever. They will have maybe, a small surplus. We hope from that they will keep on making surpluses. I think it is a good institution and it has served its purpose for the region and Guyana.

Head 37, Ministry of Works and Transport (Transport) - \$1,010,386 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Page 95.

HEAD 38 – MINISTRY OF WORKS AND TRANSPORT (TRANSPORT)
POST OFFICE

Question proposed that the sum of \$20 for Head 38, Ministry of Works and Transport (Transport) – Post Office, stand part of the Estimates.

Head 38, Ministry of Works and Transport (Transport) – Post Office - \$20 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Page 96.

1980-04-17

3:40 – 3:50 p.m.

HEAD 39 – MINISTRY OF WORKS AND TRANSPORT (TRANSPORT)
TRANSPORT AND HARBOURS

Question proposed that the sum of \$7,642,142 for Head 39, Ministry of Works and Transport (Transport) – Transport and Harbours, stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Abraham: Sir, as we all know, earlier this year a brand new boat was commissioned to serve the people of the North West Region. Now, it is my information that a short time ago, about a week or so ago, there was a mishap to this boat in mid-ocean with the result that it had to be brought back into dock. The name of the boat is “M.V. Kumaka”. May I ask how early that boat will be in service again and what really went wrong with it? Will the Minister explain?

Secondly, in the past, the commuters, the passengers travelling between Georgetown and Moruca area were accustomed to a once-a-week service from the Pomeroun steamer. It has been about two years now since that once-a-week service has been cut off. Of course, we have the airplane service now but that service is hopelessly inadequate because it is just a small plane and it is quite costly to passengers. So people are asking if we can have back that once-a-week service to the Pomeroun especially in view of the recent economic pressure on the people there. They cannot get the foodstuff, the sole distributor there is our good friend the Hon. Member Mr. Stoby. He himself was made to understand that it is most difficult to get foodstuff into the Moruca area because it has to come over the overland route whereas in the past this shipment of cargo used to come very easily by the Pomeroun steamer. I would like to ask if the Minister can consider bringing back that once-a-week service to the Pomeroun.

3:50 p.m.

This boat was said to be able to do the trip from Georgetown to the North West in eleven hours and people are saying that it takes seventeen hours now, it takes one hour less than the old boat and people really wanted to have the pleasure and the relief of having an eleven-hour trip to the North West. What really went wrong, what really is the matter.

Cde. Nokta: Cde. Chairman, I too would have liked to ask some questions on this boat, but my colleague has. I think you will permit me under capital estimates because that is a substantive item, Kumaka. However, I just want to ask on this page 96, subhead 1, Net Deficit on Transport Services, over the many years, we have been witnessing the continuing decline in the Transport and Harbours Department and the indications are that this Department is dying. The subsidy continues to increase, the deficit continues to grown bigger and bigger. It has now reached the stage where it has gone beyond the double. I want to ask the Minister at this stage where he will find it convenient to set up a commission to investigate the overall functions of the Transport and Harbours Department with a view to ascertaining some of the problems that are causing the Department to malfunction as it is and to make recommendations for its improvement.

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3:50 – 4:00 p.m.

The Chairman: Cde. Minister.

Cde. Ram Karran: Before the Minister replies, I would like to observe that the deficit has risen beyond expectations and one would ask why, in spite of the fact that the Demerara Ferry has been virtually taken off, that new vessels have been supplied and have been operating in the place of the old ones, has this deficit been increasing, has practically doubled. I have repeatedly asked the Minister and, in fact, informal questions in this House, to give us the fate of the Ambrosio which, as a result of the Government's incompetence or lack of something has been burning oil for a considerable period. Is that tub still being used, is it still afloat and being supplied with oil to run it, to light the place or to pump the water out of its hull? What has happened to the R.H. Carr about which the Government made tremendous publicity and propaganda, what has happened to those two vessels, are they still draining the resources of the taxpayers of this country via the pipe of the Transport and Harbours Department?

Now, sir, we know the government has disposed of the assets of the railway section of the Transport and Harbours Department which came into existence in 1927 or 1928 or thereabout under the law. May I ask the Hon. Minister when an audited statement of the assets disposed of the sale of these things is going to be tabled before Parliament? May I ask the Hon. Minister why is there a departure in the presentation of the estimates in that the estimates of the Transport and Harbours Department, not withstanding it is a Corporation, have traditionally been presented to Members of this House to be examined very carefully to see the workings of that Department. Besides, there was a great deal of information relating to these ships and the assets of the Department and we were able to examine the expenditure of the Department.

May I enquire of the Hon. Minister what is being done with those structures particularly those bridges over the Mahaica and Berbice Rivers, whether they are under a system of care and maintenance or whether they are being allowed to run to ruin and probably fall into the river affecting navigation and causing other ill effects on the river and the environment. Those are the questions I would like to ask.

Cde. Naraine: The Kumaka did have what the Hon. Member called a mishap. What happened was that one of the engines stopped for about half an hour at sea and after about half an hour it was put back into use and the journey continued. One of the engines was smoking quite a bit and the manufacturers' representative came here a few days back and some modification has been done to the engine. Again it is on trial to see whether the smoking will continue. The boat was put back into use from Tuesday. Now there is a question of why it is not reaching that speed of, I think, 18 knots. The revolutions of the engine, which has a warranty, should have been 1800 revolutions but it is doing only 1600. They suspect it may be the pitch of the propeller. That is being looked at now and I understand that any modification will be done at the expense of the manufacturers of the engine. Now we have every assurance from the Naval Architect and the people who supplied the engine that once it gets up to that 1800 revolutions, it would be able to give that speed. That is still to be seen but we hope it will.

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The Pomeroon service. Cde. Chairman, we really have a problem here in that you take a boat of about 150 tons, sometimes bigger, running this service and in the fortnight the maximum cargo you can get would be about 80 tons. This is why the service is fortnightly-run rather than weekly. However, that service also makes a loss of about \$900,000 a year. I feel maybe we can generate more cargo going and return cargo because as you know they are a lot of sloops operating in the area now and those sloops bring a lot of return cargo to Georgetown. With some publicity we may be able to generate some more cargo and do something about it.

Cde. Nokta raised the question about an enquiry into the Transport and Harbours Department in terms of its efficiency and its deficit. Well, we are not having an enquiring into that directly. What we have is a committee now going into the rationalisation of the Transport and Harbours with the Guyana National Shipping Corporation to see whether something can be done with the Transport and Harbours Department and the Corporation by bringing them together and effecting better control, better efficiency, better management techniques, better systems for book-keeping and finances and so forth. This is going on and I have no doubt when the report is out, Cde. Nokta being a member of the advisory committee will have the benefit of studying that report.

Now the question of the increasing deficit in the Transport and Harbours Department, I think there has been no other announcement here about the increase in fares. Fares have not been increased over many years and particularly in relation to cargo, there have been no increases.

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Now the Georgetown Ferry and the Berbice Ferry, they do not do too badly at all, they sort of break even, but those services in the Berbice River, Bartica, Pomeroon, and North West, lose substantial sums of money. In addition to this, there have been increases in wages, we have fuel crises and problems with spare parts. All these things are going up and recently, 1978, because of the 44-hour week decision that was taken, a sum for 1979 and an additional sum of over \$1 million had to be paid. There were victualling allowances and so forth. This was done with respect to Dharry's report and this all went back as far as 1976. All this caused increased expenditure and therefore a high deficit.

To raise the question about audit statement, my information is that the Director of Audit audits the books of the Transport and Harbours Department and as he produces his reports, they are made available. The R.H. Carr was sold about four years ago; the Ambrosio, the useful engine and generator and other things were taken out and the Ambrosio is no longer in use. There is no expense involved on it and it is now beached.

The bridges are inspected constantly. We have not made a decision to remove those railway bridges and erect them in any place for two reasons. One is that no suitable site for their use has been selected. I believe those were the questions.

Head 39, Ministry of Works and Transport (Transport) – Transport and Harbours - \$7,642, 142 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Pages 97 and 98.

HEAD 40 – MINISTRY OF WORKS AND TRANSPORT (TRANSPORT)
CIVIL AVIATION

Question proposed that the sum of \$2,590,022 for Head 40, Ministry of Works and Transport (Transport) – Civil Aviation, stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. M.F. Singh: I will deal with subhead 1 item (8) and it will cover quite a few other subheads to which I would not go back, but let us just take this one and see what it is like. Air Traffic Control Assistant II/I. There are supposed to be 15 of them. Air traffic control, as we all know, is very important indeed. The sum voted for 1979 was \$60,342; the revised amount is \$35,801 and the amount requested for this year is \$58,108. We significantly under spent the amount requested in the approved estimate for 1979; that seems to suggest that there are vacancies and since Air Traffic Control Officers are so important, I would like to know what are the vacancies and what is being done to fill them.

The same argument and the same pattern apply to the following subheads which I will now quote. On the same page 97, subhead 1, items (21), (27), (31) and (39) and a few others but those are the significant ones. Turning over to the other page sir, I would like to very quickly speak on item (63) Flying Allowance. The approved estimate was \$20,000; the revised estimate is \$12,000 but the sum being requested for this year is \$82,800. The legend says: “Increased Allowances”, but perhaps the Hon. Minister could give us some of the mechanics. I want to use this head to speak about pilots not only in the Civil Aviation Department but also in the Guyana Airways Corporation.

I want to say this. I have no quarrel with this increase in flying allowances. Why? Because I recognize now what a dedicated bunch of pilots Guyana has and I think Guyanese should really appreciate and understand this. Why do I say that? I personally saw this in operation, Mr. Chairman. You were not there at the Constituent Assembly meetings, when we went to the interior areas, the North West District. The Hon. Minister, Mr. Duncan was. Yes, sir, that was the only one I was permitted by the exigencies of time and my commitments to go to. The P.P.P. members did not go to any. I am saying something which I feel very strongly about, the way in which I saw those pilots work.

The aircraft left here with the team; it went up to Mabaruma; it came back to Georgetown, it went back to Mabaruma, then to Matthews Ridge, came back to Georgetown then went to Baramita. I think it went also to Port Kaituma then back to

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Matthews Ridge and then back to Georgetown. The same two pilots. I think that is dedication to duty. I felt proud of those two pilots. That kind of flying shows the dedication of our Guyanese pilots. One was called Fredericks. I am not sure what the other name was. Flying could be a boring thing. It is boring for me to sit down in a plane. That must have been real dedication on their part and I understand that this is not the exception, this is the pattern how these pilots work servicing all the interior areas. There is a shortage of pilots. They are really working very hard and I am very thoroughly in favour of a recognition of their services in terms of increased flying allowances.

I want to mention something else. I went on a Guyana Airways flight to Barbados last December, and I want the Hon. Minister to know that I was proud to be flying with Guyana Airways aircraft going to Barbados and back. I have flown on international aircraft all over the world and I say this, the efficiency and the service which I experienced on that aircraft both going and coming were as high as any I have experienced in the world. I want to say, sir, that the aircraft left on time, the service was courteous, the service was efficient, the food was good on the journey going and the same applied to the second journey coming back. I would like to recommend that that kind of service be expanded not only expanded, but expanded in such a way that it can earn more revenue for Guyana. I would certainly continue always, as long as there is such a service, to travel with Guyana Airways.

If we can expand that service, we will then be able to earn more revenue to be able to subsidise our local interior area services. It is something which I commend to the Hon. Minister.

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I will congratulate him for that service. Not only him, but all who have been involved in it, particularly the Chief Pilot, Malcolm Chan-A-Sue. I saw his dedication and the spirit with which he did his work and I understand that he used to enthuse his pilots and his staff with that same spirit of dedication to hold them together to keep that service efficient. I want to warn that that service must be kept efficient because the same way in which I congratulate the people now, if the standard is allowed to drop I will come back here and say very fully and forcibly what the criticism is. So I want to appeal to them to continue it. I want to say that Guyanese have in Guyana Airways a service of which they can really be proud.

The Chairman: We have one more Head under the fixed heads.

Mr. M.F. Singh: Subhead 11, Safety Aids at Aerodromes. I merely want to know the details on these safety aids which will cost \$9,000. I spoke some time ago about these little gadgets which keep peep-peeping if a plane crashes. Is it that kind of thing?

The Chairman: We have only 20 minutes more and we have a big Head that you may want to speak on.

Cde. Ram Karran: I wish to support the comment made by my friend Mr. Singh insofar as the competence, dedication etc. of the pilots are concerned, but I am a bit worried.

The Chairman: Cde. Ram Karran, please tell me the specific head you are speaking on.

Cde. Ram Karran: I am speaking on Duty Allowance and Overtime Allowance, subheads (61) and (62) on page 98.

The Chairman: I do not know where the overtime allowance is and where this duty allowance is.

Cde. Ram Karran: Subheads (61) and (62) on page 98. I want to warn that many people through their dedication and activities, especially with work of this nature where frequent examinations have to be made – airline pilots spend rather rapidly, especially in the tropics where constant checks have to be made on their physical ability because you cannot come out and crank, as they say. It is better for us to have a useful service with all the dedication and ensure that we do not have very wealthy widows after it is all finished. In other words, we should have more pilots. [Interruption by Cde. Field-Ridley.]

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The Chairman: Cde. Ram Karran, please proceed.

Cde. Ram Karran: It is very important that we have a sufficient number of pilots to ensure that they are not overworked, as my friend described just now. If they have to fly from here to there then it seems to be that the Ministry ought to consider training more pilots. Obviously, from what we see, the quality of pilots we have today is better than when we used foreign-trained pilots. This is a fact and I am very proud of the fact that it is the P.P.P. which started that. The Chief Pilot referred to by my friend --

The Chairman: Cde. Ram Karran, let us proceed. We only have 15 minutes and a big Head to come up.

Cde. Ram Karran: We worked late last night.

The Chairman: But I am not working late tonight again.

Cde. Ram Karran: The point I want to make is that the Minister ought to explain why there is such an excessive amount for overtime allowance and for flying allowance when these sums shown in previous years were very small compared with what we have here.

Cde. Nokta rose --

The Chairman: I am not allowing any more questions on this.

Cde. Ram Karran: You are not allowing questions? What you are? A dictator?

The Chairman: Yes.

Cde. Ram Karran: We have seven days to debate this.

The Chairman: I have no seven days.

Cde. Ram Karran: I am not going to tolerate this nonsense.

The Chairman: You can do what you like. Cde. Minister, please answer.

Cde. Ram Karran: If the Minister is answering I am going to walk out of this bloody place. How are you running this blasted place? I am not going to be allowed to ask him questions. Damn it! This is beyond all reason.

Cde. Naraine: Mr. Feilden Singh raised the question about the vacancy on item (8). The vacancies: we had there last year seven vacancies. Only eight persons were on the job. Now there is a constant training programme going on right there and some of those trainees will be appointed this year, so we will have a higher number of people and also we will have to spend a little more.

The other question raised in relation to these other items, my information is that

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these posts are filled; they are not vacant. There may be some vacancies here and there but generally I think most of these posts are filled.

A question was raised in relation to flying allowances both by the Hon. Member Mr. Feilden Singh and by Cde. Ram Karran. Cde. Ram Karran also raised the question of overtime allowances and duty allowances. Before I answer, Cde. Chairman, I hope you will allow me to express my appreciation of the remarks made by the Hon. Member Mr. Feilden Singh. We feel exactly as he does and we think that not only the pilots but many of the ground staff and so forth – the people who do the maintenance work in civil aviation – are all doing excellent work, sometimes under very difficult conditions. I thank you very much for making those remarks.

On the question of the flying allowance, there is more flying to be done now because in addition to the two small aircraft that are used by the Director of Civil Aviation for inspection of the airstrip, for maintenance purposes, there is the Skyvan which is used to assist the National Service and sometimes the Army. It has as well to service the capital work being done at Lethem, Imbaimadai, Apoteri during this year. Therefore there will be more flying time involved. This sum of money does not go to one person. It is shared by whoever is the pilot at the time. It is hoped also that the allowances themselves will be increased this year.

