

**THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
OFFICIAL REPORT**

[VOLUME 1]

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

25th Sitting

2.00 p.m.

Wednesday, 9th January, 1974

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Speaker

His Honour the Speaker, Mr. Sase Naraine, J.P.

Members of the Government – People’s National Congress (50)

Prime Minister (1) and Deputy Prime Minister (2)

The Hon. L.F.S. Burnham, O.E., S.C.,
Prime Minister

Deputy Prime Minister (1)

Dr. the Hon. P.S. Reid,
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of
National Development and Agriculture

Senior Ministers (7)

The Hon. H.D. Hoyte, S.C.,
Minister of Works and Communications

*The Hon. S.S. Ramphal, S.C.,
Minister of Foreign Affairs and Justice

(Absent)

***Non-elected Minister**

*The Hon. H. Green,
Minister of Co-operatives and National Mobilisation

The Hon. H.O. Jack,
Minister of Energy and Natural Resources

*The Hon. F.E. Hope,
Minister of Finance

*Dr. the Hon. K.F.S. King,
Minister of Economic Development

*The Hon. S.S. Naraine, A.A.,
Minister of Housing

Ministers (6)

The Hon. W.G. Carrington,
Minister of Labour

The Hon. Miss S.M. Field-Ridley,
Minister of Information and Culture

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

*The Hon. Miss C.L. Baird,
Minister of Education

*Dr. the Hon. O.M.R. Harper,
Minister of Health

*The Hon. G.A. King,
Minister of Trade

(Absent)

Ministers of State (9)

The Hon. M. Kasim, A.A.
Minister of State for Agriculture

The Hon. O.E. Clarke,
Minister of State – Regional
(East Barbice/Corentyne)

***Non-elected Ministers**

The Hon. P. Duncan, J.P.,
Minister of State – Regional (Rupununi)

The Hon. C.A. Nascimento,
Minister of State, Office of the Prime Minister

The Hon. M. Zaheeruddeen, J.P.,
Minister of State – Regional
(Essequibo Coast/West Demerara)

*The Hon. C.V. Mingo,
Minister of State – Regional

*The Hon. W. Haynes,
Minister of State – Regional (Mazaruni/Potaro)

*The Hon. A. Salim,
Minister of State – Regional
(East Demerara/West Coast Berbice)

Parliamentary Secretaries (8)

Mr. J.R. Thomas,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Housing

Mr. C.E. Wrights, J.P.
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Works and Communications

Miss M.N. Ackman,
Parliamentary Secretary, Office of the
Prime Minister, and Government Chief Whip

Mr. E.L. Ambrose,
Parliamentary Secretary, (Agriculture),
Ministry of National Development and Agriculture

Mr. K.B. Bancroft,
Parliamentary Secretary (Hinterland),
Ministry of National Development and Agriculture

Mr. S. Prashad,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of
Co-operatives and National Mobilisation

***Non-elected Ministers**

Mr. J.P. Chowritmootoo,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Education

Mr. R.H.O. Corbin,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of
Co-operatives and National Mobilisation

Other Members (18)

Mr. J.N. Aaron
Mrs. L.N. Branco
Mr. M. Corrica
Mr. E.H.A. Fowler
Miss J. Gill
Mr. W. Hussain
Miss S. Jaiserrisingh
Mr. K.M.E. Jones
Mr. M. Nissar
Dr. L.E. Ramsahoye
Mr. J.G. Ramson
Mrs. P.A. Rayman
Mr. P.A. Raymon
MR. E.M. Stoby, J.P.
Mr. S.H. Sukhu, M.S., J.P.,
Mr. C. Sukul, J.P.
Mr. H.A. Taylor
Mr. R.C. Vansluytman
Mrs. L.E. Willians

Members of the Opposition

Liberatory Party (2)

Mr. M.F. Singh, Deputy Speaker
Mrs. E. DaSilva

OFFICERS

Clerk of the National Assembly – Mr. F.A. Narain
Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly – Mr. M.B. Henry, AMBIM.

PRAYERS
ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

New Year Wishes

The Speaker: Hon. Members, may I take this opportunity of welcoming you back for the New Year and I extend best wishes to you and your families for the present year. I will also like to take this opportunity of welcoming back the Prime Minister who was inadvertently absent due to illness and I am sure we are all happy to see him once more in this Chamber. [Applause]

Leave to Members

Leave has been granted to the hon. Member, Mr. Ramphal, and to the hon. Member, Mr. G.A. King, for today's Sitting.

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS
PRIVATE BILLS
GUYANA MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

The Speaker: Hon. Member, Mr. Aaron

Mr. Aaron: Mr. Speaker, I beg to present a Petition on behalf of Dr. Allan Carlyle Miller of 167 Fifth Street, Campbellville, Georgetown, Director of the Guyana Missionary Baptist Church, seeking to have introduced in the Assembly a Private Bill to incorporate the Guyana Missionary Baptist Church.

The Speaker: The Clerk will now read the Petition.

The Clerk read the Petition as follows:

“Guyana

PETITION

To: The Honourable Members of the National Assembly of Guyana

The humble petition of Allan Carlyle Miller of 167 Fifth Street, Campbellville, Georgetown, country of Demerara, State of Guyana, respectfully sheweth as follows:

1. That your Petitioner is the Director of the Guyana Missionary Baptist Church and himself an ordained Minister of Religion.

2. That the said Church was established in Guyana, then British Guiana in 1954 and during the nineteen (19) years of its existence has constituted two (2) places of worship situated at:

Campbellville, Greater Georgetown and
Beterverwagting, East Coast Demerara.

3. That the said Church has a total membership of 618 persons who believe in the doctrine of the bible, with particular reference to the New Testament and as the sole authority for the discipline of its members united in Christian fellowship among themselves and a sharing a common bond with the Guyana council of churches.

4. That the objects of the Bill are inter alia to incorporate the Guyana Missionary Baptist Church with a right to determine its own affairs, to acquire and dispose of property and to provide for other related matters relevant to the administration of the said Church.

5. That it is proposed that all the persons who immediately before the incorporation of the church were members should not be prejudiced in any way whatsoever.

6. That your Petitioner on behalf of the Guyana Missionary Baptist Church has submitted to and obtained the permission of the Convent Avenue Baptist church of 420 West 145th Street, New York, United States of America to promote the instant bill.

7. That both the Guyana Missionary Baptist Church and the Convent Avenue Baptist church are affiliates of the Lott Carey Foreign Missionary Convention of 1501 11th Street, N.W. Washington D.C. United States of America.

8. That a copy of the bill is annexed hereto.

9. That your Petitioner humbly requests that the Honourable Members of the National Assembly be pleased to permit the introduction of the bill and to enact the same.

(sdg.) Allan Carlyle Miller
Allan Carlyle Miller
Petitioner
167 Fifth Street,
Campbellville,
Georgetown,
Guyana.”

The Speaker: In accordance with Standing Order No. 57(4), I will now put the Question.

Question –

“That the Promoter be allowed to proceed”,

put, and agreed to.

GUYANA SOCIETY FO THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY OF ANIMALS

The Speaker: Hon. Member, Mrs. Willems.

Mrs. Willems: Your Honour, I beg to present a Petition on behalf of Sir Donald Jackson of 21/22 Lama Avenue, Bel Air Park, Georgetown, and Mrs. Sheila Burrows of 34/35 Lama Avenue, Bel Air Park, Georgetown, Acting President and Honorary secretary, respectively, of the Guyana society for the Prevention of Cruelty of Animals, seeking to have introduced in the Assembly a Private Bill to incorporate the Society.

The Speaker: The Clerk will now read the Petition.

The Clerk read the Petition as follows:

“GUYANA

PETITION

To the Honourable Members of the National Assembly of Guyana.

The humble petition of Sir Donald Jackson, of 21-22 Lama Avenue, Bel Air Park, Georgetown, and Mrs. Sheila Burrows, of 34-35 Lama Avenue, Bel Air Park, Georgetown, respectfully sheweth as follows:-

(1) Your Petitioners are the Acting President, and Honorary Secretary, respectively, of the Guyana Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

(2). The Society was formed sixty years ago for “the promotion of kindness and the prevention or suppression of cruelty to animals, and to do all such lawful acts as may be considered conducive or incidental to the attainments of these objects.”

(3). a) On 21st September, 1935, the Society became affiliated to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, whose Headquarters are in England, and became the British Guyana Branch of that Society.

(3). b) In 1950, cognizant of the absence of any means of treatment for sick or injured animals at reasonable cost, the Society considered the question of erecting an animal clinic in Georgetown, at the corner of Robb Street and Orange Walk. This clinic was opened in 1952, and over the years has been instrumental in bringing much needed relief to sick and injured animals. During the past five years attendance at the weekly clinics has been increasing steadily.

(4). Appreciative of the good work being done by the Society, the Government provides the Society with a subvention of \$1,500.00 annually. All additional income for the work of the Society is raised by public effort and by interest on investments, which provide for the maintenance and upkeep of the Clinic, for the salaries of a Clinic Secretary, Clinic Caretaker, two Inspectors stationed at Headquarters in Georgetown, and one each in the West Demerara and Essequibo Districts, and one for other expenses incidental to the operation of the clinic.

2.20 p.m.

“(5). On Guyana’s attainment of Independence the Society considered changing its name, and this was approved at the Annual General Meeting held in 1971, when the

[The Clerk contd.]

Guyana Branch of the R.S.P.C.A. became the GUYANA SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS.

(6). The GUYANA SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS now wishes to be incorporated so as to be able to acquire and dispose of property in Guyana, etc.

(7). Your Petitioners are the promoters of a BILL which seeks to incorporate the GUYAN SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS.

(8). Your Petitioners are desirous of having the said Bill introduced in the National Assembly and enacted by the Parliament of Guyana.

WHEREFORE your Petitioners humbly pray that the Honourable Members of the National Assembly may be pleased to allow them to proceed.

AND your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

Signed this 31st day of October 1973.

- 1. (sgd.) Donald Jackson)
21-22 Lama Avenue, B.A.P)
) Petitioners
- 2. (sgd.) S. Burrowes)
Hon. Sec.)
34-34 Lama Avenue, B.A.P”)

The Speaker: In accordance with Standing Order No. 57 (4), I will now put the Question.

Question –

“That the Promoters be allowed to proceed”,

put and agreed to.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following papers were laid:

- (1) (a) Small Industries corporation Order 1973 (No. 161), made under section 34 of the Public Corporations Ordinance 1962 (No. 23), on the 13th of December, 1973, and published in the Gazette on the 14th of December, 1973.
- (b) Guyana Development Corporation (Dissolution) Order 1973 (No. 162), made under section 51 of the Public Corporations Ordinance 1962 (No. 23), on the 13th December, 1973, ad published in the Gazette on the 14th December, 1973. [The Prime Minister]
- (2) (a) Customs (Exemption from Duties) (No. 2) Order 1973 (No. 149), made under section 8 of the Customs Ordinance, chapter 309 (now Customs Act, Chapter 82:01), on the 22nd of December, 1973, and published in the Gazette on the 8th of December, 1973.
- (b) Customs Duties (Amendment) (No. 4) Order 1973 (No. 158), made under section 8 of the Customs Ordinance, Chapter 309 (now Customs Act, Chapter 82:01), on the 12th of December, 1973, and published in the Gazette on the 14th of December, 1973.

[The Minister of Finance]

9.1.74

National Assembly

2.20 – 2.30 p.m.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS – FIRST READING

The following Bills were introduced and read the First time:

Slaughter of Cattle (Control) Bill 1974.

[The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of
National Development and Agriculture]

Guyana ad Trinidad Mutual fire Insurance Company (Amendment) Bill
1973.

