

THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
OFFICIAL REPORTS

[Volume 8]

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

21st Sitting 2 p.m. Monday, 28th September, 1981

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (82)

Speaker (1)

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

Speaker of the National Assembly

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

Prime Minister (1)

Cde. Dr. P.A. Reid, O.E., M.P., - (Absent)
Prime Minister

Other Vice-Presidents (4)

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

Cde. H.D. Hoyte, S.C., M.P., - (Absent)
Vice-President, Economic Planning and Finance

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

Cde. B. Ramsaroop, M.P., - (Absent)
Vice-President, Parliamentary Affairs and Party/State Relations

Senior Ministers (10)

Cde. R. Chandisingh, M.P., - (Absent – on leave)
Minister of Higher Education

Cde. O.E. Clarke, M.P., - (Absent- on leave)
Ministry of Regional Development

Cde. R.H.O. Corbin, M.P.,
- Minister of National Development

* Cde. F. E. Hope, M.P., - (Absent)
- Minister of Trade and Consumer Protection

* Cde. H.O. Jack, M.P.,
- Minister of Energy and Mines

* Cde. Dr. M. Shahabuddeen, O.R., S.C., M.P., - (Absent)
- Attorney General and Minister of Justice

* Non-elected Member

- * Cde. R.E. Jackson, M.P., – (Absent- on leave)
- Minister of Foreign Affairs
- * Cde. J.A. Tyndall, A.A., M.P., – (Absent- on leave)
- Minister of Agriculture
- * Cde. S.A. Moore, M.P.,
- Minister of Home Affairs
- * Cde. J.R. Thomas, M.P., – (Absent)
- Minister of Education

Ministers (13)

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

* Cde. R.A. Van West-Charles, M.P., -(Absent)
Minister, Health, in the Ministry of Public Welfare

Ministers of State (3)

Cde. M. Corrica, M.P., - (Absent – on leave)
Minister of State for Culture, in the
Ministry of Education, Social Development
and Culture

Cde. R.C. Fredericks, A.A., M.P.,
Minister of State for Youth and Sports, in the
Ministry of National Development

* Cde. C.E. Wright, M.P.,
Minister of State for Construction, in the
Ministry of Works and Transport

Parliamentary Secretaries (3)

Cde. A.W. Bend-Kirton-Holder, M.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary, Women’s Affairs and
Housing

Cde. P.A. Rayman, M.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister

* Cde. E.M. Bynoe, M.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister

Other Members (23)

Cde. D.A.N. Ainsworth, M.P.

Cde. M. Ally, M.P.

Cde. M. Armogan, M.P.

Cde. B. Beniprashad, M.P.

Cde. B. Bhaggan, M.P. -(Absent- on leave)

Cde. J.B. Calderia, M.P.

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

Cde. E.B. Davidson, M.P. -(Absent)

Cde. H. Doobay, M.P.

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

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

Cde. P. Fredericks, M.P.

Cde. E.F. Gilbert, M.P. - (Absent)

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

Cde. A. McRae, M.P.

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

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

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

* Non-elected Member

Cde. H.L.B. Singh, M.P.
Cde. S.H. Sukhu, M.S., M.P
Cde. B. Tiwari, M.P.
Cde. C. Vandenburg, M.P.
Cde. H.B. Walcott- Nascimento, J.P., M.P,
Government Chief Whip

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

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

Members from the Regional Democratic Councils (10)

Cde. K.N. Jones, M.P. (Region No. 1- Barima/Waini)
Cde. K.V. Jairam, M.P. (Region No. 2- Pomeroon/Supenaam) - (Absent- on leave)
Cde. C.A. Singh, M.P. (Region No.3- Essequibo Islands/West Demerara)
Cde. W. Bipat, M.P. (Region No. 4- Demerara/Mahaica)
Cde. H.I. London, M.S., M.P. (Region No. 5- Mahaica/ Berbice) - (Absent)
Cde. I. Chowritmootoo, M.P. (Region No. 6- East Berbice/Corentyne)
Cde. N.R. Charles, MP. (Region No. 7- Cuyuni/ Mazaruni) - (Absent)
Cde. D. Abraham, M.P. (Region No.8 – Potaro/Siparuni) - (Absent)
Cde. A. Dorrick, M.P (Region No.9- Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo) -(Absent)
Cde. D. Hinds, M.P. (Region No. 10- Upper Demerara/ Berbice)

Members of the Minority (12)

People's Progressive Party (10)

Minority Leader (1)

Cde. Dr. C. Jagan, M.P, - (Absent - on leave)
Minority Leader

Deputy Speaker (1)

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

Other Members (8)

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

(ii) United Force (2)

Mr. M.F. Singh, J.P., M.P. - (Absent – on leave)
Mr. M.A. Abraham, M.P. - (Absent)

Officers

Clerk of The National Assembly – Cde. F.A. Narain, A.A.

Special Assistant to the Clerk of the National Assembly- Cde. A. Knight

Prayers

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKERCONGRATULATIONS TO THE PRIME MINISTER

The Speaker: Comrades, following the departure yesterday from Guyana by the President for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Conference in Australia, I have been advised that the Prime Minister has been authorised to perform the functions of the office of the President during the absence of the President. I am sure that Members of the Assembly would wish to join with me in extending congratulations and best wishes to Cde. Reid. [Applause.]