On the question of overtime allowance, Cde. Chairman, while some of the technical staff and some of the other people are being trained, there is a high demand on the fully trained staff, those people who are in the posts, to do extra work and therefore there is need to pay for overtime. In any case, sometimes the work is of such a nature that people have to stay on beyond the normal number of hours of the day because a lot of the people that work, particularly at Timehri, live away from Timehri and have to be transported. So it is not always easy to get people to come in and do some extra work. It is much better to keep those that are there and let them carry on and so they benefit from overtime. I believe those were the questions raised.

Subhead 11, Safety Aids at Aerodromes. This sum of \$9,000 is for things like markings on airstrips and runways, wind-socks and other things that are necessary for the guidance of pilots in using the various airstrips and the runways.

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Head 40, Ministry of Works and Transport (Transport) – Civil Aviation - \$2,590,022 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Page 204.

DIVISION XXVI – MINISTRY OF WORKS AND TRANSPORT
(TRANSPORT)

Question proposed that the sum of \$10,054,000 for Division XXVI, Ministry of Works and Transport (Transport), stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Now, we have only got ten minutes more and this is a big Head. When I allow the Opposition to spend only five minutes and the Minister to spend five minutes, there is going to be a big quarrel.

Mr. M.F. Singh: I thought we had until five o'clock.

The Chairman: No. Last night we spent half an hour on this Head and we have three hours for it.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: May I ask, Cde. Chairman --

The Chairman: Cde. Nokta.

Cde. Nokta: Page 204, subhead 14, Passenger Vessels. Mr. Chairman, I have several but I doubt whether you will permit me so I am just doing subhead 14 and I invite your assistance here in time. I want to deal with this matter because it was brought up by my colleague and I want to put in some additional questions.

I see \$1 million to be voted and the legend says, "To provide for the payment of the vessels, Kumaka". Now, from my observation it seems that this vessel is now running into a national scandal. I hope it does not. I would like to ask the Minister if it is true that when this vessel was to be constructed, there was a modification on the original plan? Secondly, if that is so, will he accept the fact that the engine which was provided to be used on the original plan is now used on the modified plan, which is unsuitable? The engine is too big for the hull. Is it true that because of that, the engine of the size now has to be fitted into the middle of the boat because the crank shaft is too long? As a result of that, when the boat is moving it drags lots of water and the boat has a tendency to dive. Is it true that intentionally they were planning to make a steamer vessel but they wanted to put airplane seating? My view is that they were trying to build an airplane with a steamer and now they have ended up with a submarine. Is it true, Mr. Chairman, that this vessel is now using one hundred gallons of dieseline an hour and is costing the government \$16,000 a trip, a deficit?

Mr. Chairman, I am told and it is verified that the vessel ran into some problems on the last trip and it was sent to the dock. As the Minister rightly said, some representative of the firm came to examine it. Is it true that this gentleman who came here, having examined it, has condemned the condition of the hull? Is that why the engine today is not functioning properly? Is it true that it will now cost the Government an additional half a million dollars to rectify the problem? If that is so, I would like to say to the Minister that he is spending \$500,000 on this vessel, and having done all this and repairing it even before they start running it, that he should tell the House when will this vessel really be of any use to the Transport and Harbours Department.

The Chairman: Yes, Mr. Abraham.

Mr. Abraham: Sir, just a few short questions. Could the Minister kindly say --

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The Chairman: Which subhead?

Mr. Abraham: Subhead 28, sir, Hinterland Airstrips. Could the Minister give us some idea as to when the Lethem airstrip will be completed, the maintenance works? Secondly, in the rainy season the Aishalton airstrip at times cannot take off the aircraft. May I ask whether the Minister would consider using the Karaudanawa Lumidpau airstrip instead at the times when the plane cannot touch down at Aishalton? It is just about twelve miles away and it also is supposed to be an all weather airstrip.

Mr. M.F. Singh: Mr. Chairman, because of the apparent constraint for time I will have to bulk this lot and ask for details in respect of subhead 4, Purchase of Logs and Barges, subhead 12, Purchase of Launches, subhead13, Cargo Vessels. Subhead 27 deals with rehabilitation of Timehri Airport and the sum of \$150,000 is requested to effect the first phase of the renovation of the Terminal Building. What is really going to be done here? I see we did not spend the money that we allocated last year - \$850,000. And what about that restaurant? The service is still so very poor. We have been promised a better service for a long, long time now. That is one aspect of rehabilitation.

The other aspect is the baggage area which one goodly Guinness Book of Records gentleman has spoken about and he suggested renovation for the baggage area. On this occasion I do agree with him that there is urgent need for extension of that area, because when two aircraft arrive more or less at the same time, there is utter chaos, confusion in the Timehri Airport baggage area.

Sir you see I thought we had until five o'clock, but lastly, sir, 34 and 35. What are the details in respect of this CTPU Survey Studies and ... CTPU Equipment? I do not know what CTPU means. Could we have some details?

Cde. Belgrave: Cde. Chairman, I will have to pose this question under subhead 27, Rehabilitation of Timehri Airport. Can the Ministry say if this \$150,000 includes the repairs to the approach to Timehri which is considered to be most ridiculous. It is the worst I have ever seen in any international airport in the world. The approach to Timehri is a nightmare.

Cde. Naraine: Cde. Chairman, the Kumaka – Cde. Nokta raised a number of issues and I will try to give the answers as I have them but I must point out that in relation to the engine not performing in accordance with the specifications, this matter is still being pursued and we have not got a final report on that yet. My understanding is that the engine is burning seventy-five gallons per hour and that what we want to get it down to is about sixty to seventy gallons. If we get it to sixty, it would be very good but if we can get it even at seventy gallons per hour that would be satisfactory. I do not think it is a hundred.

Now, what has been done in relation to the design of the boat – the design of the boat was modified and the modified design was supplied to the makers of the engine and it was always designed for the engine to be in the middle of the boat. Now, this boat was

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designed for speed and therefore it was designed to be on even keel not lifting upwards. The present position is that there is a slight tilt of the bow downwards. Now, what would happen is if the boat could develop its full speed, that bow would rise. You see it like a speedboat. If a speedboat is going slowly, it goes fairly level and if it goes fast, the bow rises. But I'm not a technical person on that sort of thing. I am giving you it as it was reported to me.

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Now, the defect of the engine was that there was some problem with the injectors.
[Interruption.]

The Chairman: Comrades, you all want to hear the Minister's reply?

Cde. Naraine: The makers, as I said, have come in and they are looking at it, they have done some adjustments and there may be need to do other things. Now, there will be a slight modification to be made in relation to the hull. A full report is being prepared by the suppliers of the engine, the makers of their boat, that is being prepared by the suppliers of the engine, the makers of the boat, that is Guynec, and Transport and Harbours. If there are modifications to be done, we will then have to see what modifications are needed and who will bear the cost of the modifications. The cost of the boat was, I think, about \$5.7 million and the sum now to be provided is not additional to that but it is to pay for work already done. Cde. Nokta is a member of the Advisory Board of T. & H.D. and you can be kept informed of what -- [Interruption.] Well, you can get in touch with me, if you wish.

A question was raised by Cde. Abraham on Lethem airstrip. The best information I have is that Lethem airstrip will be finished by the end of this month and will be put into use. Aishalton airstrip; the General Manager of G.A.C. has told me that he sees no problem in landing at Lumidpau when Aishalton is flooded. I heard the complaint, we will pursue it, but we would have to work out some system.

Then, in respect of questions raised by Mr. Feilden Singh and Cde. Belgrave, I am afraid that this sum does not include a sum for the road, leading to the airstrip. Whatever work is required there, would have to be done out of maintenance of roads or some other vote like that. The rehabilitation of Timehri, some work has started in relation to the public health, the customs and immigration areas for incoming passengers. It is proposed to do some work on the baggage section this year it is also proposed to do some modest work, not very big, on the restaurant facilities and to re-organise and maybe get some new person to run it. [Interruption.] Yes, we are going to invite tenders, and we will try to get someone to give a service better than we presently have. But we did not get many replies to the tenders. We invited tenders this year but we did not get good tenders. I think those were the questions --

The Chairman: Cde. Belgrave raised some question about the airstrip.

Cde. Naraine: The Approach road – it is not included here, that will have to be done from roads. The taxis association, when they met me last year, raised the question about zoning of hire cars – the Head Central Transport Planning Unit – subhead 34, will be used to do a survey in respect of that zoning. The other item is for equipment for the section and would include, as I said, the landrover and calculators, typewriters, adding machine and other types of equipment that they need for the expanding staff of this division so that they can do their work.

Division XXVI, Ministry of Works and Transport (Transport) - \$10,054,000 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

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The Chairman: Pages 131 and 132.

HEAD 66 – MINISTRY OF HEALTH

Question proposed that the sum of \$2,111,380 for Head 66, Ministry of Health, stand part of the Estimates.

Cde. J. Jagan: I do not know if anyone is going to answer, I do not see anyone in his seat, maybe we have lost a Minister. [Interruption.] You are not in your seat.

Item (20), Statistical Establishment. I notice that there is a large statistical establishment and I would like to enquire from the Minister what is happening with the figures produced by this establishment. I had figures which I believe were confidential because I have never seen them made public although I referred to them last year during the Budget Debate, showing that the infant mortality rate per 1000 live births had gone up in 1974 to 53.6 from a figure of 38.2 in 1970. However, I note that the World Bank Report of February, 1980, which I referred to in the Budget Debate, has a number of statistics from developed and developing countries in which they cite the infant mortality rate for 1975. I have never seen the most up to date infant mortality rate and I would ask the Minister if he could today tell us what is the latest figure on infant mortality in Guyana. Also, it was revealed in a confidential document that the death rate for children aged one to four years, per 1000 births had gone up in 1974, which was the latest figure I could find, to 12.55 from the figure of 3.8 in 1970.

Now, most of these death rates which I referred to showed a marked increase in the death rate of infants and small children. Whether these statistics were given to the World Bank for their latest report in February, 1980, I do not know, but I do know that they are not anywhere revealed in this document. I also noticed that the document carried such important statistics as the percentage of population with access to safe water. Does our Statistical Bureau provide us with such figures? If it does not provide us with such figures I would suggest that it is important for us to have such figures because the lack of pure water supply as well as many other factors contribute to the high incidence of infant and child mortality and therefore I think it would be correct for the Statistical Bureau to be able to give us such figures.

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Also, I have heard that the rate of deaths from gastro-enteritis is very high and I should like to know if the Minister will today provide us with up-to-date figures from his Statistical Establishment so that we can have an idea if the health services are functioning in a way that will protect the population. I throw greater emphasis on to the question of infants and children because they are the most vulnerable and they are the ones who need the greatest protection.

Moving on to page 132, item (32), Inspector of Pharmacies where there are three listed, I should like to repeat a question I made last year, about 12 months ago, and I am still waiting for an answer: Has an Inspector of Pharmacies ever inspected the Pharmacy

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at Jonestown, North West District? We should like an answer to that. We should like to know if at any time there was any control exercised over the quantity and type of drugs used and stored at Jonestown because we do know that excessive and dangerous drugs were on hand and, as we know, it resulted in the murder/suicide of over 900 persons. I hope that this year the Minister will have the information on hand.

At subhead 9, Pharmacy and Poisons Board – Expenses of, I notice that the amounts requested for 1980 has gone up considerably. Last year we approved an amount of \$5,000 of which only the sum of \$3,044 was spent. Now we are being asked to provide \$8,000. Perhaps the Minister could tell us why.

Subhead 11, Grant to Infant Welfare and Maternity League. We are being asked to approve the sum of \$76,236 which is the amount of the revised Estimate for 1979 and the actual amount which we approved. But in examining the previous years to which money has been allocated for the Infant Welfare and Maternity League I notice that in 1977 the actual amount spent was considerably more, almost twice as much as we are now being asked to contribute - \$143,750. I am puzzled at the drop from the amount actually spent in 1977 and the reduced amount now being asked for. From what I know of the Infant Welfare and Maternity League it is one of the vital organisations in the maintenance of health, particularly of infants and, of course, expectant mothers and mothers in the post-natal period and in giving advice in relation to infants and small children. I think it is one of the important preventative services offered by the Government and it has a long and rich history. I can remember in the period when I was Minister of Health the Infant Welfare and Maternity League at that time won an international award for the high standard of work which is done mainly by the nurses. I should like to record our respect for and congratulations to that dedicated group of nurses who work so hard to maintain a high standard in the Infant Welfare and Maternity League. Instead of reducing the amount I think a careful examination should be made of their needs.

I can remember some years ago when the People's Progressive Party Government was in office that the Infant Welfare and Maternity League carried the services down all the riverain areas and all the interior areas of Guyana and brought services to women and children who had no other contact with any form of medical services at that time and they were a great help. I found later that many of these services were dropped. Not that the nurses did not want to go but the arrangements for transportation were not being made and the funds were not being provided. I think every effort should be made in keeping with the point I made during the Budget Debate that if we want to keep people within the interior, rural and riverian areas of Guyana to produce and increase agricultural production we have to give them all the protection and aid and assistance needed and certainly medical health is one of the vital aspects.

Subhead 16, Grant to Guyana Chest Clinic. I note that that grant has been static for a number of years. I understand that the rate of tuberculosis has been going up and down. At some period we believe that we have conquered that dreaded disease and it seems to subside and then again it moves upwards. I should like the Minister to tell us what the present position is as far as the rate of tuberculosis in Guyana is concerned and roughly the number of patients seen monthly at the Guyana Chest Clinic. I should like to

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enquire if there is a permanent doctor at the Guyana Chest Clinic.

Cde. Nokta: Just a short question on page 132, subhead 5, Telephones. I notice a tidy sum is to be voted, \$675,000, which represents an increase of 225 per cent over last year's figure, but the legend states "Underprovided in 1979". I should like the Minister to explain how it was underprovided when last year \$450,000 was approved and only \$449,827 was used.

The Chairman: Cde. Minister.

The Minister of Health, Housing and Labour (Cde. Green): With respect to the Statistical Bureau. This is a small unit that deals specifically with giving the Minister of Health guidance in terms of our general programme for health care delivery.

In terms of the confusion that the Hon. Member has with the World Bank Reports, these reports are notorious for their inaccuracy in some areas. If you just pick up a number of reports and make comparisons you will always have that problem with figures and statistics. In any event, there is another national statistical bureau under the Ministry of Economic Development and perhaps some of the detailed questions asked could be made under that Head.

In terms of item (32) Inspector of Pharmacies, I would have been disappointed if Jonestown did not come into the discussion on health again this week. All I am prepared to say is that our inspectors cover every part of the country. I will have to make specific enquiries. The assumption is that there was a pharmacy.

4:50 p.m.

With respect to the last question asked about Telephones, the figures appear as they are because very often, based on our accounting procedures and systems, we have accounts coming from one year to the next and that accounts for the apparent inconsistency. The fact of the matter is that the maternal and child health section of the Ministry has assumed much more responsibility both in the urban areas and rural areas and therefore the reduction in that particular head reflects that new position.

Grant to Guyana Chest Clinic, subhead 16, we do not have a permanent doctor; the Chief Medical Officer, who is himself a professional and specialist in this area, services the Chest Clinic. But similarly, the Best Hospital is in the course of being converted into a general hospital and therefore what may appear to be a fluctuation in the rate is responsible for the way we are now treating patients with tuberculosis. The new modern approach is wherever possible not to isolate people in a single hospital based on the particular professional advice, and in fact any fluctuations very often is the result of the indiscipline by some of the patients.

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Cde. J. Jagan: Some of our many questions were not answered. I asked for specific figures on Infant Mortality and Child Mortality. I think it is very important for us to have an understanding of how our services are going. I also asked why there was an increase from \$5,000 to \$8,000 in the Pharmacy and Poisons Board and I asked specifically if he could tell us what is the position with tuberculosis. Is it going up or down? Give us some idea on how T.B. is in the country.

Cde. Green: Sir, the Pharmacy Board, because of expansion, the operation is moving into the hinterland area. The comrade will have to give notice for the specific --

The Chairman: You cannot give that.

Head 66, Ministry of Health - \$2,111,380 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Pages 133 to 135.

HEAD 67 – MINISTRY OF HEALTH
MEDICAL

Question proposed that the sum of \$7,266,200 for Head 67, Ministry of Health – Medical, stand part of the Estimates.