[Mrs. Willems]

PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker: Hon. Members, by agreement, it has been decided that we will deal with item 3 under Public Business

Motion

APPROVAL OF PROPOSALS IN STATE PAPER ON NATIONAL SERVICE

“Be it resolved that this National Assembly approves of the proposals outlined in the State Paper on National Service for the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, which was presented to the national Assembly on the 20th of December, 1973.” [The Prime Minister]

The Prime Minister (Mr. Burnham): Mr. Speaker, about two years ago, when Youth Week was being commemorated, I announced the then Government’s intention of introducing national service in Guyana.

In the President's Address to this House at the formal opening late last year, there was an allusion to Government's proposal to introduce national service in Guyana, and on the 20th December, 1973, there was laid in this House the State Paper on National Service for the Co-operative Republic of Guyana.

There have been, sir, therefore, several opportunities offered for discussion of the philosophy, objectives, and operations of national service in Guyana. There was a debate in this House on the President's Address on this subject, where certain fears were expressed by the Opposition, and winding up on behalf of the Government, I sought to allay those unjustified fears, which were based on suspicion rather than on facts. Today, on behalf of the Government of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, I am asking this House to agree to the principles set out in the State Paper. This is another opportunity for public debate.

As is obvious, it will be necessary subsequently, we hope rather shortly, assuming the concurrences of this House, to introduce a legislative measure to enact the necessary provisions to make law of the national service in Guyana. It cannot, therefore, by any stretch or elasticity of the imagination, be alleged or suggested that there has not been an adequate and full opportunity offered to all to put forward their views and to make known their particular contribution, shall I say, and as I understand it, this Parliament, then considering all the views, will make its decision.

Guyana attained Independence in 1966 on the 26th May. We have often been told of the large country which is ours and the huge natural resources given to us by God, and even if others from outside did not remark it, we are conscious of the potential of our human resources. We know that Guyana's level of literacy is over 90 per cent, which puts it amongst the top three or four nations of the world. This combination of natural and human resources, however, has to be organized or mobilized, I would submit, in the best interest of our nation, of our Co-operative Republic.

9.1.74

National Assembly

2.30 – 2.40 p.m.

2.30 p.m.

When we were a colony, we were wont to inveigh against the iniquities of colonialism and foreign rule. A great deal has already been said here and elsewhere on the exploitative practices of our former colonial and imperial masters. Even though political independence was achieved in 1966, that is nearly eight years ago, and we moved on to Republican status in 1970, that is about four years ago, and a few months ago we removed a British legal tribunal as the final tribunal of appeal for cases in Guyana, we are aware today that there still remains certain vestiges of colonialism, and it is appreciated by the world at large that political independence is a stepping stone to true economic and cultural independence.

It is also recognised that though today political independence, except in certain parts of Southern Africa, is rather easily achieved as against those conditions under which countries like India achieved their independence, there is abroad a new type of colonialism which seeks to subjugate our people, to control our resources and to exploit them not for the benefit of the indigenous population but for those in far-off countries which are described as developed nations.

Consequently, after political independence, they still continues the struggle for the achievement of full economic independence. And I would say there continues a necessity for us to achieve our national dignity and to have an orientation which bears some relevance to the environment in which we live and to the nation of which we are citizens.

Some years ago the Government of Guyana, which it was my good fortune then to lead, announced a policy of ownership and control of the natural resources of our country. We have taken several steps in implementation of that policy. This Government has at all times been attempting to reorganize many of the institutions in our country and to make sure that Guyana is ready for the next push forward. It would be otiose for me to remark on such things as our

taking possession of our major bauxite resources and to the discussions which are now taking place with respect to other such resources. In the Development Plan we see what are the proposal of this Government for conquering our entire country and developing our hinterland, remarkable for its plethora of natural resources and its paucity of human resources.

National Service, I submit, at least in the contemplation of my Government – and it must be admitted by all those who have taken the trouble to consider what has been put forward – seeks now to mobilize to the fullest our human resources.

As I observed earlier, we are blessed with human resources, the great potential. But those human resources are not so mobilized, organized, or trained in every case, or in all cases, as would make them best suited for the job at hand. Is it necessary for me to remark on the type of education to which so many of us have been subjected? It is necessary for me to remark on the sort of orientation which has been ours? It is necessary for me to be repetitive and to say how so many of us have considered ourselves, even without knowing it, as bronzed Englishmen or Britishers rather than Guyanese? This has happened even in cases where there have been conscious efforts at what I would call emancipation from the cultural servitude to which we were subjected during the days of slavery, indentured labour and colonialism.

The demands of sugar, after the Amerindians were found unsuitable for working the sugar plantations, brought to this country diverse number of ethnic groups. During our colonial days, of course, each group was led to believe that it had, or enjoyed, an inherent superiority over each other group. In that respect our colonial masters showed no particular originality; they were merely adopting and adapting the rule laid down by the Roman Emperors' *divide et regie* "divide and rule". And even where differences of ethnic origin were not emphasized there was the tendency of stratify our society into what I, as a reader in political science, would say, "A number of imagined classes."

We were told, or we were led to believe, that in Guyana you have an upper class, an upper middle class, a middle class, a lower middle class and there were such differences between the people in Guyana. But any classicist in political science will concede that Guyana does not have what one would call the conventional bourgeois or middle class. These classes sometimes depended upon accidents of vocation, or accidents of employment and sometimes upon absence or presence of a certain amount of melanin under the skin.

All of these things, the differences between groups, whether ethnic or so-called “class”, served well the Empire, served well the old system. The attitudes which were to be found in Guyana, and alas in some cases are still to be found, are based upon the most successful bit of brainwashing that has ever been done. “Look not to Guyana for preferment but look to the North, look outside, promotion cometh from the North”, as I heard one distinguished Judge once say in our courts: Promotion, tastes, values, and attitudes were all conditioned from outside of Guyana.

The Government is making a bold attempt to restructure the formal education system and significantly, recently, an institution like the Guyana Industrial Training College has been brought under the Ministry of Education showing the relationship between formal education and training in skills.

2.40 p.m.

Also, the reform schools which previously were within the responsibility of the Ministry of Home Affairs have now been transferred under the umbrella or aegis of the Ministry of Education.

But while we seek to re-organise our education system – and the efforts we have made in this direction have brought forth a commendation from various parts of the developing world – it is apposite to remark that we cannot merely through the existing or proposed educational system

within a short time adapt and trained people to fit into the new environment which is ours today in Guyana. Some have already passed out of the educational system after having got as far as they could get; some of them are almost about to leave this system and, alas, many who have left the system are ill-suited to make the maximum contribution to the welfare and development of Guyana.

Influenced as we have been by British jurisprudence, after so many years of British rule, affected as we have been by so many ideas which have originated outside of Guyana, particularly in Europe, most Guyanese shout at the top of their voices that they believe in basic human freedoms; they believe in the freedom of speech, freedom of assembly. Those to my mind are important freedoms, but are they as basic a freedom as, the freedom to work and to contribute? There are some people, some Guyanese, who will concede that every person has a right to work. Others perhaps, may say every person has a duty to work. But, however one may phrase that proposition, how could you possibly speak of a person having a right to work when, in fact, he has not been fitted by training and assistance to apply his talents in a manner which will be beneficial to the country?

It is usual for some of us to remark on the limers that we find at the street corners. These people, we say, are a drag on the society – at least some of us say so – but how many of us have stopped to ask ourselves whether they have been given the opportunities to employ their talents, whether they have been offered the facilities of training and education that would make them useful citizens rather than limers.

Many of us are wont to rise up in righteous indignation when we hear of incidents of crime where property is stolen and Judges and Magistrates impose heavy penalties and sentence these person to gaol. But how many of us stop to think that their crimes in the majority of cases are, in fact, crimes of our society, a society which has not made arrangement, which has not made a provision for the fullest development of the human talents and abilities lying latent in these people we call criminals.

A society like Guyana's which seeks to have all men equal, to give all men the opportunity of developing to the fullest their talents, cannot claim to have achieved even an iota of success if it does not do something about those, also, who are in reform schools and who are in the institutions of correction, better known as gaols.

National Service, as seen by this Government, will be an institution aimed at giving the fullest opportunity of exposure, training and orientation to the entire Guyanese society, at least, so far as it is humanly possible.

On page 5 of the State Paper there are set out the series of units which will be catering for different categories of persons in Guyana under the National Service. There will be those who have had all the available formal training appropriate to their ability and aptitude and who are already employed. May I pause for a moment? Not in every case is an employed person making the maximum contribution. Undeveloped abilities, latent brilliance, in fact, are sometimes to be found in persons, who, though pressure of circumstances, have to spend their time working at repetitive and unimaginative tasks.

The third category would be those who have had all the available training appropriate to their ability and aptitude but who are still unemployed and in many cases persons are unemployed because they do not have the relevant skills. It is interesting to note how frequently the Ministry of Works and Communications, for instance, is short of skilled carpenters though there are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of persons asking for unskilled jobs or employment.

And then there is the fourth category of persons who have not been exposed and who have not had the opportunity of all the formal education that was available or appropriate to their ability and who are still employed, those who, in many cases through poverty or other fortuitous circumstances, have to leave the education system to make a living. And then, of course, perhaps into a fifth category one would put the limers or most of the limers, those who

have not had all the opportunities which the system so far has offered, and in addition to that and, perhaps, because of that are unemployed.

And then you have the young men and the young women who, having completed secondary school courses, are ready to go on to Universities or to higher or further training. And, again, there are those who would like to go on to further training but do not have the necessary qualifications or pre-qualifications for enjoying that opportunity. And, of course, you have another category of persons to whom, in another context, I have made reference; those who are in prison or otherwise in detention in accordance with the law.

2.50 p.m.

It is the intention, Mr. Speaker, of the National Service, to make provision for the fullest development of the talents of all these categories, which categories, I believe, would cover all or practically all of the Guyanese citizenry.

There are many persons in Guyana who support National Service because they believe that National Service will be a means whereby the working people's children, who are unemployed, would be inducted into a system where they would be removed from the streets. It is not the intention of this service to discriminate in that manner. Let me say, that those who live under difficult physical conditions, and whose playgrounds are the street corners, are not the only limers in our society. How many so-called respectable sons and daughters of respectable gentlemen and ladies do not lime?

I recall, when I was in the practice of law some years ago, that I always understood to defend free of cost persons charged for gambling in public, because there were the snooty clubs in Guyana, where there was gambling ad nauseam, where many of fortune changed hands night after night, because they had the advantage of being able to belong to exclusive clubs. But they could gamble without let or hindrance, and the little man, who lived in a coop, if he wanted to

[The Prime Minister contd.]

play some three cards or some dice, was hauled before the Court for gambling in public. It is like prosecuting, for doing the acts of nature in public. It is like prosecuting, for doing the acts of nature in public, a man to whom you have not given sanitary facilities. Either gambling is right or gambling is wrong.

I would like to make my point of view quite clear, that many of the self-righteous person who inveigh against liming should also remember that there are others who lime, but because they enjoy the facilities of playrooms, and billiard rooms, and clubs, for which their parents can pay, they are not in ordinary parlance considered limers.

But, to my mind, such persons are potentially good Guyanese. There must be no discrimination against the so-called “middle class” against the working class, or against any class. They all are potentially useful Guyanese, who have had the fullest opportunity of training, who have not had the fullest opportunity to develop their abilities and talents in the service of the nation.

I remember when I was declaring open the Education Faculty of the University of Guyana, that I alluded to Government’s intention to induct into National Service those who are about to go into the University. There was some fluttering, there were some objections, most of them arising out of prejudice, but put forward with charming semanticism; there were arguments that if you interrupted a young man’s or a young woman’s education on the way to the University, you were doing that young man or young woman an ill. I say this, Mr. Speaker, the best scholars in Guyana today, my best colleagues, are persons who, before going to the University, had an exposure to life.