Leave to Members

The Speaker: Leave has been granted to Cdes. Chandisingh, Clarke, Tyndall, Johnson, Corrica and Jairam for to-day's sitting; to Cde. Jackson to 9th October; to Cde. Bhaggan from 15th September to 31st December, 1981; to Cde. Cheddi Jagan for five weeks from 2nd September; and to hon. Member Mr. Singh for today's sitting.

Death of Joseph Lyttleton Wills

The Speaker: Comrades, we have all heard of the recent death of Joseph Lyttleton Wills. Cde. Wills was himself nearly fifty years ago a member of this country's Legislature. He was elected representative for the Demerara River Constituency. He made and subscribed an oath as a Member of the Legislative Council on 28th June, 1934, and served until the last sitting of that council on 24th July, 1935, that is, before the dissolution of the Legislature prior to elections for the new Legislature.

During the period that Cde. Wills served in the Legislative Council, which was just over a year, fifty sittings of the Legislative Council were held. He attended most of these and made many contributions. He moved Motions, he presented petitions and he spoke on several matters, not only for his constituency but for Guyana as a whole. He was in favour of Guyanisation. He made contributions concerning agriculture, the medical service, the postal service, the transport service, local government matters. His contributions are in our records and form part of our history.

I am sure that Members of this National Assembly would wish to note his passing. I therefore on behalf of Members of the National Assembly record our regret at his death and extend our sympathy to his sorrowing relatives.

Death of Cde. Dalchand's Father-in-Law

The Speaker: I also wish on behalf of the Members of the Assembly and myself to extend our deep sympathy to Cde. Dalchand on the recent loss of his father-in-law.

Presentation of Papers and Reports

The following papers were laid:

- (1) (a) Annual Reports and Audited Accounts of the Guyana National Insurance Scheme for the year ended 31st December, 1978;
- (b) National Insurance and Social Security (Benefit) (Amendment) Regulations 1981 (No.19), made under sections 14, 20, 21, 39 and 51 of the National Insurance and Social Security Act, Chapter 36:01, on 4th August, 1981, and published in the Gazette on 8th August, 1981;
- (c) National Insurance and Social Security (Sickness Benefit Medical Care) Regulations 1981 (No. 20), made under sections 19, 20, 21, 24 and 51 of the National Insurance and Social Security Act, Chapter 36:01, on 4th August, 1981, and published in the Gazette on 8th, August, 1981;
- (d) Statement of Guarantees given by the Minister of Finance under section 3 of the Guarantee of Loans (Public Corporations and Companies) Act, Chapter 77:01, for the quarters ended 31st March, 1980, 30th June, 1980, 30th September, 1980 and 31st December, 1980;
- (e) Statement of Guarantees given by the Minister of Finance under section 3 of the Guarantee of Loans (Public Corporations and Companies) Act, Chapter 77:01, which remained unexpired for the period ended 31st December, 1980;
- (f) Financial (Amendment) Regulations 1981 (No. 18) made under section 5 of the Financial Administration and Audit Act, Chapter 73:01, on 7th July, 1981, and published in the Gazette on 18th July, 1981.

[By Minister, Finance, on behalf of the Vice-President, Economic Planning and Finance.]

- (2) (a) State Paper on Ratification of International Labour Convention and Implementation of International Labour Recommendation adopted at the 66th Session of the International Labour Conference held in Geneva from 4th to 25th June, 1980. (State Paper No. 2/1981)

- (b) State Paper on Ratification of International Labour Convention and Implementation of International Labour Recommendation adopted at the 65th Session of the International Labour Conference held in Geneva from 6th to 27th June, 1979.
(State Paper No. 3/1981)
[Vice-President, Public Welfare]

- (3) Annual Report of the Guyana Prison Service for the year 1976.
[Minister of Home Affairs]

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

The following Bills were introduced and read the First time:

- (i) National Insurance Board (Transfer of Supervision and Control)
Bill 1981 – Bill No. 9/1981;
- (ii) Premium Bonds Bill 1981 – Bill No. 10/1981.

[Minister, Finance, on behalf of Vice-President, Economic Planning and Finance]

Public Business

BILL – SECOND READING

RENT CONTROL ENACTMENTS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1981

The Vice-President, Public Welfare (Cde. Green): Cde. Speaker, I beg to move that the Rent Control Enactments (Amendment) Bill, 1981 be now read a Second time.

This Bill has come about after some thought by Government against the background of a number of social and economic factors which face Guyana and, indeed, many parts of the developed and developing world. As has been noted in this Honourable House before, throughout the world there is a dismal story of the rising cost of living, rising unemployment, followed with that kind of problem you have in both East and West, North and South, decreasing social benefits.

One of the benefits which we see decreasing in many parts of the world is the provision of housing for people. We have noted the pressure for housing in this country. From the time the People's National Congress took office, we identified the provision of adequate housing as a priority and an important part of our effort to attack our legacy of poverty from our colonial past. Reports from the developed world are not very encouraging. I understand in Britain the housing situation is worsening; the unemployment

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situation is worsening. There will be three million unemployed to content with towards the end of this year by our former masters.

[Cde. Green continues]

In the USSR there is also the problem of housing. They are building all kinds of multi-storey buildings to house their people. Against the background in agriculture where, for example, they have projected 255 million tons of grain for this year, the latest information is that they only produce 180.9 million tons of grain.