Cde. J. Jagan: Page 133. I had made reference to a number of shortages among specialists listed during the major debate, but I wish to raise them again. We do not have – subhead 2 – Principal Medical Officer (Preventative). At least, I understand so; perhaps the Minister would require that I give written questions on all those I wish to ask. I could also remind him that we have so many written questions that have not been answered, including those about Jonestown, which were asked about a year and eight months ago, I do not know what is the purpose of this exchange, if the Minister is going to plead ignorance on everything. If the Minister of Health cannot even know about the infant mortality rate, I am sorry for him. How many senior physicians, item (7), are missing? I notice in 1980 we are supposed to have four. Could he tell us whether we have one, two, three or four.

Medical Superintendent – Mahaica Hospital, item (12). Do we have a Medical Superintendent? I can remember we had a very good one once but this Party chased the man away. Item (15) Venereal Diseases and Dermatology Officer. Could the Minister say how long we have had that post unfilled? I do not know what happened to the last Officer. But I do know it is very, very necessary to have a specialist in skin diseases. I dread asking the Minister questions because I get the same answers but perhaps he could tell us what is the position with venereal diseases. Do we have it totally under control? Is the incidence high? Is the incidence low? [Interruption.] I beg your pardon.

The Chairman: Cde. Jagan, you are addressing me, you are not addressing the

Minister.

Cde. J. Jagan: I have a feeling though he was making a rude reply because we are discussing venereal diseases. We would like to know how the problems of venereal diseases and dermatology are being solved while we have this vacancy. I am asking him specifically how long has this post been vacant and who is filling in and who is looking after this important social service? The Principal Anaesthetist, item (22). I understand we do not have an Officer to fill that position. I do not know how the other Members in this House feel, but I do know it is not a very pleasant sensation to go for surgery, especially major surgery, without an expert anaesthetist. This is vital to life and if any one should know, a lot of people do not necessarily die because of the operation but they die because of the various facilities that are required to keep one alive during surgery, the main one being the Anaesthetist.

I had raised too during the Budget Debate, item (26), the provision for two Senior Psychiatrists. The Minister replied to the charge that the mental health of our community is very bad. We do not have the help of any skilled Psychiatrist. He replied with the note that they have built a new unit at the Mental Hospital at Berbice. I think he should know that we could build ten new units but if you do not have a specialist operating them, guiding them, supervising the patients, it is almost a waste of time. I would not say it is a complete waste, but, without a good doctor to administer to the mental health of the people at Fort Canje, it will remain what it is, a snake pit.

Item (31), Senior Dental Surgeons, and item (32), provision for ten Dental Surgeons. How many dental surgeons do we have working in the Ministry of Health? At one time we did have a mobile dental service that moved around the areas, the country areas, not the interior but the coastal areas, looking after the dental welfare of a school children. I do not know if we have any mobile units operating at the moment. I would like the Minister to tell us, if we do, how many, and roughly, not in detail, I would not expect that, but, roughly, what they are doing and how many patients they are covering? I do not want him to tell me it is part of the Medex Scheme because a Medex can only do so much. A medex is not a Dentist. A medex works under a qualified dentist, who must examine all the preparations for fillings, who must supervise extractions and all the various work.

To my general knowledge, and I do not claim I know specifically, I believe that the majority of work being done by the various dental units of the Government is extractive surgery. I should say this is the pattern except for the young lady who was here at the time of the Vincent Teekah shooting, who did very specialized dental work for very specialized people. But, apart from here extra services, I would like to know if the general public is getting the opportunity of receiving preventative dentistry, not extractions, for we know we do not get restorative dentistry. I would not expect the Government to be able to provide restorative work, but at least the basic work of preventative dentistry which is mainly doing fillings in the first set of teeth and in the permanent teeth of children. If we can concentrate only on the children, even if we forget about the adults, we will be doing an important service in maintaining the dental health of our child population.

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5:00 – 5:10 p.m.

Coming down to items (33) and (34), I understand the posts of Health Engineer and Assistant Health Engineer are also vacant. Health Engineers are vital particularly as far as the preventative aspect of health is concerned. Health Engineers are very important in matters of sanitation and I come back to the point I made at the main debate which was that the Guyana Health Service in concentrating too much on the curative and not sufficiently on the preventative aspect and this is where people like Health Engineers, Public Health Nurses, come in. Also I would like to know under item (41) where it is provided that we should have five Nutrition supervisors. Do we have five Nutrition supervisors or do we have any at all? Because it is important for us to have persons experienced, qualified, and trained in this field of activity.

On page 134, I just want to make one reference to items (80) and (81), Outboard Motor Operator and Boathand. Are the Outboard Motor Operators and Boathands really functioning? Where are the boats which they operate? It is my information that in the areas where we should have boats to carry our medical personnel, whether it be nurses, dispensers, or doctors, or dentists, into the various areas that we do not really and truly have the means of communication. We have boats but the engines do not work, or we have engines and the boats are leaking, or we do not have the fuel or we do not have the personnel, but generally speaking, my colleagues who are well versed in the interior problems will back me up when I say that the boats which are so necessary to carry medical personnel to the people are sadly lacking. The people have to find the medical personnel. That is generally at great cost to themselves and great discomfort. I know the Minister is particularly sensitive to my references to all the various women who have had to be delivered in various odd places. He does not like to hear those comments so I would not burden him with the problems of the common people.

Page 135, item (100), Night Duty Allowance for Medical Officers. This item is going up fairly high. I draw attention to it because, I am not protesting the expenditure of the money, I am protesting the expenditure of human lives. Here, we have a shortage of doctors at our hospitals, particularly the Georgetown Public Hospital. We have to have a night-duty service. Obviously, there are so many hundreds of patients there, that there must be an officer on duty. But what happens is, and I think this happens all the time, an Officer who may be on duty during the day is also on duty during the night and then he has to resume duty the next day, so that would give him almost a thirty-six hour period of being on duty. Something like that. And it is impossible. It makes a man or woman a wreck. It also reduces their ability to perform properly and we have to think of that.

That is one of the sins of having too few doctors, but I do think there must be something done to stop the over expenditure of the energy and qualities of our medical personnel who are obliged to be on duty for impossible hours. We cannot expect much from them. Usually it is a syndrome. After a man has worked all day and all night and starts again the next day, he is cross and short with his patients and does not give them the attention they need. Ordinary men and women going for assistance get the back lash from this very poor arrangement.

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Subhead 7, Training and In-Service Education for Medical and Para Medical Personnel. My information is that although we are spending a lot of money on training and although we want the training of our medical and para medical personnel, my information is that the quality of training is sadly lacking, that we are not getting the teaching personnel we need to lift the level of our medical personnel to what is desired and, therefore, I think it is not only a question of training, it is a question of having the right people to do the training, those who are capable and qualified to do the training. That is very, very important.

I want to go to subhead 20, the B.C.G. Programme, which I noticed has been reduced from \$20,000 last year to \$10,000 this year. For some strange reason which the Minister, I hope, can explain, the actual revised estimate for 1979 said that only \$124 was spent. That I find unbelievable. I do not think they could have that much of the vaccine on hand and if they did, it would become quite old. They need to use fresh vaccine, with the B.C.G. particularly, because the B.C.G. programme goes to very, very small children, to infants. In fact, the Minister is a little vague on tuberculosis, saying roughly that it looks like it is going down. I am not sure it is going down and I would say it is important that we keep our B.C.G. programme going in full swing. I was also informed that last year there was a shortage of the vaccine. I do not know if the Minister is aware that there was a shortage last year and that mothers were told to come back and some of them never got the vaccine for their children.

Subhead 21, Environmental Sanitation. This is a very small amount of \$3,000. I do not know exactly what is being done with this money but I do know that environmental sanitation, we are bound to have more diseases. Many diseases arise from poor environmental sanitation, from poor disposal of faeces, poor disposal of garbage, poor water supply, drainage. All of these factors are really important and I do not know if we have a serious environmental sanitation programme.

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[Cde. J. Jagan continues]

5:10 p.m.

I know that some years ago we introduced a very good one in which we laid down certain requirements for the building of pit latrines in the rural areas, models that were based on the latest research done in tropical countries. I do not know if we are following up an environmental sanitation programme or if we have a token amount of \$3,000 to just keep the title there. But a real vital environmental sanitation programme certainly could not be run on \$3,000 and if we are serious about preventative medicine and preventative health we have to take into consideration that these are vital to health. We will continue to have large incidences of gastro-intestinal diseases and other related types of diseases if we do not take care of the environment and make it as clean, sanitary and as healthy as possible.

Assembly resumed.

Sitting suspended at 5:15 p.m.

5:45 p.m.

5:45 – 5:50 p.m.

On resumption --

Assembly in Committee.

Cde. Basir: Cde. Chairman, I wish to raise some questions on page 135, subhead 2, Transport and Travelling, subhead 12, Post Mortem Examinations – Fees for, and subhead 19, Mosquito Control Service. If transport has to deal with launches, I want to make specific references to the launch in the Pomeroun River District which services the Akawini, Wakapau, St. Monica and Kabakaburi areas. This launch has been out of service for the past nine months and if the Minister is aware of this I should like to ask him to have an investigation as to the proper working of this launch.

On subhead 12, which has to do with Post Mortem Examinations, I wish to inform the Minister that the person who exhumes the bodies of dead people is residing on the island of Wakenaam and as such it is extremely difficult to have personnel to do that type of work at Suddie when required.

The Chairman: Cde. Basir, we are talking about post mortem examinations not of exhumation of the dead from the grave. This deals with post mortems.

Cde. Basir: Examination Fees. I thought it had to do with personnel and this is why I should like to ask the Minister if it is possible for him to make the necessary legislation to have personnel reside in the Suddie area.

The Chairman: No, Cde. Basir. We cannot allow that type of question under that subhead.

Cde. Basir: I should like to continue on subhead 19 which has to do with Mosquito Control Services. Is the Minister aware that because of the lack of engines in

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the Pomeroon district the mosquito control service has been affected? I wish he can look into that aspect.

Cde.Nokta: On page 133, subhead 1 (13), Senior Ophthalmologist/Ophthalmologis I notice there is provision on the Establishment for four Senior Ophthalmologists.

Cde Chairman: Would you be kind enough to tell me what item you are speaking under?

Cde. Nokta: Page 133, Head 67, subhead 1 (13). I understand that at the moment there is no senior Ophthalmologist at the Georgetown Hospital. I do not know how long this vacancy has existed. I am also told that presently there is someone in the country operating in that capacity on contract. I should like the Minister to tell us whether this is true, if there is someone now filling that vacancy on contract, and how long this contract will run and if it is possible for it to be renewed.

On the same page, item (30) Medical Officer, I notice here that there is a vote for Medical Officer and from 1977 this vote has been going down from \$620,000. In 1978 it was \$572,000 and now we are asking for \$268,000. The fact that this vote is going down makes me believe that there are certain vacancies existing. I should like the Minister to tell us how many doctors are presently in the medical service and how soon will the Government be able to fill the many vacancies that exist.

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/Cde. H. Nokta continues/

5.50 p.m.

On page 135, subhead 12, Post Mortem Examination –Fees for, I would like to draw to the attention of the Minister that some time ago or in the past there was a mortuary established at the Leguan Hospital where when persons died and there was need for post mortem examinations, the bodies from the Essequibo Islands, all the way from Saxakilli which is a far distance away, Hog Island, Truli Island, Wakenaan, Leguan, were taken there. For many years now, that mortuary has been virtually closed and no post mortem examination is done in that area. As a result, when this has to be done, it is very costly to take a dead body, a corpse, right on to Suddie Hospital. I would be glad if the Minister can look into this matter and see whether this mortuary at Leguan hospital can be put into use and that post examinations be done at Leguan hospital.

Mr. Abraham: Mr. Chairman, page 135 subhead 19, Mosquito Control Service. Sir, during my contribution towards this debate I raised the matter of malaria in the Rupununi and I remarked that there is a very sharp, a steep increase, a sharp rise in the incident of malaria, I want to believe that one of the factors responsible for this is the lack of vehicular transport to get men and personnel to the respective areas. I know for one, sir, that the vehicles available at this time are not really adequate and what I would like to find out is what is being done so that we could have more of these vehicles back on the road. There were some motor cycles, I think there were three of them, Yamaha cycles, which really came in very, very handy and even bicycles, but we do not see these any more in operation.

In fact, some of these men in the outposts, they have got to walk and so cannot reach as many people as they used to do in the past, so could the hon. Minister say what really is being done to get these vehicles, these motor cycles and so on back on the road?

Cde. Belgrave: Cde. Speaker, page 134, item (46), (47), (49). I would like briefly to deal with some problems here. Item (46). The legend seems not to represent the thought here in relation to what it is. It says: “Underprovided in 1979” but then we look at it, Senior Health Visitors, the Estimates as for \$52,047 ---

The Chairman: You are speaking on item (46)?

Cde. Belgrave: Item (46), yes. On page 134.

The Chairman: Yes, but the Legend says “Seventeen new offices created w.e.f. 1.12.79.”

Cde. Belgrave: I have written on it and this is there. Seventeen new offices created but let us look at it in fact. In 1979 the Approval Estimates show \$55,283, the revised estimates,

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\$36,503, which means \$18,000 less spent. Now if the seventeen new heads are to be created to bring the figure up to \$52,000 it would mean that there were vacancies in that department in 1979. This does not truly reflect; something is wrong there. There are vacancies in that department. If there are vacancies other than the seventeen new heads created, can the hon. Minister state how many vacancies, or if within this year, 1980, whether they were filled. For this reason it does not reflect or spread over.

Item (47), Health Visitor and School Nurse. There seems to be a problem here too, Cde. Chairman. The sum of \$402,897 was approved in 1979; revised estimates - \$305,432. It means that there was \$97,465 not spent. Now, there are Health Visitors, an important part of this particular Ministry. Would the hon. Minister tell this House how many vacancies there are, if there are any, and how early these vacancies are expected to be filled?

The same goes for item (49), Mosquito Control Service. If you look at (49) you will see that in this department \$288,625 is requested; spent - \$268,126. Maybe I will deal with that and subhead 19. As this is accepted, the arrears are \$20,499 not spent.

Item 55, Staff Nurse; in 1979, spent \$47,890. We are asking this year for \$90,389. There is no legend indicating why you are asking for this sum but what it says here is that \$42,499 was not spent. Apparently there are vacancies in this department. If there are, can the hon. Minister explain what is the true position here because staff nurses are vitally important, as mentioned before, to this Department, and it is only too clear that we should attempt to make sure that these vacancies are filled and this department operates at its maximum.

I refer to subhead 19, Mosquito Control Service, where you have got to a total sum of \$900,000 in the approved estimates for 1979 and the amount spent was \$636,697. The sum that was not spent – amazingly, in this particular department – was \$263,303 but still we are saying here in the legend: “Increased costs.” We did not spend \$263,000 at a particular time, Cde. Chairman, when everybody knows the nuisance that is going on in this country. We heard the member of the Liberator Party who spoke of the area where malaria is on the increase and here it is we have \$200,000 unspent. To my mind it reflects the true position of item (49) where, to my mind, this department is understaffed. Can the hon. Minister say what shortages there are in the department that may be responsible for this vote not being utilised, that may have been responsible also for the upsurge in this nuisance which the department is supposed to take care of. I trust that the Minister understands and will answer these questions.

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6:00-6:10 p.m.

Mr. M.F. Singh: Mr. Chairman, just before I go to page 133 perhaps I should briefly mention that one item on page 134. The last speaker referred to it. I was going to talk about it too but then it has now occurred to me that the legend is obviously wrongly numbered. Where the legend is numbered (46), it should have been (47). You will see that when you look at the increase in the establishment. The category, Health visitor and school nurse has increased in number. It was 77 in 1979, 94 in 1980, an increase of 17 and that is for item (47) so the legend must be numbered (47).

Yes, Sir, going back to my one question on page 133, let me say that the points made by the last speaker in respect of underspending are valid. In respect of page 133, my one remark there is on both items (31) and (32). I will take these together, they refer to Senior Dental Surgeon and Dental Surgeon and a previous speaker made the point about whether there are vacancies in those posts. I would like to ask, to reiterate the same question but in addition, I want to raise under this head the question of the Dental School. I think it is in Thomas Street.