I have seen for myself, when I was an undergraduate, that there were Guyanese who really honesty and, so far as their mental equipment was concerned, truthfully said that there were so slums in Guyana. They did not know of Albouystown. They only lived in a certain part

of a certain part of Guyana. It would appear to me that in most instances, as long as it is feasible and practical, there should be a reasonable period between the secondary school system and the University system, when person seeking to enter the later can have the exposure to life in Guyana and to Guyanese.

It is interesting sometimes to see some of us who have been through Queen's College or Bishops' High School, or the convents, and then we have gone on the University, come back home do not even know what is Crown dam. When people talk about a conservancy dam, we do not even know what it is, and there are some of my friends, I do not remark whether they are present or absent, who, when campaigning politically, could not understand the dialect, could not understand the modes of expression of many people in Guyana.

I remember once I was discussion with my colleagues, the question of running a seminar, and one of them a good thinking man, Mr. Speaker, he said, "You know, we will have a problem. We cannot train those from one section with the others." I said, "Man, but you are supposed to be a socialist." He said, "Yes, I am a socialist, but the trouble is that those who went to the secondary school, and will be well ahead of those who did not go to the secondary school, and the illustrations you will have to use for the latter would be a waste of time for the former." And I asked him, "Do you think that those who went to the secondary school would really understand if you were to speak to those who did not go to the secondary school in their idiom?" On reflection he admitted that they would not. Are we going to have in Guyana, people speaking the same language, but not understanding the idiom of each other? That, in itself, is a divisive influence so far as Guyana is concerned.

National Service must also be understood in the context of the Development Plan, which is already public property, and to which there has been absolutely no objection with respect to its objectives and its strategy. The main objective of that plan is to wipe out unemployment within our time, but how can e wipe out unemployment, if we don't have persons who are properly oriented and trained? Orientation some people confuse with indoctrination. For me, they are

two separate words and concepts. May I hazard an example of what I call mis - or dis-orientation?

3 p.m.

A child was attending a particular school, and the teacher of the particular class in which the child was, took that child with others to a farm. The mother went back to the teacher, hot and sweaty, most irate, pointing out to the teacher that she did not send her little girl child to school to learn about farming and digging cassavas and eddoes. That is a case of dis-orientation in the context of Guyana's being on the Amazon Shield, one of the most fertile regions of the world; in the context of the potential which we have for producing agricultural crops, goods, and commodities. Is it not a case of dis-orientation or mis-orientation when a mother thinks that a teacher who exposes her child to agriculture is misconceiving the teacher's role and is doing something wrong?

It is a whole atmosphere that has to be created in and out of school. That is why one of the first institutions of the National Service will be the Young Brigade covering roughly the children between the ages 8 to 14. Let me say that in the same way as joining the Boy Scouts and the Girl Guides is voluntary, children will be able to join or not to join the Young Brigade in the primary school; they will be free, for, as democrats, we believe in the ultimate freedom.

But may I remark, that there are three things that come not back, and one of them is the neglected opportunity. Let us not, therefore, in exercising our freedom not to join, be heard to complain when the rest of the world has passed us by.

One institution, as I said, is going to be the Young Brigade in the primary schools organizing children between 8 and the normal school-leaving age, 14. The children are not going to be taken away from their formal school training but on the weekends particularly and during the long holidays those who are members of the Young Brigade, those who volunteer to

be members of the Young Brigade and no one else, will be taken out on camps. They will be given the opportunity of exposure. We will be given the opportunity of exposure. We shall seek in some cases to take the school to the farm, instead of doing what we have done in the past, trying to bring a little garden to the school and calling it a “farm”. We shall seek in this institution to inculcate a love of things like agriculture, respect for one’s brothers, the group spirit, and the co-operative attitude.

Those who are institutions of secondary learning will have the option, again, of joining the National Cadet Corps. That again will be voluntary. There will be no need for any young man or young woman at a Secondary School to join the National Cadet Corps. But one of the three things that come not back is the neglected opportunity. In each of these cases Certificates of Excellence will be awarded and those Certificates of Excellence will be Badges of Honour in all sections of our society. Those who prefer to neglect the opportunity will enjoy the distinction of having no Badges of Honour.

Then there will be the New Opportunity Corps which is intended to take in, cover, provide for, those who are in what we call today reform schools, sent there under the law. We shall seek to make of those institutions new institutions for correction and not punishment. One frequently finds that in these reform schools there are maladjusted young people not, not wicked young people, not sinful young people, but maladjusted; young people who have not had the opportunity of knowing a father sometimes, even of knowing a mother; for though there would be a physical mother, that mother very frequently leaves early in the morning to earn a living and returns too late at night to exercise her maternal functions.

Sometimes one has found in the past in our formal educational institutions teachers telling children. “You are going to grow up to be criminals.” It reminds me of the calypso I hear, “Time is longer than twine, and now ah got numbers on me chest.” Those teachers may be accurate in their divination, or prognosis, because of certain things they recognise in the children

but those things that may be apparent in the children are not irremediable and in many cases are due to maladjustments, social, mental or otherwise.

We shall seek within the context of our National Service to give such young people an opportunity of being corrected and assisted before they run foul of the law. Such young people, it is proposed, would be members of the New Opportunity Corps, and we do not propose that the instructors would merely be “chalk and talk” instructors, teaching the three R’s and that sort of thing. They will be people who will have to be professionally trained to deal with persons who suffer from one maladjustment or another.

3.10 p.m.

Another institution of National Service will be the Pioneer Corps. That will formally take in campus young people from 14 right through to 25 depending on their particular circumstances. May I offer an example: A young man or a young woman may leave a primary school at 14 having gone through all of the classes but, for one reason or another, may not proceed to a secondary school or a post-primary institution of training will just be put on the market.

Obviously, such a young person needs further training and needs further assistance. Such a young person, like many others, may well be what we call a late developer. I remember when I used to teach at Queen’s College there was a certain young man who usually got X and Y in most of the subjects right through to IVB and I heard to my astonishment that that young man subsequently won the Guyana Scholarship. His was a case of late development. But how many late developers in our society get an opportunity because of the paucity of institutions and opportunities? We want within or under the aegis of National Service to be able to give that opportunity.

[The Prime Minister continued]

I can see, as I provided here, persons who enter the Pioneer Corps for one year volunteering to remain after and going on to institutions like the Technical Institute or even the University of Guyana, person who, otherwise, we would have considered lost in so far as further education and training are concerned.

The State Paper goes into some measure of detail on the various Corps. The Pioneer Corps is intended to be a Corps which persons who are eligible must compulsory join. But let us be fair and be frank. For some time to come we will not have at our disposal the logistical support, equipment and so on to put through that Corps all those who are qualified to go through that Corps.

It is so much like what happened in Tanzania where a National Service Scheme was introduced that was compulsory but, because of the inability of authorities to deal with and service properly all those who are eligible, a large part of that service still remains primarily voluntary. But again, I say, Mr. Speaker, one of the three things that come not back is the neglected opportunity. We cannot eat our cake and have it.

What are some of the things on which emphasis will be laid in the various Corps at one level or another? Training in co-operativism, training in agriculture, theoretical and practical, industrial training, craft training, cultural training, a training to understand the values of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana. In the Pioneer Corps and in the Cadet Corps there will be paramilitary training and in all cases, in all the Corps, there will be compulsory calisthenics. *Mens sana in corpora sano*, I used to be taught at Queen's College "It takes a health body to be the host of a healthy mind."

It does appear to me, Mr. Speaker, that in any nation that is bent on developing its resources as Guyana is, provision must be made to inculcate the very early habits of discipline and to encourage exercises which make for physical fitness.

[The Prime Minister continued]

There is one other corps to which I should have made allusion and that is the Special Service corps. The Special Service Corps is an attempt to accommodate those who have

acquired certain skills, professional or semi-professionally, call it what you will, who may be, but not necessarily are, over 25 years of age but whose training and professional ability can be put specifically to use in the public service. Let us take an example, Mr. Speaker. I remember that when we were building the Mahdia-Annai road, at least three doctors volunteered to do a two-week stint and several nurses did the same. Of course, many of them were particularly used after they had volunteered to employ their medical and nursing skills wherever the cause arose. I remember in one case a tree fell on a man's foot. A doctor put in splints and helped to hustle him to the dispensary at Mahdia and arrange for him eventually to be flown to the Bartica Hospital.

I have noted with more than passing pleasure, pride and happiness that a certain professional organization, the Guyana Association of Professional Engineers, has, over the past years, been offering its services or the services of its members to various Local Government authorities which authorities needed and could not normally afford to pay for services of professional engineers. In Guyana it seems to me in spite of the growling and the bleating of the few, that we are blessed with person sufficiently public-spirited who are willing to offer their services to the public and to the country which has given them their birth, their infant nurture, their training, their education and their bread.

3.20 p.m.

It is proposed in the initial stages to open a register, on to which register, persons may inscribe their names with their particular skills, and from this register, persons will be chosen from time to time to assist. For things, we may need a teacher for a short period at some far-away point like Konashen. We may need the services of an engineer particularly, or the services

[The Prime Minister contd.]

of a doctor, or the services of a dentist. When perhaps we are doing the road to the Upper Mazaruni, we may need the services of plumbers, because they are particularly skilled and important persons. From this register we will be able to extract names of person who will serve for limited periods.

The present contemplation is that the period of service in the Special Service Corps should be no more than eight weeks at any given time, and that no person who has inscribed his name and so serves would be asked to serve before a period of five years has elapsed. If he wants to serve again, and there are such people, he can serve again, but he will not be called upon to serve during a period of less than five years after his last stint of service.

Earlier in my remarks in moving this Motion, I referred to the fact that ours is a great hinterland, replete with natural resources, but most sparsely inhabited. I remarked also on the fact that there are many Guyanese who do not know Guyana. Let me be the first to admit that it is only about fifteen years ago that I first knew that there was a Lake Kimbia in the Berbice River, and it was only about eight years ago that I learnt of the fertility of the soil, though earlier, I had been able to admire the beautiful landscape.

The area of Lake Kimbia, which is a few miles from Ebini, has been identified as one of the centres for training of National Service recruits. To my mind, and I think I will be supported in this by many of my colleagues, political and otherwise, just to go into the hinterland of Guyana and to spend some time is a refreshing and dazzling experience and an education in itself. That is why we are going to put the centres for training in the hinterland.

Certain infrastructural works will be put in and certain facilities, which are alleged to go with civilization, will be provided.

Incidentally, the Pioneer Corps is also going to be the Corps through which those young people who went to settle in the hinterland will have to pass. You cannot want to settle in the hinterland and merely pick up your boots and say, “I am going to settle in the hinterland.” (1) It is proposed that you have the exposure; (2) it is proposed that you have the training.

Of course, the great emphasis will be on agriculture. Of course, quite appreciable emphasis will be placed on the skills that go into forestry, but the setting up of communities in

the hinterland requires more than farmers and foresters, for a community must be an entity. We will require teachers; we will require paramedics; we will require administrative staff. And all other things being equal, I cannot see how a coast-bound lubber could serve as effectively in any of these services in an interior settlement as one who has been exposed to the hinterland and has had the orientation which comes from the very exposure to the beauties of nature in our hinterland.

The National Service Scheme aims at bringing people together. I heard someone saying that his objection to national service would be that his son, whom he had reared so carefully, would be likely to be at the same centre as some orangutan. Father, forgive him; he knows not what he says. An objection like that discloses a basic, an un-Guyanese prejudice: Because his son has had certain opportunities – not because of his ability but because of who his father is – he is too good to mix with what Kipling would have called “the lesser breed without the law”. But he and his son will quote with great facility, Kennedy “Think not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country.”

There is a lot of hypocrisy abroad. This government believes in establishing an egalitarian society in which there is equality of opportunity for all. It does not believe that some should get the gravy and some should get the “bun-bun.” We either all get the gravy or we all get the “bun-bun.”