One sees problems all over the world. We have not been able to escape these problems that face the world, but have tried to cushion on blows of rising prices – oil prices - unfair balance of trade arrangements. We have tried to cushion this blow for the working man, the wage earner, and even the man without a job, for these are the people very often in a society such as ours, who are first hit with the kind of situation to which I referred earlier. Part of our tactics was to hold rents for one year in 1974 but because of the series of conditions that existed, we held that until the end of last year, 1980.

However, Cde. Speaker, we need to face reality. The Rent Control Special Provisions Act Chapter 36:25 expired on the 31st December, 1980. It was enforced since 1974 January. This legislation was passed to relieve the ordinary man, the tenant, from paying increase rentals on the grounds of improvements to the premises by the land-lord and rates and taxes or in the case of rice land holdings to prevent increase in rental based on or the increase of rates improvements which may have been done or alleged to have been done. We are aware that tenants particularly in urban centres benefited by not having to pay these increases; it helped to cushion the problem that the working man faced in our society. However, Cde. Speaker, the land – lords or property owners on the other hand, over the past few years, have become extremely dis-satisfied over the prolongation of what we call the common parlance, the rent freeze, and in many instances they refuse to carry out repairs on the premises because they could not get increases as a result of these repairs. The outcome was that the very people we sought to assist were suffering from poor facilities and deteriorating conditions and, therefore, a poorer quality of accommodation.

The fact of the matter is that building materials have gone up and we, therefore, need to reflect and look at these circumstances realistically. Taxes were also rising, and these factors did not encourage land lords to maintain the premises at a decent level for people to live in, and we felt therefore, that we need to examine, whether the provisions of the Act or to which I just referred, should be extended.

In doing so, Cde. Speaker, we are not oblivious of the welfare of the tenants because if the provision was left naked as was suggested by some people, it would permit the land-lord to pass on to the tenants, difference in rates and taxes between the year 1974, to the current period. However, the provision we have put before this honourable House, is that the land lord can only claim increase for improvements made from the 1st of January, 1981, and that the provision now is clearly that the tenant only pays difference of the increases in rates and taxes as it affects land lord from the end 1980.

Cde. Speaker, perhaps it is important for me to make this point because some members of this House and sections of the press and community hasten with a strange speed of vulgarity to misrepresent any act or action by this Government intended to improve conditions and make things better for people. I perhaps need to address this House to statements in a certain political paper, the 27th September, 1981, that the Bill which I now propose will not prevent the jacking-up of, and that is the words they use, of rents and

that they allege they were protests by tenants. Cde. Speaker, whether these protests took place I am not sure. As interested parties we have cleared the way to avoid the arbitrary jacking-up of rents. Cde. Speaker, if that statement was intended to convey the impression that tenants shall now be at the mercy of the land-lord it is most malicious and yet another attempt to create confusion and to mislead the public.

I would hope in future, Cde. Speaker, if there are honourable intentions or interest by such persons, that they should check the facts properly. The law is that all premises have to be assessed whatever the rent charged. And this has recently been introduced. Previously, there was a limitation of \$250 and if a person is assessed at a rental beyond \$250, he then was outside the ambit of the legislation and, therefore, could not be protected by the law. But with the increase in price on everything this sum can no longer be considered as it was at one time, an area of little concern because it concerned the “big ones” so to speak. Many ordinary people, public servants, middle income people, are in fact not paying that kind of rental i.e. \$250:-; they are paying much more. We have, therefore, removed that limitation by the Miscellaneous Enactment (Amendment) Act 81:6. The tenants, therefore, have their rights under the law extended to all premises, and no unfair advantage can be taken against them.

But, Cde. Speaker, I am sure that even though this enactment is intended to assist, it will only be a small step in the general direction to assist tenants and to relieving the general housing problem we have in our society.

And perhaps it is opportune for me to inform this honourable House, very briefly, of some of the steps we have taken or propose to take, for example, in the main urban centre Georgetown where the pressure is greatest. We have a few months ago, sent letters to all owners of land and property in Georgetown where there are empty lots, seeking to cushion and inviting them to call on the chief executive officer of the Central Housing and Planning Authority, to discuss their difficulties in not building.

[Cde. Green continues]

This letter is the first step and based on the kind of response we get we will consider what further action to take in relations to those empty lots, own sometimes by people who are speculators, by people who have left the country and keep the land they are hoping to make a killing at some time in the near future, people who for one reason or another have refused to invest or improve their property. Recently, Cde. Chairman, we have had a meeting with all of the insurance companies and the Trade Union Organisations, Credit Societies, who have money to lend, by way of mortgage, to the people interested in building. There are funds available for housing purposes at all of the traditional lending institutions. In fact, I can make available to Members of this House a booklet which I prepared recently, which is intended to help landlords and persons seeking housing accommodations, to guide them and to tell them where to go and what they should do. But even in areas outside of the city where there exists to infrastructure efforts are now being made to put in this kind of infrastructure. We are concentrating, therefore, in areas where there already exists infrastructure. Georgetown is one area and we may have to come back to this House to persuade persons to make use of the infrastructure we have. Cde. Speaker, if you were to walk around Georgetown, and I know you drive, you will be amazed and alarmed at the number of empty lots that are held by people who can afford to build and who will have no difficulty getting mortgages to build, or loans to build. We need to persuade those people that they must stop holding on to land hoping that the value will go up in the next few years.