Is this school under the principalship of one of these Dental Surgeons? If there are vacancies, then it would put a strain on it but I take it that the school must be under the principalship of one of these Dental Surgeons. I would like to say in accommodation that a Doctor recently told me that he was very impressed with this school, it was doing really very good work and the standard of the school was very high. That prompted me to look at the estimates for some reference to the Dental School and I could not find any so I am wondering-----

The Chairman: That is why I do not see how I could allow that question. We are talking about Dental Surgeons.

Mr. M.F. Singh: But the Dental Surgeon is connected with that, Sir. How is the school being financed? That is the question.

Cde. Green: Cde. Chairman, may I first congratulate the last speaker on his perspicacity and his obvious intelligence and interest in these estimates because clearly he identified the difficulty on page 134 and I would like to confirm that there is obviously a typing error.

The Chairman: Hon. Minister, this is the type of thing that has been going through all the Estimates. [Interruption] Printer's devil? It is incompetence or carelessness, or no interest.

Cde. Green: I will speak to those persons, I can assure you, Cde. Chairman. May I make a general observation in reply to a number of questions asked on page 133? First, whether the question was based either on misinformation or information that may have been valid many years ago, and I shall cite some examples.

The Hon. Member Janet Jagan talked about there being too much emphasis on the curative. In fact, Cde. Chairman, if you look at the new movement in health, one of the reasons why there appears to be a weakness in the system is that over two years ago a deliberate policy was put in place to change the emphasis from curative to preventative. That explains a number of things which will follow and, therefore, the criticism about extractive surgery is a thing of the past. I challenge the member because from my own investigations and enquiry, we have moved a far way from merely pulling teeth from people and that we are merely just responding to an old situation. People clearly have not brought themselves up to date and it is a pity that they come to this House on the basis of a lack of information.

In the same way, Cde. Chairman, the other speaker, my good, Islamic friend, Isahak Basir, talked about the launch in Akawini being out of order. The launch is working, the launch was out of order last year. Obviously, Cde. Speaker, the comrades do not bring themselves up to date. This launch is now working in the Pomeroun. Here is a man who has just come from the Pomeroun and I would urge members not to just have questions that they had last year, but really acquaint themselves with the situation as it is. [Interruption.]

The Chairman: When you were asking your questions, you wanted the Minister to listen patiently. Now that he is giving answers, you do not want to hear. Minister, if they do not want to hear you, you sit down and I'll move on to the next Head.

Cde. Green: Cde. Chairman, we have a shortage generally, in Guyana and, in fact, in the majority of countries such as ours, of medical staff and specialists. I should give some specific answers to some questions asked against the background of, I do not want to use a harsh word, ignorance, but I would say lack of being up to date. We have, for some time now in this very House, Cde. Chairman, made the point that in our general reorganisation of the medical services we are regrading institutions. The hospital at Mahaica is now being serviced by Dr. Pat Rose and I believe very effectively serviced.

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It is true we do not have a V.D. --- [Interruption] Cde. Chairman, we do not have a V.D. Specialist as such but we have a Dermatologist and a Leprologist who at the moment, is doubling in this area which in terms of skin diseases, has similar problems. In so far as the psychiatrists are concerned, we sent away one of our bright, young physicians and he has just completed an intensive and expansive course and is expected back within weeks to strengthen the one psychiatrist operating in the Berbice area.

There was a specific question asked about Dental Surgeons. We have at the moment seven out of ten and if I may, with your permission, Cde, Chairman, answer my good friend, Marcellus Feilden Singh, the Dental School is treated as a separate institution and the posts are requested generally in the estimates. There is a Principal and we have employed a former Principal Dental Officer who functions as a consultant to the Dental School. I am glad that there are some decent members left who at least will give us credit for the areas that we have revolutionised in health services and I am glad to hear that he has noted the good work done at the Dental School.

We have no health engineer but, Cde. Chairman, there is an international shortage of health engineers and at the moment we are attempting to use our international contacts to acquire the services of one or two health engineers. This is a serious deficiency in the chain of health services. We are very conscious of it and every effort is being made to correct this situation. I have already dealt with the question of boat hands. We have anesthetists.

Night duty allowances. It is not fair to say, in fact, I would be surprised if professional people allowed themselves to work the way the Hon. Member so graphically described. A physician who is on call at night can be on call either in the compound, in a place which permits him to sleep, or he can be on call at home, so the fact that the man is on call does not suggest that he is not sleeping. He is only called out on emergencies or where his particular services are required and the hours are so arranged that they are staggered. I have no complaint from the doctors whom I meet regularly to discuss their problems.

The question of training, Cde, Chairman, I am not sure on what basis this unfortunate remark was made about the quality of our training. People have looked at the quality of our training from various parts of the world and we only have words of credit and congratulations on what we are doing even though in a small way and with the several constraints and difficulties that we have. In any case, we are integrating most of our programmes with the University of Guyana and this is an on-going programme.

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6:10-6.20p.m.

[Cde. Green continues]

6.10p.m

B.C.G. again. I wish that people who pretend to speak about health could bring themselves into the 1970s and '80s. On the B.C.G. question we have found - In fact, the whole world has found - that the tests have proved to be erratic and in some cases unreliable. Therefore, what we did last year was to look at the programme and we have put this sum in because we are at the moment reviewing the whole situation as it affects the use of B.C.G. The modern professionals themselves are satisfied that this is an old system that we can well do without.

Post Mortem Examinations. Cde. Chairman, on our programme this year we propose to improve some of the post mortem facilities in some of the rural areas but we cannot guarantee that bodies will not have to be moved, if there are legal problems, from place to place because I do not think at this time we can put a post mortem facility in every area.

We do have a senior Ophthalmologist and the contract is for three years. We have 32 medical officers and this number is complemented by the kind assistance of our comrades from the Republic of Cuba. There is an on-going programme with the team from O.P.M. to rehabilitate our vehicles to assist in the malaria programme. I believe I have answered Cde. Belgrave's question except to note - and we have said this umpteen times in this House - you do not look at figures in so far as personal emoluments are concerned, divide by "X" numbers and get an answer. One has to deal with movement in terms of grades in the scales and, secondly, also it has to do with the particular time in the year that personnel is appointed. So it is not a simple long division or short division system. There are no difficulties with the figures here. [Interruption.] You do not understand. Feilden understands. Let him explain. You do not understand that problem.

Cde .J. Jagan: I made enquiries about environmental sanitation but I cannot recall the Minister replying.

Cde. Green: This vote has to do with a specific and a small area of activity. Environmental sanitation is normally the responsibility of the municipalities. We give advice and we give guidance in many of these areas. There are problems with the rehabilitation programme started during the Republic Celebrations to bring the environmental situation in line with what we consider acceptable norms.

Head 67. Ministry of Health, Medical- \$7,266,200- agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

The Chairman: Page 136.

HEAD 68- MINISTRY OF HEALTH
PATHOLOGICAL

Question proposed that the sum of \$990,430 for Head 68, Ministry of Health - Pathological, stand part of the Estimates.

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6:10-6.20p.m.

Cde. J. Jagan: It is my information that most of your senior positions in pathology are not filled. Perhaps the Minister could tell us what posts are filled and what posts are not. But my information is that we do not have a Principal Pathologist, a Senior Pathologist, or a Medical Microbiologist, a Biochemist or a Chief Medical Technologist. I may be wrong. He seems to know everything; he seems to resent criticism. The Minister has to learn the basic socialist principle of criticism and self criticism. I do not know what the Minister expects us to do in these sessions because he is so totally resentful that I am inclined not to bother any further. Maybe that is what he wants. My understanding is that we are supposed to be here to enquire into the expenditure and I should like to suggest that the Minister should exhibit some humility and stop being so nasty.

Subhead 10, Blood Transfusion Services. I recall when he was on his feet during the main – [Interruption.]

The Chairman: Can I get some order.

Cde. J. Jagan: When he was on his feet during the main Budget Debate he made certain allegations about the fact that members of the Opposition had not contributed any blood. That is not the point, but it is a fact that we have contributed blood. The fact is that the Blood Transfusion Service needs a little infusion of something other than it has. Perhaps it is the fault of the Minister and his Government that they have been unable to inspire people to come forward and give blood and that has a lot to do with the general attitude that is going on.

In New Amsterdam I understand there is no blood available for blood transfusion purposes. There is no point in raising this here because I do not think the Minister is capable of correcting it.

Cde. Green: Cde. Chairman, I do not know what I have to answer.

Head 68, Ministry of Health –Pathological -\$990,430 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Page 137.

HEAD 69- MINISTRY OF HEALTH
RADIOLOGICAL

Question proposed that the sum of \$578,950 for Head 69, Ministry of Health – Radiological, stand part of the Estimates.

Cde. J. Jagan: We passed the other page. I am at a loss to understand why the Minister is incapable of telling us what is the position with —

The Chairman: We are at the page 137, if you do not mind.

Cde. J. Jagan: I am wondering if there is any point in my asking if there is a

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Principal Radiologist or a Senior Radiologist if the Minister has no intention of answering the questions. I am asking him again to say if it is true that the posts are unfilled and why. What is the anticipation?

The Chairman: What posts? Are you talking on page 137?

Cde. J. Jagan: The Principal Radiologist and Senior Radiologist. I also refer back to the question asked under the Pathological Section which was never answered.

The Chairman: Mr. Singh.

Mr. M. F. Singh: Subhead 1 (6). X-Ray Technician. This one I cannot understand and I see an obvious mistake but even then I cannot understand it. There is a legend which says "Four additional offices created with effect from 1.2.76". That "76" should obviously be "79". That is the legend for item (6).

If we look at the 1979 complement it was 8. In 1980 it is 12 so that must be '79' instead of '76'. In spite of that let us look at the figures.

For the 8 X-Ray Technicians in 1979 the Approved Estimates provided \$31,646. The revised sum for 79 is \$11,874. Now, if you create four additional posts I would expect that the amount you will be asking for this year would be over and above the approved estimates for 1979, which was for eight. You are now asking for an amount for twelve. How then could you be asking for only \$16,000 unless it is envisaged that most of these posts would not be filled, in which case it does seem a little extraordinary to create four additional posts even when the eight would not be filled. There must be something here that needs some explanation.

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Cde. Nokta: Page 137, subhead 8 and subhead 9. I will do them quickly. Maintenance of X-Ray equipment. I am told that ----

The Chairman: Subhead 8 and subhead 9 have nothing to do with that. The next time I am not going to correct you.

Cde. Nokta: X-Ray equipment. I am told that at Bartica Hospital presently, the X-Ray equipment is not in service and, as a result, patients who have to have X-Rays done have to travel all the way to Georgetown- most inconvenient and at high cost. I am told also that the X-Ray unit at the Mabaruma Hospital is not, at the moment, functioning properly. Maybe the Minister can verify this and if that is so I would be glad if the Minister can tell this House what steps are being taken. Now, I am reliably informed that—

The Chairman: What item are you speaking on?

Cde. Nokta: Subhead 7 – Maintenance of X-Ray equipment. I am reliably informed that at Lethem also, the X-Ray equipment is not functioning and you will

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appreciate that to bring a patient down from Lethem to Georgetown for X-Rays would be costly, especially when the fares will go up by 35. I would be glad if the Minister can examine these things and try to rectify them, if he finds that my information is right.

Now, subhead 8, Electricity. I see there is an increase in the votes from \$25,000 to \$35,000, but the legend says, "More units to be opened". I do not fully understand what is meant here by more units. Maybe I can interpret it to mean that this Minister will be opening more or establishing some more lighting plants in various areas. If that is so, will the Minister tell us where these units will be put?

Cde. Green: Cde. Chairman, in terms of Principal Radiologist, we do not have a person in place but we do have a Senior Radiologist and there is a man in training. I do not know when he is expected back. Perhaps, sometime next year. X-Ray Technician, item (6), I believe, Cde. Chairman, that I share the concern of my hon. Friend. There seems to be some inexplicable error here. We are now training our X-Ray technicians locally and the number reflects the number of people trained who, once they qualify, will fill these vacancies this year.

In terms of X-Ray units, my information is that the Suddie unit is working. I will have to check the latest position at Mabaruma. At Lethem, there is no unit. But there is a portable unit to go up. In so far as Lethem is concerned, the observation is accurate. I know Suddie is working. Mabaruma, I cannot confirm. Bartica is working as far as I am aware.

Electricity, Cde. Chairman, in a number of the areas we are putting in electric facilities and particularly at Skeldon and Port Mourant. This is the reason for the legend which is quite accurate, more units to be installed.

The Chairman: Perhaps, Cde. Minister when you are considering incentives and so on, you will consider those people who prepared the estimates, that they ought not to receive any incentives.

Head 69, Ministry of Health-Radiological -\$578,950- agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Pages 138 to 142.

HEAD 70 - MINISTRY OF HEALTH
HOSPITALS AND DISPENSARIES

Question proposed that the sum of \$29,341,220 for Head 70, Ministry of Health-Hospitals and Dispensaries, stand part of the Estimates.

Cde. J. Jagan: Page 138, Item (2), Assistant Hospital Administrator. Is it true that we have neither a Hospital Administrator nor an Assistant Hospital Administrator at the New Amsterdam Hospital, which is a relatively large hospital and that we have someone who is ill-trained for such a responsible post and it is resulting in very poor administration of the New Amsterdam Hospital?

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Item (37), Dispensers. We have this year an allocation of 46 Dispensers. I wonder how many Dispensers we actually have. The Dispensary service has traditionally been one of the finest services for the rural, riverain and interior residents, but we find now that areas that have previously been served with Dispensers have no services whatsoever. For example, in the Pomeroon River, we used to have regular visits by the Dispensers and river areas were well served by Dispensers. I can remember when the P.P.P. was in office we also had doctors going down many of the rivers. Now we have neither Doctor nor Dispenser. I understand in the Berbice River, for one full year, they did not have a Dispenser going into the river district. Now that is very hard on the residents. They have no place to go except, of course, they have to get in a boat and come all the way to the New Amsterdam Hospital, and this not convenient. I would suggest that more attention be paid to our dispensary services. I would like to ask too if the Dispenser is going regularly into the two East Coast Rivers- the Mahaica and the Mahaicony.

6.30 p.m.

Subhead 1, item (46), Dental Mechanic. The Minister accused me of being behind in my information about dentistry. I am not behind and I know that the dentists in the Georgetown hospital are just lying there yanking out teeth. I want to know that we have a dental mechanic for because there is no restorative work that I know of going on, but perhaps the dental mechanic is there to pick up the teeth and dispose of them.

Item (52), Medical Ranger. Under this item, I would like to ask. Is it the responsibility of the medical rangers or other officers to see that medicated salt for the control of malaria is distributed in the border areas of the country? It is my information that in some of the border areas there has been no medicated salt for a long period and this is the reason for the increase of malaria which unfortunately our Minister seems to treat in a cavalier fashion and he laughs. But it is not a laughing matter for those people who are contracting malaria because they are not having the substance, medicated salt, that was introduced many years ago and has proved a successful method of controlling and preventing the spread of malaria.

I would like to ask the Minister if we have a Respiratory Therapist, item (72). I see we have a token amount put there so I do not suppose we have. Under item (78) I notice we have provision for 733 staff nurses and midwives. My information is that we do not fulfill the quota needed and I would be pleased if you would give us the figure of how many nurses are actually employed under this Head.

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On the next one, item (79) Nursing Student, I would like again to say that the method of recruiting student nurses and the unnecessary requirement that they do National Service is preventing Guyana from getting the best possible student nurses. If we continue in the direction we are going, the quality of the nursing staff is going to decrease and the dedication and intelligence and emotional commitment to nursing so necessary to have good nurses, will move downwards because there are many capable women who want to go into nursing but are not willing to subject themselves to National Services. Again I would like to plead that we leave the National Services out of it and let us train the nurses.