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As further, I say this. From him to whom much is given, much is expected. Let me say this as one who has been educated by the taxpayers of Guyana, there is no one passing through our educational institutions in Guyana, whose education has not been contributed to by the lowliest of the lowly taxpayers in this country. My mother used to say, with no originality, “ingratitude is worse more than witchcraft.” It is that type of ingratitude which tends to exacerbate my feelings, when I hear people say. “My son, after having gone there, how could you expect him to go there?” What are we all? Third generation descendants of indentured labourers and slaves. And we claim to have class! Ha, ha, ha!

Mutual exposure –this exposure which we aim at in the National Service, exposing people of different ethnic groups, different alleged social classes, different experience – I think would be a source of mutual education.

Also, the National Service through its institutions is aimed at introducing, or inducing, a spirit and an attitude of discipline.

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Let us be frank. Many of us – though thank God not all of us – have looked upon Independence as the moment when we could do our own thing; we could do what we like, and discipline then became immaterial. But no society, regardless of its political, ideological or philosophical orientation can survive unless there is a discipline within that society.

National Service can inculcate in many of its recruits, in many of us that sense of discipline, that sense of duty and also that love of our country, not in the abstract, but in terms of our brother man and in terms of the added productivity which we can bring about as part of the national exercise.

[The Prime Minister continued]

We hope that those who are exposed to this system of National Service will also be imbued with the determination to make the best of what we have, using excellence as their criterion and not comparative merit or ability. We hope that this National Service, by the opportunities it will offer to a large number of us, will make us Guyanese, who are proud of being Guyanese, who are self-reliant, and who are men.

When first I assumed office on Monday, the 14th day of December, 1964, I invited certain senior civil servants to speak to me, to discuss certain matters like what were their plans, their ideas. They came up with some beautiful ideas. I asked: “How is this going to be done?” they replied, “Well, we can apply to the United Kingdom for assistance to get a man to do this.”

Then I met some others, “Oh yes, it is a good project Mr. Prime Minister. We think if we apply to the U.S.A.I.D. they will send the expert.” “And Mr. Prime Minister in Russia you will find people who really know about this thing.” That is the heritage from our colonial days. Some of us lack self-confidence, and we feel there is no excellence within; all excellence is from without.

I asked one of my colleagues: “Could I get X,Y, Z. done?” He said, “Yes I can get it done within a week.” I said, “No, I want it within forty-eight hours.” I had it within twenty-four hours. That is a man for you. You can sell ourselves too short, and we hope that the new Guyanese will be a man who does not automatically look without for prototypes or experts. We can be humble enough to admit when we have no expertise or experts in a particular field. But that is quite different from the blanket attitude, so to speak, which has prevailed in the past. For instance, we bring Dutchmen to tell us about our seawall, and we have had to live with this seawall all these years and we had hydraulic engineers.

National Service, I think, is a good thing. But there are some person and some organizations which exist only on paper – remove the paper and you remove the organization –

who and which are campaigning against National Service. What are their problems? They ask, “If National Service is introduced what is going to happen to our daughters? Three things let me say: (a) It is voluntary; the little darlings do not have to volunteer, but remember one of the three things that come not back is the neglected opportunity; (b) the centres proposed are going to be sexually segregated; there will be no mixing because we do not want to offend the proper sensitivities of our people and (c) let me repeat a little experience I had when I was at primary school. Just before every August holiday a “magic man” use to come to perform. He was a fellow who used to grow bananas and mangoes, and pull eggs out of space, and pull a long frill-work out of his mouth and he used to say, “The more you watch the less you see, the less you watch the better for me.” That is the third point I want to make. **[Laughter]**

There are some who will sing about the glories of Cuba, where the whole nation is mobilized, but let Burnham introduce voluntary National Service, and you hear that Burnham wants a slave camp. Slavery is a matter of mentality. That is all I say to those slaves who utter such a criticism of this system.

In various parts of the world, from time to come, there have been systems of National Service depending on what was the crisis. Our crisis is not an ordinary crisis; it is a crisis of having to produce Guyanese who can develop Guyana. Is it not a crisis to see our youth wasting their energies, their abilities their potential on the street corners? Is it not a crisis that we should want in the midst of plenty? It is not a crisis that a country endowed so richly as Guyana is by way of natural resources should be importing so many things which she can produce or the alternatives of which she can produced here? Sir, Paul says, “When I was a child I spake like a child.” When were colonials, thought as colonials, but now that we are citizens of a free country let us think as citizens of a free country. One of the major problems in Guyana is the mistraining to which we have been subjected not only in formal terms by also in terms of attitudes.

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Like the woman I met at Mahaica who said: “Prime Minister, you know I am your Party supporter, but Prime Minister, bring back the saltfish.” I said, “But Comrade we are already producing saltfish, there is a Co-op shop a half mile away, from which you can get local saltfish.” She paused for a few seconds and said, “but it can’t be as good as the foreign.” Yes, some of us had better only smile quietly. Is it not a crisis when there are abroad such attitudes on the part of one of our citizens? Is it not time that we seek to mobilize fully, to train properly our human resources? That is what National Service is about. No forced labour or labour camps. You can join if you want; you need not join, if you do not want. I think because of my wrong or dis-oriented education, I remember a few lines from one of Tennyson’s poems:

“And he that shuts Love out, in turn shall be Shut out from Love,
and on her threshold lie Howling in outer darkness.”

One of the three things that come not back is the neglected opportunity. Individuals may neglect this opportunity, they may be inspired by all sorts of considerations including the calumnies and the misrepresentations of the wicked few; they may neglect the opportunity because of fear of something new.

I see here my parliamentary colleagues who were afraid of nationalising DEMBA. They have lived to see that there was nothing to fear but fear itself. I see persons who were afraid of our becoming a Republic. They have learnt that there was nothing to fear but fear itself. That is what I say to those who object because of fear.

There are others who object because of ignorance. I am not using ignorance in a pejorative sense. We are anxious that they understand. A colleague of mine came from speaking at a luncheon today where, after he was finished, he was asked by many present how could they who had originally been opposed to National Service contribute to the system and to the service.

We have deliberately taken time over the introduction of this measure to give an opportunity for information to be brought to people, to give an opportunity for them to understand what it is all about and to understand that in the final analysis National Service offers to everyone of us an opportunity to serve, to make and to build Guyana. Someone wrote:

“Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
This is my own, my native land! ...”

I commend this Motion to this House in the full certitude that it will be accepted but I also commend to my colleagues the task seeking to inform, educate and recruiting other Guyanese in this splendid service of this great nation of Guyana.

Question proposed

Mrs. DaSilva: Mr. Speaker, before I deal with the Motion before this House on National Service, I wish on behalf of the United Force to say how pleased we are to have once again with us in this House the hon. Prime Minister. In spite of everything, we have missed him very much. We have missed his presence and his reheric that lends so much to the debates in this House, and we hope that if he is not completely recovered that it will not be long before his health will be completely restored and he will once again be fully back with us to attend Parliament.

Now, sir, to get back to the question of National Service: Because the Members of the Government have the two-thirds majority in the House their wishes for whatever happens are bound to pass; because by sheer force of numbers no matter the Opposition says it will be carried and we will have National Service. I wish to state that we would like to draw and point out to the Members of this Hon. House, to the Prime Minister, his Ministers and Members of the Government our reasons for opposing this Motion and to ask them to consider very carefully and to take and accept some of the constructive criticisms we have to offer. The Prime Minister in

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his usual charming, suave and easy manner has presented the case for National Service and when you listen to him, you honestly want to say that there is nothing wrong with National Service.

The concept of National Service is admirable for it is for the betterment of our country, and even though there are those in Guyana: organizations, groups and people and individuals who seek to divide us, there are Guyanese, and even Guyanese who do not belong to the People's National Congress who want Guyana to progress and to develop. And after listening to the hon. Prime Minister putting forward the case for National Service, one would almost feel that this is the thing to have and this is the only way we will progress. But as I go on I hope to show, to bring out and to offer for consideration points that, if accepted, could make for the smooth running of National Service and this is what, I should imagine, the Prime Minister would want.

The first objection we have is that this State Paper is very brief. As a matter of fact, some of the points that I am going to bring up a little later on were mentioned only for the first time when the hon. Prime Minister spoke. A little more detail was then given. Professional Corps would be run, how the register would be formed and so on, and his comments about the arrangements of accommodation in the Pioneer Corps which has caused a great deal of trouble and concern. Our first comment is that the State Paper does not explain fully enough the mechanics and the working of the different Service Corps for the citizens and for us who have to debate it here to understand. The Paper states the categories, age groups and what has to be done but does not explain in much detail the actual working. I should imagine when the reply is given that I would be told that the Paper was not the place to go into detail. So I am hoping that in the replies we will be given more explanations because, as the Prime Minister truly said, fear is behind the running of this National Service Scheme.

3.50 p.m.

It may be all very well for him talk about the people over here who were afraid of nationalization, who were afraid of Independence, and how everything is all right, and all the rest

[Mrs. DaSilva contd.]

of it. All that glitters is not exactly gold, but nevertheless, fear and not knowing enough about what is going to happen is at the root of the problem of the people who do not support national service. This does not mean necessarily that they think that the Prime Minister is putting forward forced labour, and labour camps, and so on. They can see that it is in the interest of the development of the nation, but then, the Prime Minister is not omnipresent, he is not ubiquitous – he is not everywhere at the same time, and it will be in the hands of many people.

As a matter of fact, we hear now of 300 instructors – and you are going to need people to operate the national service. Because people are people, because there are differences in people, you will have problems, and you will have people saying that: “Yes, the Prime Minister may have had the best of intentions, but so and so is not carrying them out the way he should, so and so is showing favouritism.” This is one of the reasons behind the problems of the people distrusting national service and not wanting their “darlings” to take part.

I would like here and now to make it quite clear that these “darlings” on which the Prime Minister puts so much stress are not the “darlings” of any one special class, or any one special ethnic group. There are people from the People’s National Congress, loyal party supporters of the People’s National Congress, who are just as opposed to national service, who are just as concerned about national service as are the people of, what can be called, the opposition groups, of those who do not want it. They are your own supporters, who are also concerned, so in their interest, in the interest of Guyana and the Guyanese who are going to be involved, let us have as full an explanation as possible.

I think it is quite clearly understood and recognised by all Guyanese, and I would like to quote the Prime Minister, that accident of ethnic origin is not inconsistent with pure consciousness of being Guyanese first and foremost. Full awareness and acquaintance of this principle is as important, whether it applies to community development, to co-operatives, or indeed to national service. Happily, there are many Guyanese who recognise this and recognise

that Guyana has to be developed, but as I said, they want to be quite sure, they want to know what this national service entails, so that they will feel that they can give it their honest support. Do not worry with the individuals who try to divide Guyana, who try to break us up, because if we are split, if any scheme to develop Guyana fails – I have said this before and I repeat it again – all Guyanese will suffer. Now to go into the details.

The Paper states that there will be five corps within the national service, and summarized behind the purpose of it all, the full development and expansion of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana and its people, which through education and service we hope will be brought about. First of all, before going into the question of the operation as is stated in the Paper on the corps, let me deal with finance.

As far as I am aware, only \$1 million has been voted in our last Estimates so far for National Service, voted for capital expenditure. I understand that 400 instructors will be required and are being interviewed to instruct and lead the programme. Also too, there will be the secretariat to be manned to service the corps. One million dollars is not an awful lot of money, so we can look to many Supplementary Financial Papers during the course of this year asking for additional expenditure not only for capital expenditure but also for current expenditure, and come next Budget Day, the hon. Minister of Finance will no doubt come down, even harder than he has this last time, on the small man that he talks about, making him a real man, and tax him a bit more to pay for this national service. National Service is going to be very costly to the nation in terms of money and we are going to have to pay for it.