Cde. Speaker, this Bill, therefore, has come at this time in an effort to encourage both tenants and landlords to view the problem of housing seriously, and we hope at the next stage to encourage people to help the State in its general housing drive. Cde. Speaker, I commend this Bill to the House.

The Speaker: The question is that the Bill be read a second time.

Cde. Collymore: Cde. Speaker, I listened very attentively to the Minister piloting the Bill. This type of debate has taken place in this House on several occasions, but on this occasion we note it has a new twist to it. It is also very enlightening to hear the Vice-President saying that there is a housing crisis in the Third World and also in this country, though he did not use those very words. He also mentioned that the crisis exists in developed countries and he singled out two countries – United Kingdom and the Soviet Union. But we would like to say at this point that while there is deteriorating crisis in England, the housing crisis has been licked in the Soviet Union and I am sure the Vice-President knows this.

Now on the several occasions I have had the honour to speak in this House I made mention that the housing situation cannot be taken in isolation. It has to be taken in the general context and that which is also a part of the economic development of the country. I made this very clear when the former Vice-President, or in fact when the Minister's colleague was in charge of housing. That is Cde. Steve Naraine. Now they both are Vice-Presidents and we have got the same situation – a deterioration state of houses, high rents, and so far we note that the Vice-President made reference to the rent freeze. Everybody knows we had a rent freeze and everybody knew that at the beginning of this year the rent freeze was off. He himself made a report in the Chronicle and when it was enlarged and developed he made certain objections also in this very House saying he did not say that and so on. He says the same thing. He has the tendency to misrepresent and not to understand what is going on in the Press. Now, Cde. Speaker, he made mention of the period 1974 to 1980 and he said the urban workers were not so hard hit where these are concerned. I would like to disprove that. In fact many landlords and I have said it in this House over and over, have been flouting the Rent Restriction Act and flouting the Rent Control Act. They have been doing that. There is so much pressure. The Minister used the word 'pressure' for housing. There is intense competition and if people want somewhere to live they will pay the high rents. According to the Rent Restriction Act every landlord is supposed to post up in the residence what is the level of the rent and when it is not being assessed that is not being done, so that the incoming tenant does not know what was the previous rent and they are at the mercy of the landlord. I am not saying all of them are unscrupulous, though substantial portions are.

Cde. Speaker, the Minister or Vice-President has to be brought into awareness that many workers in the city have been ruthlessly exploited from 1974 to 1980 and now we note the Bill before this honourable House is going to throw open the floodgates for 1981. Now, these persons, if they want to raise the rents they are going to make some alterations or what they have to do, then they are going to apply to apply to the Magistrate for the rent to go up. Note, Cde. Minister, that this is going to happen. Rents are going to increase. I challenge the Minister to say that rents are not going to increase in 1981. Let him get up and say that. Rents are going to go up. We also made a case for the landlord saying that building materials have risen. We know all of that. Now, rents have to be seen in the context of higher and rising cost of living. He made the same point and I agree with him in saying these things. The workers are faced with higher prices, higher taxes, higher transport services, higher electricity bills. Frozen wages ... rents are supposed to be an integral part of cost of living and if rents are going to be faced with the upward pressure you must have the necessary wherewithals to pay the rent. Here we have a rent freeze. Let the Vice-President for Public Welfare and he has two strategic portfolios, he has Labour and he has Housing, let him say when increased wages are going to be paid and if any has been paid as

yet to offset all these entire things which are here and which he has said from his speech.

Cde. Speaker, I am sure you are aware that our friends on the opposite side have proposed to give the workers 7 per cent and 10 per cent on the previous wage. That is 80 cents on \$11.55 and also \$1.15 on the same \$11.55. It comes up to \$12.32 per day and \$12.78. We are saying, on this side, this is intolerable and this kind of wage cannot suffice to pay increase rents which are going to accrue.

(Cde. Collymore continues)

Now we are putting out some pointers to the Government. We are asking the Government to help the low income people. He has made a case saying that some can afford to build and they are not building, they are speculating. He is right. There are some speculators and some sharks and Shylocks. They are just holding the land, they are not doing anything, they are just waiting for the price to go up. But what is going to happen to the man at the bottom who has nothing, the man who cannot even afford to pay his light bill. We are asking the Vice-President if he cannot consider certain measures to ease the pressure on the low income sector, like giving a rebate to the tenants. Let us say the rents have to go up because of the increased costs of building materials etc., could the Vice-President not work out machinery whereby the State will recompense the tenants for increased rents? I made this suggestion already and I make it again.

If the Government is serious about its concern to low income groups the Government must do something about them. Many workers cannot afford mortgages. I am also asking the Vice-President for Public Welfare to say if he does not think the Government will be able to do much if it builds more low income flats. The Government has not been doing that. At least we do not see it in the Estimates. We are throwing out these two pointers to the Vice-President to have a rebate to the tenants and to build low income flats.