On page (140), under item (101), Health Centre Attendant, of which we seem to have 43, do we have a health centre attendant for the Kalkuni, Berbice River health centre? I would like to know if we do because it is still being used as a school. The old school fell down two years ago and they had to convert the health centre into a school building. I am not saying a school building is not necessary but one would imagine that by this time the Government could have solved the problem so that they could have one health centre and a school building. Having mentioned just a few minutes before, the fact that no dispenser goes into the Berbice River, and now I bring to your attention the fact that the Kalkuni health centre is not in operation because it is being used as a school, one can get an even better picture of the problems faced by those hardy residents of the Berbice River, who are getting very little in return for what they do in the way of production etc.

While on the subject may I say that many of the health centres are not sufficiently stocked with the drugs and other requirements necessary to have a useful health centre. Over and over we hear that there are either no drugs or not enough drugs and we on this side of the House, concerned as we are for the welfare and health of the majority of Guyanese, are insisting that attention be paid to these things instead of the irresponsible manner of allowing the constant shortage of drugs and transportation and personnel that is destroying the health services of Guyana.

This one goes to page 141, Dietary, subhead 4. I want to make a plea again and again for better food for our hospitals. Those of you if you do go to the public hospital as many of us on this side of the House do, cannot help observing how very unappetizing the food is. I think any one of us here, although we are a depleted House, would find it most difficult indeed if we had to partake of the meals provided in our public hospital, and we ask that something very serious be done.

I want to raise a question that puzzles me. We know that the cost of living is going up; we know that the cost of food is going up by leaps and bounds. Hardly a week passes when some price does not go up yet I notice for 1977 the actual amount spent for dietary was \$3,066,883 and now we are being asked to provide the sum of \$3,050,000. There is a difference of three years and we are going to spend this year \$16,883 less than what we spent in 1977. I find that puzzling; I just do not know the mathematics of it unless I am missing some major point but it does seem puzzling that we will spend \$16,000 less this year than we did in 1977, taking into consideration that every single item- I cannot think that there is one single item that is excluded, rice, flour, milk, eggs, greens, provisions – you can think of has gone up. I hope it is not that the squeeze is

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going to be on the diet that our patients have to use.

Page 142, subhead 14, Drugs and Medical Appliances. I have mentioned this before the discussion on health centres and again I wish to make the point that we on the other side of this House have made over and over again, but even if the P.N.C. Ministers think that all we are doing is repeating, I would say that the ball is in their court because we must repeat. They apparently cannot correct these shortcomings, then come back and say that this is an old story. It is not an old story that there are constant shortages of essential drugs. I have friends and colleagues who go to the hospital, who have to go, and they get prescriptions and when they go to the pharmacy for filling them out, they are then told there are no drugs. It happens all the time; you cannot say it does not happen because it happens all the time and many people are not getting the drugs they need. Why do we have to raise here over and over again the question of the shortage of drugs?

[Cde J. Jagan continues]

It means total incompetence, total inability to solve the problems and sheer negligence and a callous attitude. That is my view of the fact that no attention is being paid to two basic things –drugs and the diet in the hospitals.

6.40p.m.

Subhead 26, Medical Facilities, Orealla. This is the first honest thing I have seen in the Estimates since I have started looking at them. Ten dollars for Orealla. I congratulate the regime for being quite honest and admitting that it is spending ten dollars for medical facilities at Orealla. People there are neglected. Ask anyone who has been to Orealla.

Medical Treatment Overseas, subhead 28 -\$300,000. I do not know who administers it. I do not know who decides who is going abroad but I do know that it is a bone of contention and one of grave dissatisfaction in our community. Many people have medical problems that cannot be solved here and one does not have to expand on why they cannot be solved here because we have already shown how many specialists and other doctors are not filling posts. The more specialists who are absent, whose posts are vacant, the more need there will be to send people abroad for treatment. Yet there are many people who, in the opinion of outside medical officers or doctors, deserve to go abroad for treatment but no one is doing anything about it. Perhaps I am wasting my breath to suggest that more attention be paid to screening these cases and to giving those who really need a chance to save their lives, their limbs or whatever it may be by having treatment overseas.

It is a fact – I think I mention it last year because I recall the Speaker made certain remarks when I did it- it is a fact that most of the Members of this House when they are from any serious illness do not take their chances here but they go abroad for treatment. We would like the same opportunities to be given to ordinary people, to the small man.

The Chairman: We have two Heads, Housing and Labour and only half an hour. If you want to spend the time on health only, there is no problem with me. Cde. Minister.

Cde. Green: Cde. Chairman, in terms of the New Amsterdam Hospital, again we are getting emotive observations. There are two persons functioning in the capacity of Hospital Administrator and Assistant Administrator in New Amsterdam. The alleged poor administrative ability is a matter of opinion. These persons are earmarked for special training to upgrade their skills. We have to be consistent and wherever we find Guyanese with zeal and the interest we are attempting to give them the necessary encouragement and training within the Ministry.

The Ebini complex is now complete and this question of getting the dispenser in is one that is at the moment engaging our attention. The dental mechanic functions and I do not think my answers can go beyond that.

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On the question of malaria, Cde. Chairman, I really do not understand how the speaker could say that we treat the matter in a cavalier manner. I went out of my way to point out that we completely controlled malaria in this country a few years ago but the fact that there are borders on the West, South and East present us with a severe problem. I made the point that there is regular intercourse in these areas. I further made the point that we have already initiated dialogue with the States involved, the other countries, to see if we can sensitise them and get them to take the matter as seriously as we do because we get the impression that the Governments and some of the administrative people in the other countries along our borders do not take the question of malaria quite seriously. I do not understand the observation unless it is merely another attempt by the speaker to be banal and to be irresponsible.

We have 675 staff nurses fully trained and functioning in the system. We have heard this question of the National Service once more and some people seem to use every opportunity to voice their objection to a matter which is now policy with this Government. National Service is intended to help our young Guyanese understand their country and to give them a particular orientation to serve in the several sectors of the society. The nursing profession is no different. In fact, the experience and the tendency seem to suggest that we are producing better people once you can get these programmes of national policy and education put in place. What I find interesting is that the people who object to National Service support those countries where similar programmes are a natural part of the education and institutional training systems and nobody questions them. But, then, everybody seems to be able to wash their mouths literally on what we are attempting to do.

At Kalkuni we have a problem in the Berbice River and in conjunction with the Regional Minister we are looking at this serious problem in the Berbice River and efforts are being made to tackle the difficulty in the Berbice River.

The reason why there is a reduction in the dietary vote is that the nurses no longer are fed by the Hospital since we have made another arrangement. You can give credit to the vote you see here.

On the question of drugs, last year we put in place an arrangement with the Guyana Pharmaceutical Corporation and even though the situation is not perfect we have made substantial and satisfactory improvement and except in very isolated cases we have been able to keep the hospital well supplied with the basic items that are required for health care delivery. Orealla should really eventually be taken out of the Estimates but we seem to have a pattern that once something appears you keep it for a time.

This is a token sum because the work to be done at Orealla is reflected in the general provisions in the Ministry.

Medical Treatment Overseas, subhead 28. We have a satisfactory method of screening and we have the difficulty where some people for very personal reasons, non-professional people, decide when people need to be treated overseas. We are dealing with a cultural problem. We have in our system some of the best technicians and professionals that can match skills with those from any part of the world and we send

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people overseas only when we do not have the complement of staff or when the equipment required for the particular treatment is not available. Some people, however, feel that they must go overseas for all sorts of things. Some people who have terminal diseases feel they must still go overseas. Our professional people advise in every case before we send people overseas for treatment. Therefore, there is an effective screening process in place.

Head 70 Ministry of Health, Hospital and Dispensaries - \$29,341,220 –agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Comrades, we have 25 minutes. We have three Heads more for Health and we have the whole Head of Housing and Labour. Page 143, Analyst.

HEAD 71 – MINISTRY OF HEALTH

ANALYST

Question proposed that the sum of \$474,180 for Head 71, Ministry of Health – Analyst, stand part of the Estimates.

Head 71, Ministry of Health – Analyst - \$474,180 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

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6:50 – 7:00 pm.

The Chairman: Page 144.

HEAD 72- MINISTRY OF HEALTH
PALMS

Questions proposed that the sum of \$1,229,298 for Head 72, Ministry of Health – Palms, stand part of the Estimates.

Cde. J. Jagan: Page 144, subhead 4, Dietary, I will be brief again to say that – this is the opinion of my colleagues on this side of the House – the diet provided for our senior citizens at the palms is inadequate and disgraceful and they deserve more as they spend their last years in this totally miserable institution.

There is an item for the upkeep of the grounds, subhead 12. I do not know if the term “grounds” includes the building but if you drive by the institution you get the first sense of horror by looking at the outside of the building. I would ask the Government to give some consideration to repainting it. It looks like a house of horror that one sees in these weird and frightful movies and I would urge that we try to make the place look a little better than it is. It is hard enough for the people who have to live in the Palms in a most disgusting, smelly, difficult condition. At least I think some effort should be made and I would suggest that every Member of this House should pay a personal visit to the Palms and then they will know what I am talking about.

Cde. Green: Cde. Chairman, the question of the diet at the Palms, we supply the food. We have a traditional problem of stealing of food which we have substantially corrected over the past few months.

The upkeep of the grounds, I am not sure what the problem is. I know we attempt to keep the grounds as well as we can. A garden has been started. On the painting of the building, we have virtually decided to abandon one part of the building and as you know, work has started to the east in putting up a completely new complex. Really it would be a waste of paint merely to put paint on a building that you propose to abandon in time.

Head 72, Ministry of Health – Palms - \$1,229,298 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Page 208.

DIVISION XXX – MINISTRY OF HEALTH

Question proposed that the sum of \$6,774,722 for Division XXX, Ministry of Health, stand part of the Estimates.

Cde. J. Jagan: May I ask what is the Government doing allocating \$140,000 for the New Amsterdam Hospital? I read in a Government information release-

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6:50 – 7:00 pm.

The Chairman: Will you be good enough to tell us on what item or subhead you are speaking?

Cde. J. Jagan: Isn't it 208? Isn't that where we are? Page 208? Yes, I said subhead 6, New Amsterdam Hospital - \$140,000. I was mentioning that I saw in a Government information release – must be two or three years ago – “Government to build new hospital in New Amsterdam”. I do not know if the plans are changed but I suppose they must be if we had \$140,000 because I do not think you could build a new hospital for \$140,000. If the Minister does not believe me, I will show him the exact Government information release.

And at subhead 21, Georgetown Hospital Feasibility Study – I do not know what that is all about. My own opinion is that it is just a little more window dressing to keep stalling on the whole question of a new hospital because plans were made umpteen years ago for a new hospital but I do not see anything happening.

Cde. Green: Cde. Chairman, even when we are making serious efforts, people make snide remarks and I really do not understand what is happening in this House. Cde. Chairman, the money for the New Amsterdam Hospital is for rehabilitation works. The plans announced in the papers are still existing and I am very glad to say that tomorrow, I believe, the second batch of experts and technicians from People's Republic of China will be arriving in Guyana for further talks with our technicians in terms of the realization of this objective, but this is for rehabilitation works which must continue. In the meantime, we proceed to discuss the building of a new hospital.

Subhead 21, Cde. Chairman, is what it says - to do a feasibility study as part of the I.D.B. Project for a new hospital in Georgetown.

Division XXX, Ministry of Health- \$6,774,722- agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Pages 79 and 80.

HEAD 34- MINISTRY OF HOUSING

Cde. Green: Cde. Chairman, I want to move an amendment.

The Chairman: I believe you have to ask for leave first.

Cde. Green: My sincere apologies, Cde. Chairman. The Leader of the House will do that.

The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House (Cde. Ramsaroop): Yes, Cde. Chairman, if you will permit me to seek your leave first under Standing Order 83 to move the suspension of the appropriate Standing Order.

The Chairman: Yes, leave is granted.

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Cde. Ramsaroop: We will now quickly move the suspension as it stands.

The Chairman: You will make the proposals. Cde. Green.

Cde. Green: Yes, I want to include under Head 34, the amendments as circulated under this particular Head.

The Chairman: So will you let the members know how very important it is, how very infinitesimal the amendment is, or something because---

Cde. Green: Cde. Chairman, I will explain this very briefly. As you are probably aware from public statements, this year we propose to put in place the Central Housing and Planning Authority and the technicians seem to have had some misunderstanding in terms of the funding of the Authority and therefore the ---

The Chairman: I think it is just a great case on incompetence.

Cde. Green: No, I do not think this is the case here, Cde. Chairman. It is a case of procedures and it is my ---

The Chairman: Well, who must do the procedures?

Cde. Green: Well, I agree with you and, therefore, that is the reason for us doing this as we will do it at the moment.

The Chairman: Cde. Minister, even the things that are circulated, we seem to find some difficulty in understanding them. Take for instance, item (46), Planning Technician III. It has a provision of a dollar in the Estimates to be increased to ... Then we have "\$4, 87" and then we see blocking.

Then there is item (47) "\$ 17,300" or \$17, 30 and we do not know what else.

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The Chairman (contd.)

If you will enlighten us so that when the members are going to contribute they will know what they are talking about. Could you let us know about item (46)?

7:00 p.m.

Cde. Green: It is "\$4,871" and item (47) is "\$17,309."

The Chairman: I will propose the Question.

Question proposed that the sum of \$2,364,735 for Head 34, Ministry of Housing, stand part of the Estimates.

Cde. J. Jagan: I just want to make one brief remark. There really is not much one can say because there is no housing programme. I wish to draw the House's attention to the fact that we are spending \$1.8 million to administer \$5.9 million. It is all a waste of time, maybe it is higher.

The Chairman: It is \$2,364,735.

Cde. J. Jagan: We are spending about \$2 million to administer a housing expenditure of \$5.9 million. There is no housing programme and there has been no housing programme worth mentioning for the last few years and while the fact remains that this Government is spending nothing on housing and doing nothing to improve housing, the housing condition of the people is worsening every day. There are more slums in the country, less housing available to people and what little housing is done is just for their friends.

Mr. M.F. Singh: Mr. Chairman, I am asking for your assistance in this matter. I have been in this House for some time, since 1966, and I am afraid I find myself at a loss. I have just looked at this. I understand how it is to be moved in here up to item (49) but then there must be consequential changes in figures. For example, this total Personal Emoluments \$343,134, what do I change it to do?

The Chairman: To \$3,854,423.

Mr. M.F. Singh: I like to get my estimates in order and sir, what do I change \$1,510,312 to? To \$2,364,735. And to what do I change the grand total, sir? Would not be changed. That is the grand total? Well, I have the figures now. That is what I want.

The Chairman: Yes, Cde. Minister, do you want to say anything to the observation about the non-working of the Ministry of Housing?

Cde. Green: Cde. Chairman, except to say I am not responsible for people being blind. If the member says there is no housing programme, let her go to Golden Grove and see the 24 units completed and opened this year; let her go

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to Belfield and see the 7 units, let her go Melanie Damishana and see 99 units completed last year; let us go to the Best Foreshore and see the 70 units completed last year; let her go to Vryman's Erven and see the 58 units completed; Clonbrook 25; Boerasirie; Yarrowkabra.

The Chairman: I will put the Amendment.