We have to be realistic about it. We have to be quite sure, without wishing to be frivolous over such a serious matter, that the bun is worth the penny. Many nations have to their cost discovered how expensive national service can be. In deed, some years ago, British had to end her national service because of the cost. Can we in Guyana afford National Service, afford to see how it is going to work, and the great cost to the nation? Can we afford this, or is the Prime Minister saying: can we afford not to afford it? It is going to be expensive. Let us give

serious thought and weigh the pros and cons before we embark on it and find that we cannot see it through. Let us think it will be worth it. Or should we not look for another way of nation building and welding us nearer together?

Now, sir, let us turn to the composition and the working of national service. To quote from page 7, I would just like to read two paragraphs:

“The administration of the National Service will be the direct responsibility of the Prime Minister or such other Minister designated by him but, subject to this, the Service will operate within its own independent framework provided by legislation.”

It goes on to say:

“There will be a National Service Board incorporated by Act of Parliament with the Prime Minister as Chairman and comprising other Ministers and persons nominated by him.”

Then there will be a national secretariat and the head of it will be the Director General for the national service who will be a member of the Board, the principal executive officer, and chief adviser to the Prime Minister, and he will be a uniformed member of the national service. Those details are given about how it will be comprised. Then we are told that it will be divided into two divisions under the Director General and serviced by the secretariat. I wish first to deal with the division which concerns the various field units in the first four categories, that is, the young brigade, the national cadet corps, the new opportunity corps, and the pioneer corps.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member Mrs. DaSilva, before you proceed there, perhaps this may be a convenient time to take the suspension. The sitting of the House is suspended for thirty minutes.

Sitting suspended at 4 p.m.

On resumption --

The Speaker: When the Suspension was taken the hon. Member Mrs. DaSilva was speaking. Pleas proceed.

Mrs. DaSilva: Sir, when the Suspension was taken, I had just begun to talk about the first Division which concerned the various field units and I will deal with the first four categories. I should like to make a passing comment on the Special Service Corps.

In the first Division there will be the Young Brigade, the National Cadet Corps and the New Opportunity Corps. These three units deal mainly with education both academic and practical for children between the ages of 8 and 18. By the time the child reaches the age he or she will be ready for entrance into the Pioneer corps, and the will have been exposed to the concept of the new dimension of National Service, and will have been brainwashed into the propaganda of the People's National Congress. The hon. Members might not like the term "brainwashed", they might not like the term "propaganda", but we have to be realistic that this is what will happen and this is what is causing the concern to the parents.

In the majority of our schools the ideas of co-operativism, of the thrust for agriculture, of the new Co-operative of Guyana, are already being taught. The children are accustomed to this, they are learning. It is a different age, a different way, and in spite of scathing remarks about our old colonial days, it is a fact, the children are learning it, and there is nothing basically wrong with that, we must learn, we have to move with the times and the schools are willing and the schools are doing this. The schools in which this has already been started will accelerate the programme no doubt and the schools to which it is new they will, by virtue of this, be made to start.

There is nothing wrong with this as long as it is not just talk that there will be equal opportunity for all; that there will be no class consciousness; that we will be an egalitarian society, and the little son of Ramjohn of Canje can feel that he is going to get the same chance and the same treatment as the little Burnham child from Belfield or Vlissengen Road. Nothing is wrong if this really happens.

But do not just say it. Do it and let the parents see that this is what is going to happen. Then there will be no fear. To say that the fear of those who were afraid of the nationalisation of Demba and of those who were afraid of Independence, is the same as this fear is not correct. It is not quite the same. It is a more personal thing, a more “come-home-to-the-parent” if their child will and can be involved in this, and naturally they are concerned. Parents above loyalty to country, no matter how loyal they are to their country, first are loyal to their children, and they must be concerned about how these children will be indoctrinated starting from the little ones in the Young Brigade going on to the National Cadet corps.

This is the root of this distrust and the worry about National Service. It is not that people do not recognize the concept and the need for our developing country to open up our hinterland, to get our people involved and to live and to work and play together, this is recognised. But how is it going to be done? We know of the imbalance that exists in the Government Offices, in the G.D.F., in the Police Force. People see it, they see one party group particularly in these Services, and they are going to say, “Well could not the National Service work the same way?” and, “because I am not of that particular group or that particular political persuasion am I going to be meted out with equal treatment?” Talk about it, yes, but do it is the thing.

The emphasis is going to be an agriculture and co-operative training, and national training we are told will be integrated into the school curriculum. It will be in addition to, and as well as, not instead of the accepted programme at school, and as I said there is nothing basically wrong with this. But do not use it as a means of brainwashing the children to the P.N.C.’s way of thinking. Use it as a means to get the children to be aware of their duties to their developing

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country and to grow and to be willing to serve and to work for Guyana. Use it really for Guyana and you will get support. But when people see that it is going to be used as an excuse for brainwashing then you cannot have support. If you do not have the support of this entire nation this National Service Scheme will fail.

The State paper goes on to state that before the National Service Scheme is started there will be an intensive programme of teacher training to make sure that they are aware of the new dimension of National Service, that they know what they are talking about to be able to impart it to the children. This is fine, make sure that the teachers know, make sure that the instructors do not come from one sector of the community only.

4.40 p.m.

Again, no confidence will be engendered if you just see one ethnic group. I think it was yesterday's papers in which I saw a small picture of perspective instructors being interviewed, and it was very obvious that the cameras were slanted on instructors of Indian descent. Is this to show that they are going to have instructors who are Indo-Guyanese or is this just by way of propaganda? Here is the Paper in case you thought I had a little dream.

We know that there is a shortage of teachers in our schools and with the accent being taken away from, not being great on academics but being towards the crafts, home economics for girls and the handicraft centres for boys, let us get these teachers trained and get them out into the field. We have a terrific shortage of teachers in that particular field and that is the field that this National Service needs them in most.

I would like to come next to the New Opportunity Corps. This Corps is for Guyanese up to the age of 16 years who have been in a remand home. This Corps will give these youngsters, as it were, a second chance. This is very good, to give them a second chance and opportunity. If they say that they never had a chance that is why they went the wrong way, here is their chance.

But there is one thing I want to caution about because it could present problems. By the very nature of the composition of this New Opportunity corps, everybody who is in the New Opportunity Corps will be known to have been once “bad boys and bad girls”. They will have a stigma attached to them by the very fact that the corps is made up of boys and girls who were in a remand home. You do not go to a reform school or a remand home because you have been a good little boy and done what you ought to do. You go there because you have done something wrong and by way of correction. That is alright, but we do not want a stigma attached to these people. Look at the problem we have in our country now where we cannot get jobs or where jobs are hard to find for people who have been patients of the T.B. sanatorium, people who have been at the Mahaica hospital, ex-mental hospital patients, our handicapped people, to name but a few. It is those innocent people who have done nothing except they have, unfortunately, been ill who have a stigma attached to them and it is hard to find jobs for them, how much more difficult is it not going to be for these people who will be branded as having been in the New Opportunity Corps, therefore, it means that they were in a remand home or a home of reform. They, therefore, will have this stigma. I caution against this and I would like to see and to hear how the Government hopes to get around the problem.

Sir, we come now and I wish to turn to the source of the biggest heartache and worry to the parents. I refer to the Pioneer Corps which is described, quite truthfully, as the most important branch of the National Service Scheme and this is the one that is causing the most worry to the parents.

When I began and when I spoke earlier about this State paper being very brief and not giving enough explanation and detail about the service and what our young people would have to do, it is this particular Corps I had in mind. For the first time during the Prime Minister’s talk he gave an indication that the boys will be separated from the girls.

These matters might seem trivial things to the members of this hon. House, to you, sir, and to the Ministers and feel this is bought when you have to get first and foremost the thought

of nation building. But you have to realize that the parents are first and foremost concerned about their young people, they are, particularly, concerned about their young girls. We have in Guyana the biggest proportion of our ethnic groups – our people of Indian descent. They form the majority of our population. It is well known that your young Indian girls lead a more sheltered life than the rest of the girls of other ethnic groups in the country. [**Hon. Member:** “That is a lie.”] This is a fact and I am surprised to hear a Guyanese Member of Indian descent saying ‘lie’ because he should know better. We have hear a letter sent by an Indian Religious Organisation asking us and bringing out the very points on which I am going to speak about these young girls [**Interruption**] Certainly I will give you the name of the organization. It is a Hindu Religious Organisation. I am not spelling out the individual names. Our Indian girls are more closely within the family. They do not go around like other young girl and young people of other ethnic groups. The country ones, especially, may never have left home. We still have those who hardly know what Georgetown is like and when they come they must have their mothers, aunts and sisters with them. This is perfectly true and I know and I can bring cases that I know. It goes on and you know it and it is no need trying to fool yourself. They do not know freedom, in the sense that the rest of the girls and women of the other ethnic groups in Guyana know, they get married. They do not have an opportunity to know freedom in the sense that we know it.

We are proud in Guyana of our women and of our girls in that they lead the way in the Caribbean. Indeed, in this House the women and girls of Guyana are well represented and have a higher percentage of representation than the women and girls in the other Caribbean countries. But the fact remains that we have big proportion of our population that are concerned about these young girls. How they are going to fear for the first time when they leave home, leave their little village on the East Coast or the East Bank or in the interior. They have never done anything more difficult than a little bit of sewing and some cooking and sweeping. Are they going to be able to feel trees and clear paths? Are they going to be able to pick up a gun? If they go and do the training with the G.D.F., how much of these will they have to do? We are told that it will be voluntary but can they, if they are not feeling well, stay in bed a little late or will it be a real

[Mrs. DaSilva contd.]

military rigid organization where they have to abide by certain rules? Although we appreciate the fact that the discipline that will come from the Pioneer Corps would do our young people and our nation a world of good, we still have to be concerned because these are the things that are worrying our people. What, too, about their religious customs and their religious festivals? What is going to happen to the Muslims when Ramadan comes around? It is not a question of race barriers, it is a question of fact. How are the Muslims going to be able to observe the duties of their religion at the time of Ramadan with a rigid military training, or are they going to be excused? You will have to explain this. You do not give enough explanation. How will the pioneer corps deal with their customs regarding food? Some do not eat port. Some do not eat meat, are they going to have halall meat, halall chicken or mutton, for those of Moslem faith?

It is no laughing matter. It is serious matter to the people, our Guyanese of Moslem persuasion and our Hindu Guyanese, and we have to consider all the Guyanese when you are putting up a scheme like this. How do you expect it to work? So you must offer an explanation of how these matters will be dealt with. That is the way you will make a success of your national service, by getting the co-operation and the understanding of the people. That is the way you are going to make it a success and everybody will join voluntarily. And because it is voluntary, it will go from strength to strength and people will not be there by compulsion.

Continuing, the pioneer corps will be a way of letting us all get together, by living together and working together, and getting to know each other, and we will allow Guyana to advance, but before this happens, we have to be sure people know what it entails so they will have no fear, they will not be ignorant. The concept of the pioneer corps is good but the way it will be administered, how the problems will be dealt with, is another matter and I urge those who are going to reply, to take need of what I say and give an answer to it.

In relation to the pioneer corps, the hon. Prime Minister talked of young people, after leaving secondary school but before going to the University of Guyana, being exposed to life in

[Mrs DaSilva contd.]

the pioneer corps and knowing how the other half lives.

There are two sides of every story and we maintain it is not a question of “little darlings”, as he talks about, with special privileges and all that sort of nonsense. That is so much rubbish, but the one true thing he did say is that there are young people from the so-called middle classes and upper middle classes, who are just as worthless and are just as much limers and free riders as some of the poor unfortunates who hang around the street corners; everybody one sees hanging around the street corner is not necessarily a limer or a free rider; he is there because we have not got work for him.