We would also like to inform the Minister of certain things. He made mention that the Government is concerned not only with workers but with the unemployed. We support that, you must be concern with the unemployed. We note also that there are going to be many retrenchments from various state organisations and this is also of serious concern to us. If workers with jobs cannot afford to pay their rents, what about workers who are thrown out of jobs, who have no job security? At this point in time there is hardly anybody, except the big ones, who make decisions, who has job security, people who can say "my job is secured". The majority of people today do not know if they are going to be kicked out tomorrow morning or not. Some people wake up in the morning and look in the Chronicle and see a notice that they are fired. If the workers cannot pay the rent they are going to default on light bill because the light bill and rent take up a huge part of their income. If they are faced with the alternative of either paying the rent or light bill or eating, they are going to buy food because they have to live. They have to buy clothes because they cannot walk naked. These are the reasons why we are asking the Minister to show some tangible concern – not only making propaganda on opposite side – where the low income bracket is concerned.

To give you some evidence of the paucity of support for the low income group, the Minister made reference to the various banks and real estate intuitions, insurance companies and so forth for mortgages. I made the point before that not every worker can afford a mortgage. This is where we come back to the part that the state must go and low income housing.

What the state has been doing over the past few years? We need not go back further. For 1980, the state approved a housing budget of \$8.3 million. That was .8 per cent of the total budget over \$1 billion and the state sent only \$5.3 million. In other words, the state cut that vote by \$3 million, down to 0.5 per cent. This is the same state the Vice-President was making so much about just now. What about this year? For 1981, the state vote \$8.9 million and the revised budget in June this year cut it further to \$7.4 million. The amount of \$1.5million has been scratched off. We do not know what is going to happen for the rest of the year, but we feel sure that even less than this is going to be spent. These sums are insignificant but they are made even less significant when we determine what proportion goes to the actual construction of housing or development. Out of the \$5.3 million which was spent in 1980, \$2.1 million went on

administrative costs, that is 65.6 per cent of it and the rest went up development costs. For this year we have 49 per cent going on development costs and 51 per cent going on administrative costs. We are saying that the Government must do much more than this.

The Government is therefore leaving the problem of housing the nation to the private sector. We on this side of the House are opposed to this. We feel that the Government, a party which says it is a vanguard of some sort, must take the vanguard role in housing the nation. We are throwing this out to the Vice-President, that the Government must take the vanguard role in housing this nation. His colleague there was Minister of Housing during the time of the big ... of building 65,000 houses. They only built 7,000 or less than that. Since then they have failed. Two Vice-Presidents, two Ministers of Housing have failed. Therefore, we are calling upon them not to leave the housing of the nation to private landlords who will be out to get much more than they have to get by normal means. There will be sharks. If the Governments want to stabilise the housing situation to bring down mortgage rates, to bring down rents, the Government must build houses to compete with the private landlords. That is the only way I can see it and that is the only way I am sure it is going to happen. They are not doing that, they are leaving the situation to the sharkish landlords and to the real estate Shylocks.

To come to those wealthy few who can afford to build their houses, those are the ones, like some of us in this House, on the opposite site who get a lot of perks, thousands of dollars, tax free. They are building posh houses. They can afford to pay the sharkish mortgage rates. Just to give you some information as to what is going on in the mortgage sector, I have here with me the latest Report of the Bank of Guyana. On pages 28, 29 and 30, the Bank is talking about the mortgage rates, the high flexibility of the lending institution. To quote from page 28 which deals with New Building Society. It states:

“The growth rate of the New Building Society’s resources was 14.18% in 1980, compared with 11.9% in 1979.”

This is a rate of growth which is perhaps the highest in this country for any private institution.” It continues:

“Total assets increased by G\$9.6 million, from G\$ 67.7 million in 1979 to G\$77.3 million in 1980.”

What are they doing with these increased assets?” It continues:

“The increase in resources was used partly to finance and real estate mortgage loans, which increased by G\$4.8 million or 9.5% over 1979’s total of G\$50.5 million. There was also a significant increase of G\$4.6 million in deposits with local banks – which stood at G\$7.96 million at the end of 1980.”

In other words, the Bank of Guyana is saying here that this is one of the institutions in the real estate which is making a real fortune. If the ... looked at the Report of this particular institution, it is making over \$7 million in net profit. This is the reason why workers cannot afford mortgages. The Report goes on

the deal with the Guyana Co-operative Mortgage Finance Bank, another Shylock. It is not doing as well

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as the private Shylocks. It states:

“The total assets of the Guyana Co-operative Mortgage Finance Bank fell from G\$29.8 million at the end of 1979 to G\$ 28.7million at the end of 1980.”

So it is not doing as well. It continues.

“While real estate mortgage loans increased 10.7% to G\$27.0 million in 1980, compared with a rise of 11.8% in 1979, Treasury Bills holdings which totalled G\$2.9 million in 1979 were all liquidated. Total income earned in 1980 was G\$2.64 million. Interest on loans and advances was G\$1.91 million, 73.5% of total income.”

Cde: Collymore: This shows that interest on loans and advances, particularly the mortgage, is bringing considerable income to the Mortgage Finance Bank. For some reason the Guyana State Bank merged the results of the statistics pertaining to this Co-op Bank to the to the Royal Bank of Canada Trust company. The Guyana National Co-operative bank and the Royal Bank of Canada Trust Company maintained a moderate growth rate in 1980. There was a 74.9 per cent that is \$4.6 million (Guyana) increase in 1980 against what is 37.2 per cent by 1979 and 32 per cent in 1978. Real Estate mortgage loans increased by 19.8 per cent or \$2.9 million to \$18 million.