Amendment-

That the following be inserted:

<u>Subhead</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
1. Personal Emoluments	(14) - Finance Officer - Housing Fund	The provision of \$1: in the Estimates to be increased to \$9,648
	(15)- Senior Housing Officer	-do- \$6,430
	(16)-Self Help Organiser	-do- \$7,488
	(17)-Quantity Surveyor	-do- \$7,340
	(18)-Assistant Quantity Surveyor II/I	-do- \$5,183
	(19)-Senior Engineer	-do- \$9,648
	(20)-Architect/Assistant Architect	-do- \$7,340
	(21)-Draughtsman	-do- \$4,872
	(22)-Senior Assistant Draughtsman	-do- \$4,445
	(23)-Assistant Draughtsman	-do- \$11,750
	(24)-Superintendent of Works & Buildings	-do- \$5,278
	(25)-Superintendent of Works II/I	-do- \$5,183
	(26)-Estate Manager	-do- \$4,872
	(27)-Building Supervisor	-do- \$30,760
	(28)-Rent Collector	-do- \$29,431
	(29)-Housing Welfare Officer	-do- \$15,290
	(30)-Community Organiser	-do- \$35,185
	(31)-E.D.P. Operator II/I	-do- \$9,860
	(32)-Engineer/Technician Engineer	-do- \$14,138
	(33)-Architectural Technician	-do- \$6,314
	<u>TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING</u>	
	(35)-Deputy Town and Country Planning Officer	-do- \$11,640
	(36)-Town Planner	-do- \$19,716
	(37)-Snr. Planning Assistant	-do- \$21,749
	(38)-Planning Assistant	-do- \$29,228
	(39)-Development Control Officer	-do- \$7,335
	(40)-Development Control Assistant	-do- \$40,108
	(41)-Senior Surveyor	-do- \$9,072
	(42)-Surveyor	-do- \$35,209
	(43)-Surveyor Technician II	-do- \$8,889
	(44)-Surveyor Technician I	-do- \$22,585
	(45)-Snr. Planning Technician	-do- \$5,501

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(46)-Planning Technician III	-do-	\$4,871
(47)-Planning Technician II	-do-	\$7,309
(48)-Planning Technician I	-do-	\$31,027
(49)-Apprentice Planning Technician	-do-	\$16,030

Total Personal Emoluments: Substitute "\$854,423" for "\$343,134".

Total of Heads: Substitute "\$2,364,735" for "\$1,853,446."

Put and agreed to.

Heads 34, Ministry of Housing -\$2,364,735 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Page 200.

Division XXII- MINISTRY OF HOUSING

Question proposed that the sum of \$5,940,000 for Division XXII, Ministry of Housing, stand part of the Estimates.

Cde. Belgrave: Cde. Chairman, it is observed here in relation to subhead 1, Development of Land and Construction of Houses, \$2,500,000, that the legend says it is really to prepare the construction of houses for the year 1980. Can the Minister give us some information in relation to what type of houses or land will be prepared for 1980? I would like to draw to his attention that he ought not to come to this House again with his self-help scheme because quite recently, the units for the Police which were recently opened on the highway were rejected by most of the policemen on the ground that the total cost of rental is well into \$240 per month, and traveling and other expenses would create a big blow to their salaries. Many have called for the return to them of their funds--

The Chairman: Cde. Belgrave, you have to try because I have seven minutes more and I have to do the whole Head of Labour.

Cde. Green: Cde. Chairman, my friend is – I am not sure what he is talking about. First of all, he talks about a legend which I do not see and he is going on about \$240 for a police house. I think we really need a psychiatrist that the other person was talking about.

Division XXII. Ministry of Housing -\$5,940,000 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Pages 145 and 146, Head 73, Ministry of Labour, Cde. Ramsaroop.

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7:00-7:10 p.m.

HEAD73- MINISTRY OF LABOUR

Cde. Ramsaroop: Cde. Chairman, may I seek your leave under Standing Order 83 to move the suspension of Standing Order 66 (1).

The Chairman: Leave is granted.

Cde. Green: Cde. Chairman, I signify that Cabinet has recommended the amendment of Head 73.

I now move the amendment as calculated:

<u>Subhead</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
1 – Personal Emoluments	19 (a) - Labour Research Officer	Provision of \$6,822 to be included
	19 (b) - Economist	Provision of \$6,822 to be included
	19 (c) - Job Analyst	Provision of \$6,822 to be included The remarks “posts no longer required” in the explanatory notes to be deleted.

Total Personal Emoluments: Substitution of “686,207” for “655,741”.

Total of Heads: Substitution of “\$1,252,827” for “\$1,232,361”.

The Chairman: This really is an error in not including the amounts in respect of item (19) (a), (b), and (c).

Amendment put and agreed to.

Motion carried.

The Chairman: I will now propose the Question.

Question proposed that the sum of \$1,252,827 for Head 73, Ministry of Labour, stand part of the Estimates.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Cde. Chairman, Subhead 17, Supervision of Weighing of Canes on Sugar Estates. Now, Cde. Chairman, this is very sensitive and a matter of tremendous gravity to sugar workers in the country and I want to put it very simple. When the sugar estates were owned by the expatriates-

The Chairman: Bearing in mind that you have to ask your question and get an answer—

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: It was probably necessary then for them, that is, the sugar estates, to have representation and what have you.

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[Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud continues]

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But the position now with respect to scales in this: three people are appointed as supervisors for the scales, one comes from management, another comes from cane farmers and the third from sugar workers. In many of the areas affected we have no cane farmers. We are proposing that all three persons who are to supervise the scales, that is, to watch the interest of the cane cutters to see that they are given a square and fair deal so that there should be acceleration of production, should be elected by the cane cutters themselves. One reason – and it is a vital one - is that when one is chosen by cane cutters he only functions for one of the shifts and not for three shifts. It means that when he goes off for two shifts and the cane cutters have no one there to watch the scale. They are not represented. I would hate to believe that a Minister of Labour would want the situation to continue where the workers are not represented, where their interest is not watched. I think this is a very objective proposal that at least for all three shifts provision should be there for the cane cutters to have a representative to watch the weighing of cane.

The second point is that while overtime is paid to others, these supervisors are not paid overtime and when there is need for them to work overtime they have to do without any payment. I think this is a disgrace and the Minister of Labour should take immediate action to alter it.

Cde. J. Jagan: The Cane Grove road.

The Chairman: I have no time. Cde. Green, please answer.

Cde. Green: Cde. Chairman, the question was raised several times before and I would urge with equal sincerity as my good friend that the matter be discussed at the level of the union and management.

However, if the workers wish to have representation beyond what is already arranged, I believe that the responsibility rests with the union and they must stop this paternalistic approach. If the union and the workers have a particular problem let them provide the personnel and I am sure the Minister of Labour will make the necessary representations to allow them to be present. We have absolutely no objection.

Head 73, Ministry of Labour -\$1,252,827- agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Page 147.

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HEAD 74 - MINISTRY OF LABOUR
EMPLOYMENT EXCHANGE SERVICE

Question proposed that the sum of \$125,632 for Head 74, Ministry of Labour-Employment Exchange Service, stand part of the Estimates.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: I wonder if the Minister will explain this: We have provision here for \$10 for several offices that are listed under items (6), (7), (8), (9) and (10).

Cde. Green: These token sums are for acting allowances, Temporary Clerical Assistance, substitutes. They are token amounts because one cannot anticipate how much we will spend on these particular items.

Head 74, Ministry of Labour, Employment Exchange Services- \$125,632- agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Page 148.

HEAD 75- MINISTRY OF LABOUR
SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Question proposed that the sum of \$8,520,752 for Head 75, Ministry of Labour-Social Assistance, stand part of the Estimates.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: At subhead 1 (4) Cde. Chairman, there is provision for 31 Social Security Officers. There is also provision at (7) for 3 Field Investigators etc. My information is that this department has been understaffed for some time and they are functioning without the full complement. I should like the Minister to tell us tonight whether they have filled all the existing vacancies because when the department is without an adequate number of investigators, people who apply for both old age pension and social assistance suffer. Coupled with that, even if the Board meets, the Board will not have enough work to do. My information is that many Boards have had to abandon meetings because they cannot get a quorum.

These are all matters that the Minister must look into because if the people are to get services provided, then all the machinery must be operated efficiently and properly. I repeat: it is an objective criticism.

I go to subheads 7, 8, 9, 10, Old Age Pension, Public Assistance, National Insurance, Grants to Religious and Charitable Organisations respectively. While I see that there is an increase of 100 percent from \$15 to \$30 per month, I understand that the means test, which was \$35, has gone up to \$50. My proposal is that the means test should be removed because even if a person is earning \$50 per month and he or she gets \$30, it is not much to live on. It is still ridiculously insufficient. This is the point that many people---

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The Chairman: Cde. Persaud, if you do not go on with your questions you will not get an answer.

Cde.Reepu Daman Persaud: Subhead 8 would be the same question because they go together. There is a paltry increase here and I want to ask the Minister to give further consideration, despite the provision in the Budget, and come with a supplementary estimate so that the amount that would now be given by the Social Assistance Department could be increased.

The last subhead is 10, Grant to Religious and Charitable Organisations. It states in the legend that there is an increase in a number of organisations. More organisations will get. Let the Minister tell us which are the organisations.

Cde. Green: The last question. I do not have the specific information here in terms of the organisations that receive this but I can get that quite easily. The plea for social assistance has been noted. During the year we certainly will consider it based on a number of economic circumstances. We have re-arranged the arrangements in terms of board meetings and we have now changed the situation where you have an outsider being Chairman. A public officer can now chair so that we can ensure regular meetings and I believe that things are moving much faster.

We have vacancies for the investigators but we are very cautious to fill these vacancies because we want to ensure that we have people with the sort of moral fibre that can do an effective and an honest job in this particular area.

Head 75, Ministry of Labour - Social Assistance - \$8,520,752 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Pages 67-71.

HEAD 31- MINISTRY OF ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES.

Question proposed that the sum of \$908,975 for Head 31, Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. M.F. Singh: Pages 67, subhead 1(2). The sum of \$11,641 is provided in respect of 2 Principal Assistant Secretaries, one General and one Finance. The legend states that one office is vacant. There does not seem as though there is any proposal to fill this vacancy. I wonder why because there are two posts there and there is provision apparently only for one. I wonder whether the one that is vacant is Finance because when one looks down further and sees Chief Accountant, one sees the note again in the legend, "Office transferred to Head 78", so I am wondering whether we are really grading down the accountancy in this Department.

[Mr. M.F. Singh continues]

7.20 p.m.

Going on to general remarks in respect of all these others here, item (14) onwards, one reads the note, and you have to do the estimates in the light of the notes themselves, the note on the top of the page 67, on the right hand side, which says “Consequent on the establishment of the Forestry and Mining Commission token provisions of \$1 have been provided under Personal Emoluments for these offices affected due to secondment, and no provision made for the subheads affected under Other Charges.

Well, Sir, this really makes it very difficult for us and very easy for you in that there are no questions we can ask on this. There is only a dollar provided and I am wondering whether the hon. Minister is presiding over the liquidation of his Ministry. What can I ask? One dollar. Now, I go from page 67 to 68, a dollar right through there, no questions there. I go now to page 69. Just one question I can ask in respect of items (8) to (90). They are all in respect of the legend. They are all offices to be filled and money is being provided to fill these offices, a dollar was provided in 1979. Revised Estimates had nothing, and 1980 has money requested to fill the offices. When are they going to be filled, have they been filled as yet? I take that these amounts were for the whole year -12 months, this is the fourth month of the year so that one would hope that the reply is that they are all filled in the fourth month of the year. Sir, the rest is a dollar, so I turn the page again, to page 70, I cannot ask questions on a dollar.

The Chairman: The questions are really between subheads 2 to 22, all the others are for personnel which posts are not being filled.

Mr. M.F. Singh: Yes, sir, I take it that the Minister will answer for himself. Subhead 13, Maintenance of Tumatumari Dam. In 1979, the Approved Estimates had \$50,000; the Revised Estimates had \$5,999, one cent short of \$6,000. I do not know, that was very nicely arranged, and the request being made for 1980 is for \$50,000. Obviously, something must have happened in 1979 to prevent them from spending that \$50,000 which was requested. The same \$50,000 was requested for 1980. What did they do in 1979 in respect of the Dam and what is the proposal in 1980 in respect of the Tumatumari Dam?

Subhead 15, Maintenance of Gauges, \$35,000 was approved in 1979; only \$14,042 was shown revised in 1979 and the request for 1980 is \$35,000. I am perturbed about this because I am wondering whether we are allowing our maintenance of gauges to get run down. We have \$35,000 to be used in 1979. Why didn't we use it and are these gauges being run down, are we picking up in 1980?

The next thing is subhead 22, Maintenance of Tiboku Base Camp. I do know something about Tiboku because when I was Minister, the Shawinigan Engineering Company were commissioned to do a study of Tiboku in respect of hydro power. They produced a report and as far as I am aware, that has been completely shelved but I see the base camp for years now has been maintained. I wonder, are we using this base camp to service some other area? Why is it necessary to keep this Tiboku base camp if we have

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given up the Hydro project in that area? It could be that it is being used to service some other area because consistently I see money is being provided. I would like to know the future of the Tiboku Base Camp. I want to ask – No, there is nothing provided so I cannot ask any question on Guyana Electricity Corporation.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: I was looking at the estimates both for 1979 as well as the one for 1980 specifically, so that we can ascertain exactly how many of these technical offices were filled before the secondment took place. I am ever conscious that the commission has been established and one assumes that the token dollar is simply here, but I wonder if there will be any work for the Minister to do seeing that there are mines.

The Chairman: What item comes under what for the Ministry to do? Let's get on with the questions.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: The answer to that is that if all the items are simply token provisions and officers have seconded to the Commission, be it Mines or Forest, Cde. Chairman, one assumes that there will be no need for them to return to the Ministry, therefore ultimately the posts will be abolished from the estimates. But the point –

The Chairman: You are to decide that or the Government Benches? Let's go on, please.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud : I want to ask the Minister if that is the intention; it is a pertinent question, secondly, Cde. Chairman, I want to ask the Minister whether all the vacancies-

The Chairman: Please tell me under what subhead you are speaking.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: I am speaking on the token votes. If you want me to name them, Cde. Chairman, it will only take up much time. I am speaking about Forest Department, Mines Department because these officers, this is how I understand the Budget, are technical men who are supposed to be seconded to the respective Commissions. My position is that many of the vacancies existed in the past, hence we would like to know whether the Commissions established will have the benefit of all the qualified technical men required for the efficient and proper functioning of the Commissions. I cannot see a question being more pertinent than that. Why Cde. Chairman, because if the function of the Ministry is to be taken over, because there is a token vote, as a result, I get locus standi if there is still provision recognising the existence of these officers. I make the second point and these functions are now going to be carried out by the respective Commissions.

Let me deal with respect to mines, that we need enough mining officers, you need enough rangers, you need enough guards and you can take for instance, gold. It has to do with natural resources, it has to deal with diamonds. Let me put you in the picture, Cde. Chairman. What I would like to know is whether the commission has the benefit of enough personnel to ensure that we can monitor all the mining areas that exist in the country, bearing in mind the escalation in the price of gold which now fetches \$50 per

[Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud continues]

penny – weight. That also has to be related to the collection of royalties, whether there is effective machinery bearing in mind that royalties are collected at a sum far below the price fixed per ounce for gold.

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Another point that has to be considered in looking at this particular Head, Cde. Chairman, is the fact we have these traders who, to my mind, have a monopoly, who have the greatest claim. The porknockers do not get the benefit they should get, so what happens? They suffer and the buying public suffers, by having to pay high prices. Therefore, what I would like to direct to the Minister answering for this particular department is whether all efforts are being made to ensure that we are in proper control of the vital resources of gold, diamonds, so that royalties are collected at the maximum. We must ensure that porknockers get their due and that our gold is not smuggled away to Brazil and Venezuela. My view is that the Commission has not got off the ground, talking, with specific reference to mines. It probably is now moving, doing something, but it is an area over which we have to be ever sensitive and watchful to ensure that our natural resources indeed are protected.

I probably would like to direct the next question in that way so that all can see my anxiety, my concern and I am sure the concern of the hon. Minister. Talking about exploration for oil, they have been giving contracts to foreign people to come in. All right, probably we need the technical know how, and all the other things that go with it. But to what extent local people are involved in this exercise? One would like to know whether the Ministry has in train machinery for the training of people to carry out these activities in the absence of foreigners who come to explore, so that we can really prepare these sectors of our economy to function at their maximum. Probably the Minister will be, I am sure, inclined to tell us what really is the position throughout. I hear some general statement of contracts awarded. What is the position? Is there any possibility? Has there been any report? If so, who has reported so far? These are the questions I would like to direct.

Now just a short question on forestry. You know, Cde. Chairman, I think that every Member of this House is aware that we have tremendous potential in wood and we must not become slavishly confined to greenheart and believe that is everything. There are many other species that need to be investigated. Is investigation going on? If so, does the Minister have any new report for the House so that people who wish to build houses, so that the Ministry of Housing can be helped by this sector that can produce cheap material for the building of houses? We know the high prices greenheart fetches. We can reduce those prices and provide cheaper wood for people who would like to have homes for themselves.