If in this pioneer corps we are providing work for our unemployed people, it would achieve a good purpose. But to go back to this business of sending these people into the pioneer corps before they go to the University of Guyana. It is well known that when you break the discipline, and the habit and the routine of study it is difficult to start again. They are being asked to break it by leaving secondary school and going into a completely changed way of life, and then after a year, going back to study. When you break this, it is very hard to take up the discipline and the strain again, to force yourself to study. Studying is not a picnic. It takes an effort. It is well known that this is very difficult. Why make it difficult?

There is a simple solution which can solve your problem. The long August vacation or what used to be called in colonial days “the summer holidays” is a long period, two months. Why not allow the young people at the University of Guyana to do their national service during the month of August? They will be complying with the Prime Minister’s request, they are exposed to the other way of life at the same time as they are doing their U.G. training. They will not be getting something from the State for nothing, without giving something in return. This is a simple way to solve the problem.

If your course is a four-year course, it is simple mathematics; you will have done four months in four years. When you have finished your four-year period, four from twelve leaves eight, you will have completed your studies, you do you other eight months, you would not have the break between secondary school and university and you would have the exposure to the pioneer corps, the way of life the Government wants at the same time. I urge the hon. Members and the Prime Minister to think about this.

Another matter, when you come to the pioneer corps, the question again of fear and ignorance, not knowing what it is all about. Much goodwill can be generated by having as they do in schools, an Open Day. Maybe then can do this once every three months, where the parents of the young people can come to the sites of the pioneer corps and visit, and see how they live, how they work, how they play, see what is going on, because when they can see, they will be satisfied. This would be a good idea to build confidence in the national service. That is another thought put forward for the Government's consideration.

Hon. Members of the House, and maybe you, too, sir, may think the points I have made in connection with these young people are trivial, are not worthy of consideration – thoughts for their concern, and concerns of the parents. The Hon. Minister, who is also a parent and whose children will have to do national service, should be concerned about these matters. As we are told, it is not forced labour, it is not slave labour, it is not a labour camp, it should be explained so the parents can understand, then, in that way, they will co-operate.

One consoling thought to people who are opposed to National Service is that in the beginning, and for some time to come, it will be on a voluntary basis. It will not be compulsory. When this scheme begins and is voluntary, let it be used as a period of time when they can correct what is wrong, improve and do better where needed. They can get over their teething problems, so that when the compulsory stage comes it will go smoothly, people will be satisfied, and they will support it.

This is the time to make full use of it on a voluntary basis. This is the time when we can fill the national service and provide employment for all. National service could be in a way an answer to our problem. We have high percentage of unemployment in Guyana. Many of them, these young people on the street corners, are not just free riders and limers. They are there because there are no jobs, and if this national service can provide jobs for these young people, well then, it would certainly be an answer to Guyana's prayer. Use the national service first for the volunteers, and then make it compulsory for those who are not employed.

For example, if you make it compulsory and you start taking the employed, look at the problems that are going to come up. Some of these young people, in spite of unemployment, are working. Most of them are young married people, and now that we have got eighteen as the age of consent, we will have more young married people with families which they have got to support. Some might be the sole support of an aged mother or father or both. These young people, their money is being depended upon, whatever way you look at it, and with the high cost of living even more so.

What pay, what salary, and what remuneration are these young people in the pioneer corps, young adults, going to receive? It is not sufficient to say: we are feeding them, clothing them, and housing them. If they have somebody dependent upon them, they have got to provide money for that old mother or father, or for that wife and young baby at home to live.

5 p.m.

How much are they going to get? I do not know how you would work out the salary scale to each according to his need. Maybe we will be told. But this is what we want to know. What remuneration will these young people receive?

Another thing, when it becomes compulsory, when you start calling up these young people, 18 to 25, from our Government Offices, our shops, our factories, the agriculturalists from

[Mrs. DaSilva continues]

the rice field and so on, who is going to fill their places. If you take out a great number, are the proprietors of the shops going to be able to pay the salaries to these young people when they are in National Service as well as pay somebody to do their jobs? Where is that money going to come from? Or would the places be left vacant? You can have one or two places vacant for a little while, somebody is sick you can understand that, but for one year it is a long time. And if you leave the place vacant it would impair efficiency and we could certainly not afford to have efficiency impaired more than it is already in Guyana. These are points which have to be answered. Let the people know and then you will get them to support your National Service.

There is another aspect too. So every rule there is always an exception: there is always some very good reason why it could not be done, the law recognises this. I do not see in this State paper any place where you can appeal, any board to which you can appeal, any person to whom you can appeal if you do not want to do National Service. [The Prime Minister: "It is voluntary."] It will be compulsory later on. This, I take it we are debating forever and ever. We are not talking for today and next week; it is going to be compulsory later on. There can be very good reasons why a person may not be able to do National Service, reasons of health, compassionate reasons, reasons of religion, there may be reasons of conscience. There is no provision made for compassionate reasons. You may have an aged mother and you are her sole means of support. That is one example of what compassionate reason means for those who do not know. You go off to National Service, who is going to keep the old lady alive? There must be an appeal, there must be a board, there must be a person to whom you can turn to have your case heard. Nobody means that you must have this to be abused by any crank or malingerer, but you must have such a facility, a board or person for appeal. Will the Government in reply please tell us how and where this will be handled?

People are going to be watching the Pioneer Corps in its voluntary stages. There are going to be watching and waiting to see. As we always talk about leading the way in the Caribbean, the rest of our cousins are going to be looking and maybe they have National Service

ideas too. Therefore we have to set the example of how it is going to work. Let us put ourselves in order. Do not let us have it in a way that anybody can point a finger at us. Let us have it right from the first. This is the time to do it, not when it is established and on the way.

Now, sir, as I said there is nothing basically wrong with the concept, but it is the application is what is important. The section o the State Paper which deals with the Special Service corps did not have any explanation as such and there are some questions in the minds of those who could be involved. Well, the hon. Prime Minister said this afternoon that there will be a register of professionals open. At least we have an idea of how it is going to operate; and this is what we want. I have spoken to quite a few professionals and many of them, by and large, are willing to throw in their lot. But they want to know what is going to happen to their practice when they are away for two months. This is a long time. I am taking now abut doctors (not those who belong to a private hospital group) or a dentist. When a baby is going to be born or you have a toothache you do not wait and say the doctor or the dentist is doing National Service, hang on for two months. It has to be done now. Who is going to look after their practice while they are doing National Service?

The Paper states that:

“Members will continue to receive their salaries during assignments if employed by Government, public corporations, or the large groupings within the private sector. In other cases they will receive an allowance to enable the normal living expenses of their dependents to be met while they are on assignment.”

Who is going to decide what are the normal living requirements of their dependents? They may also have besides their wives and children one or two people dependent on them for a living. For instances, the dentist many have his dental mechanic, a receptionist, and maybe the cleaner. How are you going to work out how much money you are going to give them? What is the yardstick used for measurement? These are the questions people are asking, give them the answers and you will get their support.

Keeping National Service on a voluntary basis, and as it is envisaged here it will be for quite some time to come, is probably the solution to the needs to open up our country, to get our young people to go into the Interior. There would be the establishment of the townships as we were told, and the hon. Prime Minister quoted the one on Kimbia on the Berbice River.

Then there will also be National Service Centres located at Mahdia, Five-Miles, Matthews Ridge, and Kato. These are the Centres and these are the places they are hoping to encourage these young people to go and settle, which is a good thing. Because Georgetown is not Guyana, we all cannot live and work in Georgetown. We have to expand, we have to get our Kato and our Matthews Ridge just as much as England has its Birmingham and U.S.A. has its Chicago.

We have to get other cities and it is time we started moving out. But in having these other cities we must have the facilities to them and we must push ahead with the roads that link the capital with these new cities, push ahead with them, then the young people are going to go. We are always putting the cart before the horse in this place, get the roads and they will go. Right now you know the problems you have at Tumatumari; when you get them up there, they get away if you do not keep a good eye on them. I do not know what the Government is going to do with these give Centres; you will really have to man them with the G.D.F. or they are going to get away like I said. Because whether we like it or not they are accustomed to the City like – the cinema, the juke box and what you have, so you have to get that up to them to encourage them to stay. Maybe as I said when they get up there and they learn and the new townships are established and they become citizens of these new towns, they will realize their responsibilities. They will then see the virtue and the good that came from National Service and as the Prime Minister keeps saying they will not have lost the opportunity.

5.10 p.m.

But before they go the parents have got to be convinced and we, in this House, have got to be sure that they understand what it is all about.

[Mrs. DaSilva continued]

And out of this Pioneer Corps we will, naturally, have the Special Reserve Corps that will just follow. Nothing is wrong with the Special Reserve Corps. Of course, you have to get the Pioneer Corps working first before we get the Special Reserve Corps. As I said, the concept is good, we find nothing wrong with that because we want our country developed. But it is the way it is going to be worked. It is the way it is going to be put into practice. That is the fear the people have. If the Government can do all it can to give full and proper explanations, they will get support but until they do this, they cannot get support.

We see it at the moment as a very sketchy explanation of what they Hope to do. We see it as an excuse for brain washing. It is an unnecessary extravaganza. You have the G.D.F. and you have the Youth Corps, why not expand and develop these? You can still have your townships but do not start something new and costly especially when we do not have the money. You can still have your townships but do not start something new and costly especially when we do not have the money. We are not convinced that National Service can be afforded in this country. We are not convinced that National service as envisaged in this Paper is what is needed. We need to build our country but the way it is being done in this Paper is not the answer. Let the Government make use of our existing services, build them, expand the G.D.F. and the Youth Corps and open up our country as we are doing. Use it on a voluntary basis, build the confidence of the nation. Encourage more of the concepts that I mentioned was good in this Paper. Let everybody see what it is. This as, it were, forced service – although I will admit it is not stated that it will be forced as yet – definite brainwashing of Guyanese, especially the young ones, to change them, to get them to think the P.N.C. way. It is not going to be met with general popular feeling. We have got to consider this and we have thought it over. We have discussed it with many people including P.N.C. supporters and, therefore, we feel that taken on all sides and weighing it all the way round, we cannot support this Motion.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, Mr. Corbin

Mr. Corbin The Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Co-operatives and National Mobilisation: Mr. Speaker, the year 1974 is, indeed, a significant year for Guyana; a year which poses many challenges for our nation; a year which will demonstrate the seriousness of the P.N.C. Government in creating a truly co-operative, socialist society; a year which will witness further strides in the ownership and control of our natural resources, greater advancement in the F.C.H. Programme; and a year which will see us moving closer to self-reliance. Most significantly, however, 1974 promises to be the year of the Youth since the long awaited programme of National Service will be introduced. This is a scheme which is clearly an extension of our educational system; a scheme which will provide additional training in skills relevant to development; a scheme which will foster the development of attitudes relevant to development; a scheme which will foster the development of attitudes relevant and essential for the rapid development of Guyana; a scheme which has been well received and has the full support of the masses of Guyanese Youth.

Today, we have before us the White Paper on National Service which sets out in detail not only its objectives but also how the scheme will be operated. The P.N.C. Government, unlike others who talk, has always made it a habit of setting out its programmes and policies for all to read and understand. The National Service scheme is no exception though it is good for us to note that long before the plan was released there was adverse criticism from one “Paper Tigers” in our community who had not even taken time to be constructive. Perhaps, we were expecting too much of them. Unlike those who had not the foresight or the imagination to be constructive, I would like us today for a few minutes to examine National Service and review the many benefits of this scheme to the nation and, more particularly, the benefits the young people, who comprise more than sixty per cent of the Guyanese population, will derive.

The introduction of National Service, Mr. Speaker, demonstrates the ability of the Government not only to analyse the local conditions and problems but to devise programmes for the solutions

of those problems. An examination of the Guyanese society will reveal some significant facts. Of course, we must sympathise with those who lack the mental discipline to carry out this analysis. National Service when it is introduced will certainly help them to do so.