Now, dealing with the Dependants Pension Fund. The Vice-President made mention of all these funds, so I think you will bear with me if I refer to them. The fund states at \$28.2 million at the end of 1980 to 17 per cent from 24.6 per cent at the end of 1979 and they point out here mortgages were again indulging. Mortgage loans disbursements for the year amounted to \$1.3 million, a significant increase for 1979 revenue of \$ 0.8 million.

Now they come to the Sugar Fund, the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund, and this is where we see a shameful state of affairs. The Minister has a lot of influence in the Sugar Industry. I am sure he would like to have the workers satisfied and working to their optimum, some workers cannot get houses...sugar fund total income earned compared with 3.8 million in 1979. This drop perhaps would be due to fall in production. The largest contribution to the fund was the levy to sugar export of \$2.1 million. Loans repayment for the year accounted to 16 per cent, in other words, out of the 2.5 million income to the Welfare Fund, 84 per cent is due to levy and 60 per cent to loans. Now they tell you about the disbursements of loans for 1980. The total disbursements for the year amounted to \$3.5 million and these were allocated as follows: Loans to workers- 145,300 dollars. Cde. Speaker, out of all the disbursements of the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund in 1980 of \$3.5 million, little more than .1 million, in other words to exact \$145,300 thousand went on loans. What can that do for the workers who have to build houses at high costs? The Bank of Guyana Report states that the N.B.S has a level of \$55.3 million in mortgages computed and this is the kind of fortune these people are making; the Mortgage Bank has a level of \$77 million, the G.N.C.B. Trust Company in the New Amsterdam \$18 million, the Dependants Fund \$1.3 million and we note the very sluggish rate of growth in loans from the SILWF. Cde. Speaker, we are asking the Government through the Vice-President on the opposite side to do certain things for those who are lesser able to help themselves. For instance, build more, provide more house lots and to do this the very low vote to the Ministry of Housing each year must be increase substantially. On top of that we want the government to provide cheap loans because if you provide house lots and the loans are not cheap enough workers cannot pay it. I heard that in SILWF loans given to sugar workers only amount to 30% of the actual cost of building the structure. The workers have to find 70% even though the loans are cheap. We would like these figure to realise much more because we feel that in the context of the hard situation in Guyana these statistics are too heavy on the workers. In some cases the mortgage loans from the real estate institution actually amount to one hundred per cent interest. This is a fact and nobody in this House can be able to say this because we have statistics to prove it and I need not call the names of certain companies, but these companies are indeed shylocks and sharks where giving mortgage loans are concerned. We would like the Minister to look into this to see that more house lots are given and cheaper loans are provided to all workers who need to help themselves. We would also like the Minister to regularise the squatting areas. There are lots of squatting areas in this country and these areas are a

disgrace. We hear the Minister on the opposite side saying that something is going to be done to the squatting areas. One Minister said that they are going to deal with the logies, the logies are still with us and the squatting areas are still with us and they are getting worse because sanitation conditions are non-existent in many of them. We are suggesting that the people who are squatting be put on proper basis, find house lots for them and give them loans so that they can construct their homes in a decent manner so long as they do not breach the law. One squatting area which sticks out is the squatting area at Grove. It has been going on for years and Vice-President Naraine who was one of the persons who was involve there, who was supposed to regularise this has done little because the squatting areas is still going on. Cde. Speaker, if you go to Grove and investigate the squatting area you will see that many of the houses are in very good condition and one of the names for this particular area is “stereo city”. It is not that these people cannot afford to move, if they are given a proper place to go they will move. So this is the reason why we are calling on the Vice-President to do something about it. Then as I said, we need more state Housing Projects. For sometime the State has been doing nothing. They are just administrating the same bureaucracy and they are not developing housing areas. We want more state housing schemes to be set up throughout the length and breadth of this country to beat the private landlords and control the housing estate shylocks. Sometime earlier this year the government nationalised Hope Estate, we on this side of the House

The Speaker: Cde. Collymore, we are having a full length debate on housing and all you have to do in this bill is talk about the increase of rent.

Cde. Collymore: Cde. Speaker, how can you control rent if you do not have houses.

The Speaker: The bill does not have anything to do with that, the bill is talking about rent restriction.

Cde. Collymore: I am speaking about rent restriction and rent control. I am saying that the government will be unable to do it if they do not build houses, the whole thing is going to repeat itself and I am sure the Minister would not want that to happen.

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Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud : Cde. Speaker, I have listened very attentively to the Minister and I shall try to ascertain from him the reasons for the introduction of the Bill. I concede that the rent freeze was on but he said that as a result of the rent freeze poor tenants were compelled to live in houses that were allowed to deteriorate and become dilapidated. In other words, the Minister is admitting that the landlord succeeded in defeating the so described 'rent freeze'. "If you are going to freeze the rent, good. We are not going to build the roof. Let the people get wet. We will make no improvement." Since the situation has reached this state the Minister has come now and said, "In view of all these realities and truths we have to give them a chance to increase the rents again." This is the sum total of the Minister's contribution on the first limb of the Bill because the bill has two limbs.