There has been a complaint, Cde. Chairman, by some loggers about the fact that they have to go deep into the forest. What about the question of reforestation? They are saying probably the modern approach is that you do not have to do reforestation, but I know that is vital. I would like to know, even if there is a new approach, what is

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being done to ensure that we always have a supply. The other question is whether it is not true that now that these logs have to come from far in, that will add to the price of wood. What kind of assistance is being given to the loggers? We must be concerned both with the mining industry and with forestry as a whole.

I have avoided asking many other questions because I have been recording and making a mental note of what the Minister spoke about when he contributed to the major Budget Debate. The revenue section of the estimates did not show any great improvement with respect to the collection of royalties hence one must assume from that, that production has not really increased. If the resource is there and one has to find one's figure based on what comes from royalty, then obviously that will support my contention that the greater portion of our gold is being smuggled out of the country. Will the Minister concede that the system still exists where a man goes and gets his gold and he brings how much he wants to show and declares that, and based on that, royalty is paid?

I have identified the six mining areas. What is required in all those areas? Further what is the position in respect of Housing for the Mining Officers? You are far behind –

The Chairman: Cde. Persaud, I am not going to allow you to carry on. These are not questions. You are talking about policies. These are specific posts. You can ask if they are filled and if they are not filled, where they are going. I am not going to allow you to go on with that [Interruption.] You can ask me whatever you like, but not here.

Cde. Minister.

The Minister of Energy and Natural Resources (Cde. Jack): Cde. Chairman, first of all with regard to subhead 1, Personal Emoluments, the question of provision for only one Principal Assistant Secretary, what happened was that when the two Commissions were established, it was felt, that as a result of the work being taken over by the two Commissions, the Central Ministry could do with one P.A.S. instead of two.

However, I would like to take this opportunity to clear up what I believe is a misconception not only on the other side of the House but also in some other quarters, and that is, that with the creation of the two Commissions there is a withering-away, so to speak, of the Ministry. What is happening is that the Ministry is taking on a more developmental aspect and within the Ministry itself what we are contemplating and are planning to establish is a developmental unit which will be staffed with legal personnel as well as competent and seasoned economists because our experience now is that we are having a lot of inquiries from foreign interests and we are engaged at the moment in a number of negotiations with foreign concerns. This places a tremendous burden upon the small staff that we have, so that, far from the Ministry withering away, it will really change its complexion and its function and become more developmental.

The question has been asked about secondment and I think that I will answer this question. The reason why we seconded the officers, was that at the time when we established the Commission, all of the arrangements had not been in place. For instance, the arrangements for superannuation benefits as regards the new arrangements were not completed. For this reason it is safe for the officers to be seconded until such time as

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proper superannuation arrangements are made so that if anything happens to them now, they would not, as it were, fall by the wayside because they left the Public Service and have not yet made arrangements fully with regard to superannuation benefits.

As regards the Commission of Geological Surveys and Mines, the arrangements for superannuation are more advanced than those for forestry and I am told that within a matter of two weeks the contract will be signed for the insurance arrangement which will take place. That is the reason why we seconded all of those people and we put the dollar. Those officers will then become permanent officers of the various Commissions.

[Cde. Jack continues]

7.40 p.m.

With regard to do the Hydro Power Division, the offices have not all been filled. The fact is that as a result of our concentration on the Upper Mazaruni Hydro Electric Project there is in fact not at the moment sufficient emphasis being placed upon the exploration and investigation of other sites. However, as I mentioned earlier in the debate, we have identified two sites for which we will be doing investigatory work but the amount of persons put here, while they would be necessary, certainly we will not be in a position during the course of this year to fill all these positions. We would hope that we will be able to utilise their services as we continue to develop the Upper Mazaruni Hydro Electric Station.

The Tumatumari Dam, subhead 13. The \$50,000. is an infinitesimal sum if you were to think in terms of what you would have to spend today (a) if you did not have the dam and (b) if you had to buy petrol. What we have been doing with the dam, however, is to keep repairing it. We have had a rough kind of rock fill which makes it necessary to keep repairing the baskets in which the rocks have been placed and this money is for that on-going work which has to be done.

There was some mention made of Tiboku, subhead 22. We are not concentrating on Tiboku. As you know we are concentrating on the Upper Mazaruni Hydro Project. There are some drill shoals at the camp and it is for that reason we have to keep the camp guarded. The question is: Do we have sufficient mining officers, rangers, guards etc.? The Budget prepared by the Commissioner of Geological Survey and Mines does make provision for an adequate quantity of mining officers, rangers, guards etc. but all the positions have not yet been filled.

I happen, as you know, Cde. Chairman, to be the Chairman, for the time being, of that Commission and I have been urging the Commissioner of Geological Surveys and Mines to have a very close look at the staffing of the Commission to ensure that we take, in the first place, competent people and, in the second place, only those people who are absolutely necessary. In other words, at this time of stringency, we examine each post and make sure that that post is absolutely necessary otherwise we can run away with the idea of filling all the posts and find that we have extra people, people that we do not really need.

Do we have personnel to monitor the royalty? We have called upon the Chief Inspector of Mines to prepare a new programme for the collection of royalty. We have constructed two houses. One is finished at Mahdia and there is another one at Kamarang in the process of being built now. We expect it to be finished in a matter of a month or so. We will be stationing officers there and it is quite true that there has been a system, which I consider a most deplorable system, in which the producer of gold comes to Georgetown and tenders what gold his conscience tells him he should tender and pays royalty on that. I have already taken this matter up with the Commission and we will be seeing to it that the Mines Officer collects royalty on site. We have held discussion with

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the police to get assistance from them in this exercise and where it is not possible to collect the royalty, the scheme envisaged is that the packet of gold will be stamped with the necessary stamp and it will be sent down so that there will be no possibility of opening it on its way to Georgetown.

With regard to smuggling, we are aware that there is smuggling not only to Brazil and Venezuela but smuggling of gold outside of this country. This is a matter which we are tackling vigorously and we are going to be using the assistance of both the police and the Customs department to assist us. The collection of royalty for gold this year has increased tremendously. I think we collected something like \$100,000 already. The declared production has not increased. As a matter of fact, there has been something of a reduction. I questioned this and I was told by the officers who are knowledgeable that having regard to the increase in royalty it is commendable that people have declared even as much as they have in fact declared. It is going to be our duty to carry out a very vigorous campaign to find out what is actually being produced in this country because I share the view that we are still getting merely a portion – perhaps one should say a fraction – of the gold really being produce in this country.

As regards exploration for oil, the active exploration taking place this moment is by Home Oil in the Takutu region of the Rupununi. They are doing seismic work and gravity surveys and the information I have is that up to the present the indications have been encouraging. But I do not wish to raise false hopes. We know there have been rumours that we have discovered oil. I am confident that we will, but when we do discover I may even ask to have special meeting of this House to make the declaration. But we have not discovered the oil yet. The company seems to be quite optimistic still and there have been nothing so far, since they have been carrying out their investigation, to dampen either their optimism or our optimism.

As regards the training of petroleum miners and petroleum geologist, we do have a petroleum geologist trained but we will have to train people in petroleum geology and petroleum mining to take advantage of the work that is actually being done or the work which we contemplate that we are capable of, having regard to constraints in the financing or doing ourselves. Otherwise we will train people in a very important field like petroleum and if there is nothing for them to do there we will lose them to somewhere else.

Forestry. We have been making efforts to get away from this reliance on greenheart and the conservator of Forest has a programme for the preservation of other species. We are making efforts to develop a very vibrant market for other species in the CARICOM area in the first place and in the Upper Demerara Forestry Project which will come on stream in 1980; in 1981, 50 percent of its production will be in other species.

We will be utilising other species in prefabricated houses and we do believe that during the course of this year we will have something of a breakthrough as regards the utilisation of other species in this country.

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There was a question raised about assistance to loggers. As regards the saw-millers and loggers in the Corentyne area, discussions have taken place between the Ministry, the Commissioner of Forestry and a group of Corentyne sawmillers and loggers to open up a road from Orealla going southward toward the GUYMINE concession.

We should have actually started that road last year but on both sides, I think, the matter was not pursued with as much vigour as it could have been. The Ministry, however, and the Commission stand ready to continue that project and to see that it is completed this year if the sawmillers and loggers who made an approach to us are prepared also to show a similar vigour.

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[Cde. Jack continues]

7.50 p.m.

It is true that more and more one has to go further in field to get logs but with the development of the Upper Mazaruni Road we now have a road of some sixty-old miles which allows for immediate logging and I know that at least some loggers have already taken advantage of that road. Furthermore, along the Mabura Hill road, that is, the road Rockstone/Wismar to Mabura Hill, a distance of seventy – seven miles, loggers who operate on the right bank of the Essequibo, left bank of the Demerara have already been making use of that road for hauling their logs. So that loggers have got the benefit out of the two main roads that we have built during the past few years.

I have already mentioned houses and I think that covers, Cde. Chairman, all the questions that have been raised.

Head 31, Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources - \$908,975 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Page 197.

Division XIX – Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources

Question proposed that the sum of \$8,412,649 for Division XIX, Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, stand part of the Estimates.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Cde. Chairman, the Minister has undoubtedly answered at that point some of the questions that could have been raised here:

Subhead 29 Energy Unit. We have not had a report for some time on the question of the Guyana Electricity Corporation but a debate once and we would like to know what is the position, bearing in mind that we are still having black – outs in various parts of the country. We probably have not had for some time in the city but there are still black – outs at certain times during the course of this year.

What steps are being taken by the Ministry and by the Government to ensure that we have a regular supply of power? What is the position with the boilers? Has the Government ordered new boilers? What is the condition? What kind of servicing is being given to the equipment?

Cde. Chairman, without asking further questions, I wish to ask on subhead 31 and 32, which provide in the case of subhead 31, \$3.3 million for Forest Commission and in the case of subhead 32, \$3.8 million for Geology Commission, if the Minister is satisfied that these provisions are adequate enough for all that is required, that is, both in forestry and mines. I could ask him the other question. What portion will go for the staff, bearing in mind that they are not going to be paid out of the Ministry, so to speak. We have a vote. What amount of this provision in each case will go for the staff? What amount will go for developmental work? What amount will go for all the services that are vital to ensure that we get the maximum from both forestry and mines? And when

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that deduction is done, whether he is satisfied that there is enough provision for all the exploration if not exploitation, whether in the case of gold and wood, that will be advantageous enough as to correct the position existing presently.

I have been looking at the Report of the Timber Board and they have been complaining that the sector dealing particularly with forestry is not performing as it should. If I cite just one paragraph, Cde. Chairman, it is the Annual Report and Accounts for the year 1977 – 1978, Guyana Timber Export Board. Dealing with logs alone. “Sales of logs were negligible and no increase was observed when compared to 1977. During 1978 the only log exports made were dalli logs to Trinidad”. It is not only a question of providing for our local requirements but also producing adequately so that we can earn foreign exchange which is so vitally necessary in the country.

I think that would more or less satisfy what I would like to know from the Minister.

The Chairman: Yes, Hon. Member Mr. Singh.

Mr. M. F. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Subhead 9 on page 197 – Upper Demerara Forestry Road Project. The request is for a quarter million dollars for 1980. The legend says, “To provide for the cost of the by-pass road to Kurupukari. This road is to be used to divert Rupununi traffic away from the township”. Presupposing that the legend is correct and so many of them have not been correct, I take it that this is solely for the by-pass road.

Now, I was asking my colleague next to me what he knows about this by-pass road and there does not seem to be much known about this by-pass road so perhaps the hon. Minister could tell us about it and its relationship specifically to the Upper Demerara Forestry Road Project as against this business of diverting Rupununi traffic away from the township. I take it there must be a relationship not only with diverting traffic but with the Forestry Road Project – the particular Head there.

Subhead 10, Purchase of Equipment (power). There is a small amount requested - \$4,000 - but you see the legend does not tell us anything about it, where it is to go. “To purchase overhead tank and pump and filling Cabinet” – for where? What place? Where is it going to be installed? It is a small amount but we should get some more details as to where this is going.

Now we have subhead 17, Membership of the Latin American Energy Organisation. This is appearing for the very first time and the sum of \$130,000 is requested. The legend says, “To provide for Guyana’s payment to the Association”. The hon. Member may have briefed Members of Parliament about this organisation. If it has been done, I am sorry I cannot recollect but I would like to know something about this organisation for which we are paying \$130,000.

Sir, subhead 21, Hydro Power Division, \$170,000 is being requested but we note that the Approved Estimates for 1979 provided a quarter million dollars and only \$2,000 of that quarter million was spent so one wonders are we really going to get down to the job of doing something in this Hydro Power Division. What happen in 1979? Did it not

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get off the ground? Was nothing going on? How do we propose this year to spend this \$170,000?

Subhead 23, Hydropower Surveys –

The Chairman: There is nothing on that.

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8:00 – 8:10 p.m.

Mr. M. F. Singh: I cannot ask my question. Subhead 25, Capital Contribution to Upper Mazaruni Development Authority. The sum being requested is a half million dollars. Well, I have made a personal request to the hon. Minister to have a look at this project and see first hand what exactly is going on there. All I do is hear reports inside here and sometimes I find it difficult to paint a mental picture of exactly what is going on there. At one time, everything seems to be going on, at another occasion, things seem to have come to a standstill and we are merely sort of looking on and keeping things going – watchmen looking at the equipment and that sort of thing – so I would like to know and perhaps the hon. Minister could take the opportunity of telling us.

8 p.m.

I have in mind that this area would have a flood area if the hydro power is to get off the ground; a significant part of that area would be flooded. If the area is flooded when the hydro project gets started, then we need obviously to extract our minerals from designated flood area. We need to extract our timber from the designated flood area. We have been told the World Bank has been looking favourably at this whole project. Presumably, we should be looking at these things and doing these things right now. What is the Government doing about extracting the minerals and extracting the timber from this particular area designated for the flood? And Sir, the resettlement of the people. Presumably again people would have to get out of that area and be resettled. At one time there was some controversy about objections to resettlement and the rest of it. Could the Minister give us a progress report as to what is happening in that area?

I was going to ask questions on both subhead 31 and 32. I wanted to get progress reports on both the Guyana Forestry Commission and the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission. We know they have got off the ground. We know that they have been set up, the hon. Minister has given us some indication as to what is happening. I wonder whether he would want to answer in respect of any general progress report which I am asking for now. Particularly, I would like to hear something more about the use of our forest resources, particularly in the area of pre-fab houses.

Cde. Jack: Cde. Chairman, the first question deals with the G.E.C. The position is that the first boiler which we set about repairing has been repaired and put back into commission. We did take longer than had been anticipated. The second boiler however, is in the process of being repaired and I am told that the repair is on schedule. As a matter of fact, it is a bit in front of schedule. By July, we should have it in operation and that would cause a significant reduction in the blackouts which we have been having.

Some of the blackouts have been as a result of individual faults from time to time and not necessarily connected with the general problems which obtained at Kingston. For instance, there have been from time to time difficulties at Garden of Eden. We have ordered some spare parts and we are rehabilitating not only the plant at Garden of Eden, but attempting to improve the maintenance of the other sub – stations which we have along the coast. I would expect that by July, we should have a significant improvement in the supply of electricity.

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I would like to take this opportunity of expressing our own concern for the interruption which have occurred from time to time and to any that we do in fact regret the inconvenience which the population has suffered, not only the inconvenience, but in many cases, the actual financial loss. I would like the consumers to know that the Ministry is concerned and very conscious of the difficulties which all of us have experienced during this particular trying time and I hope that later on, when we have rehabilitated the G.E.C. and when we have our hydro power, we would be able in a very tangible way to make certain amends to the consuming population of electricity for the forbearance which it has shown during this trying period.

With regards to the Commissions, the amounts which one sees here are the results of budgets prepared for the first time by the Commissions themselves and they have not been changed, so that the Commissions have arrived at amounts which they feel in the first year of their operation they can adequately handle.