The three hundred years of colonial rule with its concomitant, social and economic system has produced a people not fully oriented to production and a people with attitudes inimical to their own development. Moreover, we feel the effects of their divide and rule tactics so that national unity today is listed as one of our major objectives.

Our economy is typical of all colonial and ex-colonial territories where there was exploitation of our human and natural resources and the exportation of all profits. Our educational system in the past was geared not to suit the needs of Guyanese but to create a dependent lacking self-reliance.

The last five years, however – and I say the last five years because I will not make reference to the years when we were hamstring and had to make some temporary retreats because of the heavy weight of the U.F. coalition – have witnessed a series of revolutionary programmes by the P.N.C. Government to correct this situation. We have witnessed the arresting of power from the Imperialist ALCAN by the nationalization of DEMBA. In such a revolutionary undertaking we witnessed the manipulation of the imperialists among dedicated by disoriented workers. Had they fully understood the importance of such a move, their reactions would have been much different. We have witnessed serious efforts made by the P.N.C. Government to promote our agricultural revolution, to encourage people – particularly young people – to go to the land. But what do we find? Let us face the facts. We have been seen efforts by many young people to move towards agricultural programmes and projects.

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National Assembly

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[Mr. Corbin continued]

5.20 p.m.

Many of them, however, Mr. Speaker, because of the orientation they received from the past educational system, failed to acquire the skills which are relevant for the success of the agricultural programme.

We have witnessed serious efforts made toward housing and clothing the nation by 1976. Again, however, we find many young people who left school as recently as a few years ago not being able to participate meaningfully in the programme because they had no exposure to this type of training. We have witnessed several efforts by the P.N.C. Government to promote self-reliance and to encourage co-operative ownership by the people. Though we have been very successful in obtaining maximum participation by Guyanese in self-help projects, in many parts of the country, in many areas there is still need for an energizer, for someone from without to give a push start before some communities can execute projects on their own.

Thousand of young people leave school annually and, because of the curriculum to which they had been previously exposed and the experience which they have had in school life, they are ill-equipped to work in groups and to appreciate the full value of co-operative action. How are we to correct the situation? Are we, as a Government, fully conscious of our responsibility to the nation to build a truly egalitarian society, going to bury our heads in the sand like ostriches and fail to tackle these aforementioned problems that we have highlighted? As the leader of this country pointed out on New Year's Day, we cannot afford to choose popularity at the expense of development. National Service must be seen as a extension of our educational system, to lend an important supportive role to the revolutionary programme of the P.N.C. Government, by giving people the opportunity to participate fully.

As the State Paper points out, National Service will provide additional training especially in the development of skills relevant to our Development Programme. Are those who criticize saying that we must deprive people of the opportunity of receiving additional training?

We recognise that the multilateral school system will cater for those who are still in the school system, while the Curriculum Development Unit is working feverishly at the re-organising of our school curriculum, but have those who criticize seriously thought of the thousands of youths who leave school annually and, even though willing, cannot prepare a seed bed or, for that matter, handle a hammer or a saw.

And let us look at the skills which are going to be taught in the National Service, not the sort of propaganda that the hon. Member was speaking about a few minutes ago, but we see quite clearly set out in this State Paper that there will be training provided in co-operativism, agricultural training, theoretical and practical. Perhaps the hon. Member feels that agricultural training is propaganda. We must sympathise. There will be industrial skill training, craft training, cultural training, training to understand the values of the Co-operative Republic, pioneer training, and para-military training and calisthenics.

Are we going to deprive the young people of this nation of this opportunity to learn? Anyone who tries to do this is stabbing young Guyana in the back, as was done prior to the 1973, 16th July, elections, in the vote at 18 issue. Thanks to the work of the young people at the 16th July elections, today, because of the P.N.C., the age of majority is now 18 years. The youths will not again be defrauded of their rights. They have demonstrated their full support of this scheme.

The State Paper clearly points out that emphasis will be placed on a practical approach to training and it will provide the opportunity for on-the-job learning. Research has established that one of the most effective ways of learning is by doing. What better opportunity can be want than that provided through National Service?

In my earlier remarks, I pointed out the danger to which a country like Guyana is exposed when a people's Government pursues a revolutionary socialist programme, and I referred to the disorientation of workers at the time of the nationalization of the bauxite works. But that is only one case. We have witnessed the manipulations of the local capitalist exploiters through the

creation of artificial scarcities and the resultant rise in prices when the External Trade Bureau has introduced. This, they attempted to mislead the nation into believing that this institution, which was established primarily to protect the small man from exploitation, was not in the best interest of the nation.

We have witnessed a time when people showed a lack of understanding of the co-operative movement, a movement which is socialist in character, and which seeks to ensure the equitable distribution of wealth. If we have a population which does not fully understand the many national international issues, it can be misled easily, and the result can be the failure of our revolution.

A good example is the present oil crisis. There are some “Paper Tigers” in our community who seize these opportunities to mislead the nation and, because we have not had a National Service to provide the sort of educational opportunities of people so that they can understand the many international issues affecting the oil crisis, we have a few dishonest leaders in the community who are telling people that the government is responsible for the high cost of petrol in the present situation in Guyana. The National Service will ensure that people understand these issues so that they will not be the pawns of a few dishonest people among us.

Who will suffer most if we fail to own and control our natural resources, if we fail to feed, clothe, and house the nation, if we fail fails to achieve national self-reliance? Again, it is the young people of this nation who will suffer most. National Service will provide an opportunity for people to learn and understand the many issues, thus getting them oriented towards the goal of an independent socialist society.

My. Speaker, one of the evils of colonialism has been the way in which the society was stratified, resulting in the establishment of a number of class divisions and a class consciousness among some people in certain communities. Granted, some of these rigid class divisions and a class consciousness exist among some people in certain communities. Granted, some of these

rigid class divisions have been broken down, but the class consciousness is still present among many people in our society.

The leader of this Government a few minutes ago made a few references, cases where people have actually said that they do not believe that their sons, who come from the higher class of this society, should mix. The hon. Member of the Opposition was speaking a few minutes ago, and I am sure she was not conscious when she herself said that the boys, who have been prisoners and so on, are bad boys and we must not expose these influences in this community. So the class consciousness which we speak about is still present, even sometimes in our midst, and this is the sort of situation which we must try to correct in our society.

5.30 p.m.

National Service will provide an opportunity for people to mix freely because the P.N.C. believes in upholds the principles of human dignity and human self-respect. That is why National Service will provide an opportunity for all Guyanese to work side by side and through this process of interaction will learn to respect each other. Which dedicated and freedom-loving Guyanese will say that these are not noble objectives of such a scheme of course, one recognises the political football which is constantly in use whenever progressive programmes are put forward by the People's National Congress.

But even those in our society who make noble references to incidents in other parts of the world fail to recognise the involvement of even their people in national development. There are some in our society who praise Cuba. Only a few weeks ago I was hearing at a big meeting where people were saying that Cuba was such a great country and yet those people fail to recognise that in Cuba a fully militarized people, a people who are fully mobilized are constantly involved in national development. Perhaps our good friends have never heard of the various workers brigade, of Cuba, of the Che Guevara revolutionary front and the many self-help projects organised by bands of young people in that country. In Tanzania we see the same

system applying where Governments that are serious about national development try to involve their people meaningfully in the process of development.

Finally, I wish to draw to the attention of the hon. Members on the opposite side that this Scheme is not an airy-fairy scheme as they attempted to suggest, but it is a well thought-out scheme. Let us look at this Scheme for a moment. Page 5 of this State Paper sets out quite clearly what are the objectives of the Scheme. I do not know if the hon. Member who spoke on the opposite side of this House expected to see a replica of the 1972/1976 Development Plan presented for a State Paper. But we will sympathise with them because we hope that having read this they now fully understand the goals of such a service. We have seen that the Scheme so, well designed, sets in clear terms how the P.N.C. Government proposes to deal with the various categories of the population from the point of school age. The hon. Member of the Opposition could take out her notebook and note that eminent researchers like Robert Hebert Horse, Sir John Piagy and Gordon Allport, all of these are eminent psychologists who have done a lot of research on the development of the human personality and they have found that the most important time for the development of attitudes and the formation of values is both at home and at school. It is therefore very important that if we are to create a new Guyanese man who fully understand the issues, a Guyanese who fully understands that we are ensuring that we proceed along the right road of development we will have to start at a time when they are at an age where they can formulate the correct attitudes.

Then we see that the Plan takes care of those even in the school system. It goes on to deal with those who have left the school system through the Pioneer Corps. The very limers that the hon. Member spoke about a few minutes ago are going to be taken care of; she was wondering if they are going to be left on the streets. The hon. Member is claiming that they are on the streets because there is no work and at the same time she is coming before this House to tell us that we must not have National Service. What are we to do with the thousands of young people who do not possess skills and are liming at the street corners? I should like the hon. Member to seriously address her mind to that problem. I do not know if it would be too much to

ask the opposition to put forward an alternative programme that will deal with these problems. We only have airy-fairy criticisms most times when revolutionary and progressive programmes are put forward.

There was the problem raised about finance. The hon. Member is worried; she wants to know how is it that \$1 million could be voted. I cannot reason along the lines of this hon. Member when she fails to recognise the benefit of this National Service to the nation by relating it to the fact that the small man will have to pay more tax. But does she fail to recognise that after National Service is started and the young people are mobilized and you have trained them to be productive you will no longer have that problem of limers on the streets? Who will be worried about tax? They will be able to shoulder their responsibilities of a nation. Or is it that we fail to recognise that this Scheme is not a social welfare institution but rather a scheme which is designed to be productive and in the final analysis be self-sufficient. That is why certain areas of the country have been chosen, areas with rich agricultural potential, areas that can produce food so that those who are participating in the programme can eat well and be healthy, and when they move into areas of economic activity they will be fully equipped to carry on to task. How costly could this be to the nation? I dare say that this will not be costly to the nation but it will indeed aid this nation greatly and help us to solve our problems and achieve self-reliance at an even faster rate.

The hon. Member asked: Can we afford unemployment and dis-orientation? And she makes reference to Britain. This is a typical example where there is a failure to analyse – I am not saying to make reference, there is a failure to analyse the conditions which operated there at the time. It is not bad to make references for your information, but when you make reference you must be able to analyse the situation properly; and reference to Britain was made without any careful analysis of the conditions which existed at the time when the hon. Member pointed out that they had to discontinue it. Is Guyana in such a situation now? Let the hon. Member do some more analysis.

We hear of this programme being used to brainwash people. We hear of this programme being misused by the P.N.C. for propaganda purposes. If the hon. Member means that telling young people who live in Guyana that they should try to be self-reliant and not to be dependant on imported food and they should grow their own food; if the hon. Member feels that telling young people that if this nation is to develop we have got to develop our rich agricultural potentials, we would have to acquire relevant skills, that we would not be the powers of any major country of the world, that they must understand the issues, that they must respect their fellow Guyanese as men and that they must forget the class consciousness which has made problems in our society over the years; if the hon. Member means that these teachings are brainwashing then I would say that it is good to brainwash. If this is brainwashing I submit that we will have to say this is good to adopt because we ourselves have been subjected to three hundred years of colonial brainwashing. All our systems and all our procedures have been determined by colonial masters who geared the system to satisfy their own ends.

Of course. Mr. Speaker, I was indeed happy to hear that the hon. Members on the other wise were interested in class consciousness and this is where we find typical misrepresentation of facts. This is the sort of irresponsible behaviour that has caused so much confusion in this country when the hon. Member would dare to come before a House of this caliber and tell us that we are not placing any accent on the development of academic training and skills. I submit that this is a gross misrepresentation of the facts and this is the sort of misrepresentation which continues to feed at the root of the success of this nation.