Is the Minister admitting this afternoon that the Government was impotent in enforcing whatever provisions existed before in the Rent Restriction Act to see that people who were paying rents were living in habitable rooms? I am making the very profound point that he confessed that they were incapable of doing anything and the only way to get tenants properly housed again is to give them an opportunity to increase rents.

What is this Bill? In the sum total, all this Bill does is to say that in computing increases for rents they must not take into consideration those years when the rent freeze was on. That is all the Bill says.

The Speaker: I hope you all agree to that.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: The Minister has gone further, sir. I was making the point that this Bill does not in any way restrict computing of rents based on what costs will be at the current time in the country. Purely from a debating point, I will in the first instance argue that nothing was done by many landlords and the houses were allowed to degenerate and become literally uninhabitable and it means that great structural work will have to be done on many houses and, based on what the cost is, the rent will have to be increased. I have been looking at both Ordinances.

Looking at the housing situation I find, in my humble submission to you this afternoon, that the rent is going to go up very high based on the provisions of the law because all the landlords must not do is to take into consideration 1974 to 1980, but they must take into consideration what they have done from 1st January 1981 and thereafter. If that is the position and the situation is as bad as the Minister admits, I wonder what will be the position of the tenants. If I should only allude to the economic points raised by my colleague earlier on, I will say that this Bill does not in any way help the tenant. One would have expected that the Government would have conceded this afternoon more provisions by which and through which the tenants could have been protected, but the tenants are in the same position as they were in before, and probably in 1981 this will be worse.

The most important point that must be borne in mind is that the Minister is saying this afternoon – they talk about rapacious landlordism and this Government is moving to the end landlordism. My mind must be drawn this afternoon to the kind of campaign that went on when the new Constitution was about

to come into being. 'End to rapacious landlordism!' and that kind of thing. What is the position? The Minister is saying 'No' this afternoon. The Minister is obviously contradicting what the Government says it stands for. "No. We now want private landlords to take over." This is what they are saying. I am dealing with it from a debating point of view. "We want them to take over where the empty lands are. They are not occupied; they are not beneficially utilised. Money can be found. You can get mortgages. Build and rent houses and exploit people who can ill afford to pay." This is how I look at this debate this afternoon.

While my colleague has called on the Government to build houses, the Minister has not in his contribution this afternoon said that Government envisages in the future to build so many houses that will be Government projects at cheap rentals to help the low income group. It is clear then that the Government this afternoon has indicted itself and has brought a measure, in my view, which helps those who are already helped and can afford and in no way at all helps the man who can ill afford to pay. That is the first limb of the Bill dealing with the housing question and, particularly, housing in Georgetown and other areas.

Talking about people not wanting to build, I must make the point this afternoon: There are many people who have been building too. They cannot get materials, So many things are not there and even those who are rich build. It is not only a question of building today. If the Minister were to carry out a survey as to what will be the cost to build a house in 1981 and what was the cost 10 years ago, he would see what will happen to the tenants who will have to rent from those people who will be called upon to build houses in 1981.

In making this contribution, I am of the view this afternoon that he did not give deep thought and consideration to all the realities to which he alluded and to which he referred us this afternoon because it is a question of cost, it is a question of availability of materials and it is equally true today that before people can get a toilet bowl they have to go and get a letter from somewhere and then go to one of the corporations. It is as bad as that, to give one example. If you want tiles it is confusion. If you want a hook it is confusion, whatever you build with. Even if you are ready and have somewhere to build and even if the money is provided. There are those probably who can build and who have money and who are willing to build, but they are without materials, they are without the things to build with and so we have that situation also existing in the country. [Interruption.] The comrade is reminding me that there is no cement. There is no anything. How are you going to build?

What has the Minister done? Circulated letters to a few people in whose names house lots are registered and asked, "Why you are not building?" I speak for them. They can give him one hundred reasons, forgetting those that he was advancing this afternoon, why they are not building and why probably they cannot build in the near future. So the Government has to do much more than talk in order to help people who need homes and I am speaking particularly this afternoon for the low income group.

The second limb of the Bill the Minister has not said much about. I was looking at article 18 of the Constitution, which comes under Chapter II of the Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana. This article has a few words: "Land is for social use and must go to the tiller." I see this amendment as a contradiction to the Constitution. I see this amendment as a contradiction to the Government's utterances. "Land to tiller." A committee is appointed to look at all the ramifications so that effect could be given to the provision of the Constitution under Chapter II, but despite the fact that that Committee has reported already – because the Report has been presented to the Government – we

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this afternoon see that the Government when it talks about “Land to the tiller” brings legislation to this Assembly to allow people who are not tilling the land to increase the rents of those who are tilling the land. [Laughter.] It is not a laughing question. This is so. There can be no contradiction to this statement.

[Cde. Reepu Daman continues]

What I would have expected this afternoon on the second motion, and there are so many other areas to which one can refer to in the Rice Farmer Security of Tenures Act which can affect the farmers, and those comrades over there who are lawyers know. Their names appeared before in Land Assessment Courts. The Minister cannot deny that the Rice Assessment Committee don't meet and the Magistrates, I have raised it before, who are supposed to be Chairmen of Rice Assessment Committees, they are actively engaged in civil and criminal jurisdiction, with these courts not meeting at all. But look at the expenditure to move to court.