The breakdown of the total as we see it here for the Mining Commission shows approximately \$2.5 million in personal emoluments alone and \$1.3 million for current expenditure. Now, however, this does not reflect the total picture because you must remember that we are also engaged in joint operations with some of the companies like the uranium company. Cogama, and the oil company, where we have sent some of our own geologists to ensure that we know what is going on.

As regards the Forestry Commission, the figure is for total expenditure, capital estimates \$674,000, I am giving you very rough figures, and the current, \$1.3 million. Here again we have been beneficiaries of a CIDA loan and that is not, of course, reflected in this because that is an on-going loan where the money has been used for rehabilitation of some of the sawmills and for buying logging equipment, etc.

Well, I have given you in general figures. What has happened is that this has only been put here on this occasion it will never appear here again. I can go into the whole list of miscellaneous expenses and so on, but that would burden the house. [Interruption] You're talking of the Forestry Commission? There is Specific Finance. What I have told you is for the budget, which is for the Forestry Commission itself and does not include the input from the Central Government.

If I may turn to the subhead 10, Purchase of Equipment (Power), actually, I believe that this is a misnomer. That \$4,000 is for an overhead tank at the Ministry and for a pump. I suppose one could use that and call it power, but that is really what it is for, for the Ministry in Georgetown.

[Cde. Jack continues]

8.10 pm

Subhead 9, Upper Demerara Forestry Road Project. Let me explain. The sum of \$250,000 is exactly for what it says, that is the amount of money that we borrowed from C.D.B. One runs from the junction of Wismar/Rockstone to the Forestry Site, that is, to the beginning of the site at Mabura Hill, a distance of some 75 to 77 miles. However, one has to continue that road now inside of the compound and that was not provided for in the C.D.B loan which was a loan lent to build from Rockstone to the site. We looked at the projection which originally would have been a shorter route going straight through the forestry compound. It was felt that as this road is likely to become a thoroughfare between Georgetown and Brazil in time to come, it was not the wisest thing to have it going right through the forestry complex. Instead of that, it was therefore decided that the road should by – pass the complex and go a little around it. It would still reach the complex but it would go around so that you would not have the traffic going through the complex.

As a result of that, the road is somewhat longer than it would have been had we gone smack through the complex. We are not going to have the road run side of the sawmill. It will by-pass it and then link up at Lethem. You use that same road coming back for Wismar/Rockstone and it will by-pass it somewhere outside the forestry compound.

Subhead 17, OLADE is the Organisation of Latin America Energy Consuming and Exporting Countries. It was established in 1972 and Guyana was a founder member of that. For a number of years meetings were held by OLADE but nothing seemed to be getting off the ground. Eventually in 1978 Guyana withdrew from OLADE but in 1979, despite the fact that we withdrew, we were invited to a meeting in Costa Rica in which OLADE seems to have taken on a new life and imbued with a sense of urgency due to the energy situation. A number of plans were being pursued with assistance for members of OLADE to develop alternative energy sources. Guyana has been offered assistance to the tune of \$147,000 for a bio- gas project. We have sent two officers, one to Ecuador and one to Guatemala to look at the bio-gas project and to get a certain degree of training. So we are getting benefit out of the association with OLADE. As a result we decided to rejoin OLADE and this provision is put aside for the contribution to that organisation – the sum of \$130,000.

It is true that last year, as I said, the Hydro Power Division did not do much work but this money is put here to assist in the feasibility studies which will be done for the Eclipse Falls and the Wamakaruru Falls in the Rupununi District.

Subhead 25, Capital Contribution to Upper Mazaruni Development Authority. We have been carrying on a holding operation up to now but we expect that later in the year we will reactivate the project after certain decisions have been made at governmental level.

With regard to the flooding of the area, the Ministry and the Commissioner of

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8.10 -8.20 pm.

Geological Surveys and Mines have instructions from me to prepare a comprehensive plan both for the quickest exploitation of the minerals and also to do a survey of the total mineral potential which could be exploited even after the area is flooded because modern technology would allow for the mining of that area after the flooding and that mining would be greatly facilitated if before the flooding a complete survey has been done. The Commission has instructions to be proceeding with this as a matter of urgency.

With regard to forestry, however, it is not as simple as it may sound to just cut the forest down. You need not only to cut the forest but you need to transport it and up to now the road that we have built goes up to Puruni. Up to Puruni is usable. From Puruni up to Sand Landing there will be the need to do a lot more work before you could run lorries in a regular manner up and down. Until you have done that, cutting the wood there would not assist you. However, at the seminar which we held in Guyana, I think two years ago, on the environment, papers were produced which showed that you do not lose much if you do not cut down the forest in time since the leaching of the tree, that takes place while it stands in the lake that is formed, improves the wood particularly if you want to use it for coal. Therefore, it is not a total loss. With the price of coal being what it is now, it seems that we will be able to utilise that forestry product for our benefit in any case. I am told that in Suriname, they have been able to do some of that.

Lastly, we come to the question of resettlement. With regard to resettlement, we established a Resettlement Committee conscious of the need to do something positive with regard to resettling of persons of that area. On that Committee we invited and placed upon that Commission representatives of the various Churches which serve the area. They are the Seventh Day Adventists Church, the Anglican Church, the Pilgrim Holiness and Halleluiah Church which is the Amerindian Church which was incorporated. All of these Churches have representatives which sit on the Resettlement Committee.

Apart from that, we have medical practitioners. I think Dr. Mootoo is one. We had persons like Cde. Denis Williams and sociological persons. We had a comprehensive, a broad – based, settlement group. Apart from that, we invited the Amerindian communities themselves to elect representatives apart from all of these people. If my memory serves me right, there have been two or three representatives.

That Resettlement Committee was dormant during 1979. It was dormant during 1979 because during 1979 we were not in a position to proceed, as we are now, with the high acceleration of the hydro electric scheme. I would like to take this opportunity of making it absolutely clear that the concern of people who live in the region, particularly the Amerindians, will be carefully considered and that shall make every effort to ensure that if they move from this area they will have an area or areas comparable, or better than, the areas they now occupy and that the Government will give adequate assistance to ensure that they are established in a proper modern settlement with all of the facilities which are necessary. They have an opportunity of making an input into this.

[Cde. H. Jack continues]

8.20 p.m.

I would like to take this opportunity of refuting a scurrilous slander that was peddled in some foreign papers to the effect that the Government had told the Amerindians that they would have to find some place else to go. What in fact the Government did, and I am speaking from personal knowledge since I was the person who spoke to them, what in fact we did say was that, if it became necessary for them to leave, we would be glad of their assistance in identifying where they would like to go. In other words, we do not intend willy –nilly to find a place and say you have to go there. We would hope that as a result of discussions with the Amerindians we would arrive at a situation in which they would like to go to a particular place. In these circumstances we invited them also to keep their eyes out and to give us the benefit of their thought if they wanted to go to any particular place. That remains the Government's position up to date. Thank you very much.

Division XIX – Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources - \$8,412,649 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Page 13.

HEAD 2- SUPREME COURT OF JUDICATURE

Question proposed that the sum of \$1,222,306 for Head 2, Supreme Court of Judicature, stand part of the Estimates.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Cde. Chairman, under item (4) Puisne Judge, there is provision for eleven but I understand we have only ten judges. There is a vacancy. If I may-

The Chairman: Statutory.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: I cannot ask if the vacancy is filled either? If a vacancy exists in the Judicature, I cannot ask that? I am not opposing the vote I am asking when the vacancy will be filled. The second question, Cde. Chairman... Cde. Chairman, comes under item (10). Would the Cde. Attorney General and Minister of Justice let us know whether the office of Registrar has been filled, or even if a person is acting in this office, whether the position of Deputy has anyone functioning? I need not attempt to persuade you nor the Minister concerned of the importance of both offices. Cde. Chairman, what must be taken into account is that so far as the Chancellor is concerned, I think his Secretary ought to be a qualified lawyer, an Attorney-at -Law, and similarly I think the Deputy Registrar is held to be along that same line. But the person functioning as a Clerk to the Chancellor is not an Attorney-at-Law and similarly one would expect that within the Supreme Court Registry, someone can be found with the necessary experience , at least, to act as Deputy Registrar. You know too, sir, there are many, many people who have been servicing with tremendous experience and many people who served for a number of years here –

The Chairman: Where are we now, which item?

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Item (12). My information is that there is no one and I am saying that someone can be found and must be found and must be found and be appointed from within the Registry as quickly as possible. Simple question. I wonder if you can finish with this first so I can get the answer.

Mr. M. F. Singh: Well, you may want to go ahead, sir. I have quite a few questions. First of all, I would like to ask a general question in respect of vacancies. I do know something about this Department because for eight years I was a member of the combined Deeds and Supreme Court Registry and I am saying that this is a very important Department. It is the heart of the administration of justice, and it is very relevant that we know what vacancies are there existing in this department and that we be told what steps are being taken to fill those vacancies. I think the Deputy Registrar is acting up and I am not aware of anybody acting as Deputy Registrar. I would reiterate that it is necessary for it to be filled, as the last speaker said.

In respect of subhead 1, items (24), (25) and (26), here again it is apparent that there must be vacancies in the Court Reporting Section of this Head. We have read in the papers where there have been hold-ups in the courts as a result of the shortage of Court Reporters, and I would like to know –[Interruption.] Why don't you shut up and listen? Always a damned nuisance, can't even get up and talk and ask a question. If you can't ask a question, shut up.

The Chairman: Mr. Singh, don't get upset.

Mr. M.F. Singh: Why can't he be quiet and let somebody who wants to ask a sensible question do it?

The Chairman: Don't listen to him.

Mr. M. F. Singh: Tell him to shut up. We do not even hear him talk anything at all and he wants to heckle. There are vacancies for Court Reporters and the figure seems to suggest there is something wrong in respect of subhead 1 item (24), Chief Court Reporter. The sum being asked for this year is \$11,640. I have no quarrel with that but the revised estimate for 1979 has against it \$29,888. There must be some mistake there. We could not have paid the Chief Court Reporter last year \$29,888. I think perhaps the mistake is that that \$29,888 should go right down to where \$2,233 is. Maybe that would make some more sense there because the amount requested for 5 Court Reporters is \$27,505 and the revised amount for 1979 seems to be only \$2,233. We would like to know what are the vacancies and let us have a correction of these figures.

[Mr. M. F. Singh continues]

8.30 p.m.

Turning to page 14, item (43), Duty Allowance to Officer in Charge of Sub – Registry, New Amsterdam, which provides a sum of \$360; I am not sure whether the paper work to administer this sum of \$360 is not more than the \$360. We need to look at this carefully and do something about it, either revising it or sending up the man's salary and making it realistic. What is the work for this duty allowance to the Officer in charge. He has to make out paysheets, paysheets for every month for \$30. He has to make out estimates for \$30 a month. You have to send in the figures – for \$30 a month; \$30 a month is absolutely nothing. This figure has been there since 1951. I personally know that since 1951 this figure of \$360 has been there. How long before that it was there I do not know.

Subhead 9, Law Library. I am perturbed over the fact that the legend says this was overprovided in 1979, when I consider how very important to the legal system and legal practitioners this Law Library is. Let us realise that there are constraints for the private legal practitioner to bring down his own personal books because of the balance of payments and foreign exchange position. Therefore, for the legal system to function properly one would need to know and to be assured that the books are always available.

The sum voted in 1979 was \$10,000. It may be that orders have been placed and books have not arrived or invoices have not arrived to be paid. I would hope that this is the position but apparently that is not the position. Apparently only \$2,110 was actually spent. I would have thought that the \$80,000 saved in 1979 was to be added to \$10,000 for this year because the cost of everything has gone up, including the cost of books and I am grieved to see that we are cutting down on the cost of law books for our law library - \$10,000 plus \$8,000 would have been \$18,000. I do make a personal appeal to the hon. Minister to look into that.

In respect of subhead 21, Stationery, and subhead 22, Printing and Binding, I am really very happy to see that this is now under the direct control of the Supreme Court of Judicature. In the past I think the Ministry of Works controlled this subhead. It says in the legend "Formally provided for under Head 35, Subhead 17". Now this Ministry has its own subheads for Stationery and for Printing and Binding.

May I say that I know the situation as regards printing and binding. In the Registry it is critical. Volumes need to be bound. Volumes need to be re-printed; volumes to be repaired. I have raised this point with the hon. Minister's predecessor and he promised to look into it. Work was started but I am not sure what is the position and I would like to ask the hon. Minister to pay some attention to it. If these votes are not enough, I would be very happy to support supplementary provision so that the work can be brought up to date in this particular division.

The Attorney General and Minister of Justice (Cde. Shahabuddeen) : Cde. Chairman, the position about the Registrar is that since 7th May 1979 the Deputy has been acting up in the top position. There is regrettably, no one within the department who has the required legal qualification to act or to be appointed to the post of Deputy. It is true

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that, as the hon. Member Reepu Daman Persaud pointed out with his usual incisiveness, in the case of the post of the Assistant Registrar there is someone who is acting in that post although he does not have the required legal qualification. There is such a thing as the flow of events and the tide and time.

What happened here was this. Since 1979, a non-legal man has in fact been acting in the post of Assistant Registrar. We have not been able to take the plunge and to decide that that is the proper procedure to apply to the post of Deputy Registrar, regard being had to the high legal professional content of work which devolves on the holder of that post, Cde. Chairman, as you would very well know and appreciate.

As to the vacancies, there are regrettably vacancies indeed. All I can say is that every effort is being made to fill them as speedily as possible. As to the Chief Court Reporter the position is that this officer is on leave. I do not believe there is any intent to raise any dust over this question and I appreciate the way in which the remarks were made. I would like to say that, although this officer is on leave, the officer is in fact continuing to produce. There have been some arrears of work and the officer has been endeavouring to bring these up to date.

We have, I believe, a complement of eight posts. There are bodies in four of them. There are four vacancies but I would like to say that we also have three apprentice reporters who have been around this honourable Chamber from time to time pursuant to an apprenticeship training scheme which was instituted, so that really we have been making some progress in this very vexed area. I would like to add too that there is also a training scheme which comprises 23 trainees who have been undergoing training at the G.T.I. Since September last year. It is an 18 months' course and some time early next year we hope to be able to see the happy result of this endeavour. No doubt some will be coming here but we hope also to have some of them in the courts. Regarding the little item of \$360 which I am advised by my hon. and learned friend Mr. Fielden Singh has been on record here since as far back as 1951, I myself, was not aware of the history. I think this is a matter which could bear examination and I would be happy to look into it.

About the Law Library, yes it is true that we have not been able to enhance the figure of \$7,000 but I would like to confirm the explanation sensed by hon. and learned Friend about the reason for the reduction from \$10,000 to \$2,110 in respect of the year 1979. As he so rightly suspected, that is attributable to the fact that orders were placed, but the invoices came in late. I am impressed by his mathematics and his view that really what should have happened was that we should have added the deficit from the old vote to the new figure. But we all know that that is not how the thing works.

I was very pleased to hear words of appreciation from my hon. and learned Friend about the item for printing and binding. Yes, we have made progress there. We have brought this figure over from Works. I am glad to be able to report that progress is in fact being made. Books are being bound.

As this is the first occasion on which I am speaking since the Budget was presented on Tuesday 8th, I would like to conclude my reply to my hon. and learned Friend Mr. Feilden Singh by making a very brief reference to an apology which he

tendered to me on that occasion. I do so for the very, very limited purpose of accepting the apology. It was elegant, graceful and decent statement by a man courageous enough to amend a previous error, sufficiently cultured and civilised to distinguish between personalities and issues and to appreciate that we can be opponents without being enemies. I do appreciate the gesture.

8.40 p.m.

Head 2 Supreme Court of Judicature - \$1,222,306 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

ADJOURNMENT

The Chairman: Comrades and hon. Members, should we take the adjournment or should we proceed? [Interruption.]

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Do we have a resolution?

The Chairman: Yes, I am glad you all know about the resolution and when I stick to the resolution there is something else. [Interruption.]

Assembly resumed.

Cde. Ramsaroop: Cde. Speaker, I beg to move the Adjournment of this House to tomorrow, 18th April, 1981 at 2 p.m.

Adjourned accordingly at 8.44 p.m.