I am saying this afternoon, that the Government owes this Parliament an explanation. The Government owes this nation an explanation. The Government talks about production and productivity and what have you. Where is the encouragement? Where is the incentive to the farmers who have been exposed to so many year of rapacious land lordism. No drainage. No irrigation. All kinds of subterfuge they have to face in producing food for the people to eat in this country. And in 1981, when we were expecting those who have been actively engaged in this land – and this country has so many available acres of land. Cde. Vice-President wrote on land utility for a number of years. I would suggest that the comrade Ministers read these books and read his contribution. What is being done to solve the suggestions he has made to urge the farmers in this country and those who willing to produce?

But, no, legislation comes; the legislation before the House is in 1981 for the land lords to increase rentals, also, in the case of rice land areas, and other land areas. They can increase now, but the only thing they must not do is not take into account any kind of input by the Land lords prior to 1981. I want to say then, Cde. Speaker, that we on this side of the House are very concerned. We are particularly concerned too, when the Government has been the worst land lord in this country talking particularly from a farmer's stand point. Black Bush. You harass them; you frustrate them. I don't think this should be an era of running after the farmers for rent, for a couple of dollars. This should be an era – State land I am talking about – this should be an era when the Government should be broad minded enough in many areas. The farmers can put up strange cases to show why they have been unable to pay.

The Government should be broad minded enough to cease all rents as the beginning of giving some incentive to the farmers to produce in this country, but instead of that being done you move to dispossess them of the land. You move to bull-doze their homes from areas that are purely agricultural, and you do nothing to encourage them to remain there and to produce.

Let me conclude, Cde. Speaker, by saying that this kind of behaviour will increase the disparity that now exist between rural and urban life. People are migrating not only out of the country, but they are migrating to the city of Georgetown and if they are discouraged as they have been discouraged by the disparity and behaviour of the Government, the migration rate will increase both into Georgetown and out Guyana. I would like the Cde. Minister to say what steps the Government intends to take as an initiative to build houses for the low income group and secondly, what steps the Government hopes to take to put into effect what they themselves have written in what they have described as the people's Constitution,

that is, “Let he who till the land own the land”.

Cde. Green (replying): Cde. Speaker, you will forgive me. I was passed a note by my good friend and colleague Cde. Jack, a little line written by Kipling. “If you can bear to hear the truths you’ve spoken twisted and turned and made a trap for fools.” Cde. Speaker, I am no technician. I get a little concerned when members come to this Assembly and misuse figures as my good friend Cde Collymore did; I am a little concerned that people don’t seriously attempt to do homework and use this House for all kinds of propaganda purposes. I would just like to reply to the relevant issue raised by the two members who spoke to say, first that Government is conscious that we need to build houses. In fact, I think only the blind will not see the houses built by Government. Since we have been in Government, we have found housing for over 30,000 people – Guy Hoc Park, North Ruimveldt, Roxanne Burnham Gardens, Atlantic Ville, Wismar, Georgetown, New Amsterdam, all around the country. The Cde. Bend – Kirton courts will be opened shortly on the Ruimveldt Highway, and people only need to see. I don’t think I need to make this point.

Secondly, Cde. Chairman, Government is consistent. The question raised about the Constitution is one that only a peculiar mind could make. We have said that we have a tri-sectoral economy and true we said land must go to the tiller. We did not say in the first instance, that people will not be allowed to own their own homes or factories. We said the questions of rents will be a difficult one to deal with for some time, and we are taking into account the various factors to deal with this problem. Cde. Speaker, I want to say that the only expenditure that has not gone up in the world east, west, north and south, is rental in our Government housing estates. For the past 10 years there has been no increase in, rental in Guyana Government estates. I challenge my friends who like to quote from socialist and non-socialist works to refer to other instances in any other part of the world where rentals here not gone up.

Secondly, the world is suffering from increased interest rates. The little booklet I passed around shows that again we have another world record. There is nowhere else in the world you can get a mortgage for 7 ½ percent, as obtainable at the Guyana Co-operative Mortgage Finance Bank. I challenge those who like to quote figures to name any other part of the world where one can obtain a commercial mortgage at less than 7 ½ per cent as offered by this Government through the Guyana Co-operative Mortgage Finance Bank. I challenge them Cde. Speaker.

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[Cde. Green continues]

Reference was made to amounts in the Budget. I believe that we have spent some time in this House pointing out to both sides that what you see in the Budget is merely part of a programme. The Mortgage Finance Bank has several million dollars available for housing. The Dependant's Pension Fund and other agencies have money available and what we are attempting to do is to provide, through Government funds, the basic infrastructure to give a fillip to housing. We have taken the vanguard role, Cde. Speaker, and in so far as the suggestion made by my good friend, Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud and at times I respect him but sometimes he gives me difficulty to maintain that respect for him, we have in fact maintained as far as humanly possible the law as it is, and over the period even when landlords were not allowed to increase their rents, there were several instances when they were prosecuted for keeping their houses in a substandard position. My good friend, Stanley Moore, said a moment ago that this House is a serious place and for that reason I do not think I need to reply to the other irrelevant issues raised by Members on the Opposite side.

Questions put and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Assembly in Committee.

Clauses 1 to 4 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Assembly resumed.

Bill reported without Amendment, read the third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, "that this Assembly do now adjourn to Friday, October 2, 1981 at 2 p.m.

[Minister of National Development.]

Adjourned accordingly at 3.17 p.m.