We know, that at the same time National Service is going on in this country there will be no cut back on the other educational programmes which are being pursued ruthlessly by the People's National Congress Government. Even at this very moment while we are debating National Service there are Multilateral Schools being constructed in various parts of the country and we are still speaking of improving the facilities of the University of Guyana. A new Teachers' Training College has just been open at Turkeyen and still the hon. Member comes before this

House to tell us that there will be no accent laid on academic training in National Service. This is gross misrepresentation. This is the sort of irresponsible behaviour which mislead the nation. National Service is a supportive role, it is an extension of the educational system. So I hope the hon. Member will not make the mistake again and I hope she will take out her notebook and copy it. **[Laughter]**

In this country, we have been facing serious problems and the challenge of racial integration is getting Guyanese to work and live together as individuals who respect each other's customs. But when we come before this honourable House, Mr. Speaker, and in the height of high level discussion we hear reference to girls being sheltered and that this National Service will cause them to remove from this shelter and is provide all sorts of evils, I think it is an attempt to deceive this House about the real situation in Guyana. But, of course, we must sympathize with the hon. Member who really not competent to speak on the activities of young people in this nation. **[Laughter]**

When we look at the exposure which people of all ethnic groups have been continuing to have in this country we are seeing quite a different picture to what the hon. Member suggests. But even if we were to accept this point and put it in a real terms and move this very sheltered individual into the National Service. There will be separate camps and there will be strict supervision. I am sure that the hon. Member – probably she wrote here script before the hon. Prime Minister spoke – would have heard the leader of this country explaining this just a few minutes ago. I do not know if, again, we are trying to deceive.

Let us make reference to what is already in existence. I heard a brief, silent comment about the Youth Corps. I would ask the hon. Member if she ever heard of any pregnancies there. This, Mr. Speaker, is an important aspect of development. The hon. Member on the other side of the House is worried about the loose discipline, how these sheltered girls are going to be exposed and I dare the hon. Member to lift one finger at the Youth Corps. I am reliable informed that in

the youth Corps there has been one health marriage and this is what we hope will come out of National Service. [**Applause**]

We hear arguments being put forward about religious constraints. Are we to understand that if Ramadan had fallen at the time of the Arab/Israeli conflict that all the soldiers in the field would have closed shop, stop fighting, put up all arms and started to fast? I wonder if this is what the hon. Member is trying to tell us on this side of the House, that because someone is a Muslim or a Hindu or a Christian or any other faith for that matter, National Service would prevent that individual from practicing his or her religion. This partisan Government has always said that it believes and will continue to uphold the freedom of worship. Every week in Parliament we hear various Petitions from various churches asking to be incorporated in Guyana. We are demonstrating that we believe in the freedom of religion and how dare the hon. Member suggest that this Government is going to put religion away and allow young people not to expose themselves to this form of religions activity.

5.50 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, education in this country has for years been greatly subsidized and to large extent financed by the State. In some Primary Schools and even in some of the Church Schools the teachers are paid by Government funds.

It is the people's money, the very taxpayers' money which helps to provide education for the young people of Guyana. Therefore, when we hear people, who have not taken time to make a careful analysis of the benefits of this scheme, telling us that entry into the University of Guyana should not have as a criterion service to the nation, we believe they are upholding the principle of selfishness. They are upholding the principle of exploitation because those persons who do not want to give service to the nation are exploiting the services which the nation had afforded them. National Service provides an opportunity for them to contribute to national development.

I will not go into the other points raised by the hon. Prime Minister about the other benefits of having a mature person study, but I know for sure that in the context of our development, if we were to look carefully at the sort of skills and the exposure which young people will have in the national Service, we can conclude that if they should give the National Service before going to University, they will get the sort of grounding, they will get the sort of orientation which can be very helpful in assisting them to determine the sort of career that they will follow.

Let us take the case of a young man who probably has had a good and sound secondary school education. He has passed a number of science subjects, but he has gone into the National Service, and after spending one year working among his fellow Guyanese, he has done a lot of agriculture, he had done a little bit of house building, he has done a little bit of masonry, he has done a little bit of boat building, he has done a little bit of forestry. I humbly submit that that individual is in a better position to decide what career he or she ought to follow and, therefore, National Service will provide the sort of training ground to give young people not only skills for which they have aptitudes but skills which they will recognise as important for the development of this nation.

Finally, the ending up of the hon. Member's rendition, for indeed it was a rendition, pointed out that limers were still there on the streets, and there was no work, and there was concern about getting them off the streets, and yet, no National Service. There was worry about entertainment and all the additional aspects of the all-round development, but I think I see on the programme of National Service that there will be cultural development, cultural training, which will ensure that members are exposed to all sorts of training. Then, of course, we have our own singing M.P., who can go into the National Service and provide some wonderful renditions, entertaining the young people and telling them about the "salt-fish" mentality.

All in all, we can see that National Service is indeed a most welcome step in the history of this country. The young people of Guyana look forward to such a move. The young people

will not be misled into believing that they should deprive themselves of an opportunity for further training. I urge those, who are listening to the gossip of these “Paper Tigers” in our community, to think seriously of their own development, to think seriously of Guyana, to think seriously of the very challenging road ahead, and volunteer fully to serve effectively in the National Service.

The Speaker: Hon. Member Mr. Feilden Singh.

Mr. Singh: Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the hon. Member Mrs. DaSilva has dealt very admirably with such vague details, and with the details that it did not include, as the State Paper . I have no desire, indeed, I think it would be impossible to deal with the ranting and ravings of the previous speaker, because it is obvious that he was not listening to what my colleague was saying, or if he was listening, he would not understand what she was saying. Indeed, he made no attempt to answer the very valid questions raised by her in her contribution in this Parliament.

This we have read in the papers, that they are recruiting instructors. We have read in the papers about the sites being started. I suppose what we are doing here is merely an exercise in getting down some comments and rubber stamping what the Government decides.

Let me repeat that there is nothing wrong with the concept of National Service per se, but is there any need at the present time, bearing in mind our present financial position and, indeed, our existing institutions? Is there any need to set up a separate distinct, elaborate, bureaucratic and obviously costly scheme, such as is barely outlined in this State Paper? Let me give one example. Do we really need national Service and the New Opportunity Corps to give young people from the reform schools another chance? Can we not fit them into the existing Youth Corps? Surely, there is no need for National Service in order to give people from reform schools a second chance.

According to the Prime Minister's State Paper, the primary aim of the National Service is to create a society which is recognizably Guyanese in character. But is it not a fact that national character is something which evolves and which is not imposed by the State? The State's contribution to the development of a national character is rooted solely in its ability to maintain an open and a free society, where diversity and tolerance become gradually the most conspicuous qualities. Indeed, after the long process of living together in tolerance and diversity, then a truly national character will emerge. It most assuredly cannot emerge as the product of the political and bureaucratic drawing board.

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You cannot impose it on the people. The State Paper goes on to complain that "...another social legacy of colonialism is that want of the true spirit of self-reliance in many quarters." Just imagine this statement emanates from a Government which has stifled individual enterprise by outrageous taxes, a Government which has discouraged private initiative by placing bureaucratic controls and barriers in the way, a Government which has eliminated many of the incentives for creativity, personal commitment and investment, now discovers that self-reliance is on the wane. We hope that it would eventually dawn on some that the State cannot embrace the whole political, economic structure and expect to see self-reliance flourishing under the dark shadow of Government.

Indeed, the Government's only accomplishment in the realm of self-reliance has been by its negative acts to encourage a national brain drain which sees our most talented and ambitious youths leaving Guyana rather than waste or risk their skills on drives in a land where the individual is submerged, where the individual is buried by the bureaucrat. Far from learning the lesson that state control and direction are not the key to a national life of quality, harmony and sufficiency, the Government now proposes National Service as a further involvement by the State in the fabric of Guyanese life.

[Mr. Singh continued]

Mr. Speaker, as I said before, it is true that we are now debating National Service but this is merely a rubber stamp. The government has made its decision. As it has been doing all along, it will impose its decision on us. We have read the advertisements appearing first in the **New Nation** and subsequently in the other newspapers. We have read the advertisements for instructors. We have all read the subsequent propaganda published in the newspapers. We have seen in the newspapers a picture, very nicely taken, of individuals waiting to be interviewed – by what? By something that has already been set up despite all this talk in Parliament here. Something that has been set up already according to the Guyana Graphic of Tuesday, 8th January, called the National Service Planning Unit which has been interviewing nearly 400 prospective candidates. Like so many aspects of our life this is yet another example where the Government is bulldozing its ideas, facing its wishes down our throats, and trying to impose upon us what it says is something to evolve a national character.

I suppose my comments here in this House will be merely for the record. But comment we shall, we have a duty to comment. The Government's proposal initially calls for concentrating on training the unemployed. But what is the first priority in this National Service? It is to develop personal skills? No. The first priority stated on page 4:

“to ensure that all Guyanese within the formal training system are made aware of the new values of an Independent society and understand the relationship between the new society and themselves.”

What are these new values? What was wrong with the old ones? We are talking about new values now, we are not talking about attitudes or indoctrination. Do we not as Muslims, as Christians, as Hindus and at least theoretically as democrats, have an acceptable and durable value systems? As a result of all these religious backgrounds do we not have one? Are you saying that those are no values at all? Or has the Ruling Party in its seemingly endless tinkering with our national life found new values which have been overlooked? Who is this great discoverer who has discovered these new values for the government? Certainly if he pretends to

have formulated values to surpass those pursued by Christ, by Mohamed, by Buddha, by Gandhi and others, then he deserves recognition. Let us know how he is. But it should be pointed out to this newest prophets and philosophers that the Government insists that a national character has yet to be developed by the State. How then, in the absence of this national character, has our phantom prophet ascertained a new set of values?

The reason is obvious. What we are being treated to is something which the P.N.C. is intent on pushing down our throats as a new set of values. Therefore, this new set of values is a “take it or leave it basis”, and if we leave it we have to take it because eventually it will be compulsory.

We say that the steps to help the unemployed have nothing to do with new values. The steps are rooted in the old values which are hard work, discipline, responsibility and perseverance; these are the values to help the unemployed. The government can help by training and assisting in opportunities. But more important the government is to permit an atmosphere where the old values have meaning and reward.

It seems that after brainwashing and training the National Service trainee will then be deposited in the virgin hinterland as they say here in the State Paper. The Government’s insistence that all future hope lies in the interior has now apparently become dogma. What nonsense! Let us understand that there is much unused or poorly used land in the Essequibo, in the Pomeroon. These lands have more potential wealth than lands in the interior. This is a fact. The hon. Minister of Agriculture – [Dr. Reid: “National Development and Agriculture.”] The Ministries change so often that one has difficulty keeping in touch. They change as the bureaucracy changes and as the number of Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries increases and as favouritism increases.

[Mr. Singh continued]

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But talking about the land in the Essequibo and the Pomeroon, this land is closer to most of our people. This land could be conveniently reached by the exploitation of our waterways. It is a fact. Maximising the potentials of these lands near the coastal areas can be accomplished at far less cost in manpower and in money than developing the interior. Why then let this opportunity go a begging. These areas are obviously such an immediate opportunity that Guyanese would readily respond to encouragement and incentives without this great need for Government large scale mobilisation. Guyanese would respond because these are such nearer areas to go to.

According to the State Paper, National Service is not only for those unemployed but will become an integral part of the education system. Let us review the books to be used. Will they be more appropriate to the classroom or will they be more appropriate to the P.N.C. Seminar? Therein lies the question. The programme envisages the educational system being an integral part of National Service. What will you use there? Will it be books that are more appropriate to the classroom or will it be books more appropriate to a P.N.C. Seminar, perhaps, at Queens College, the educational centre, which has so often been used for brainwashing.

The present educational system already has its serious deficiencies. It abounds with poorly, qualified personal at all levels. It suffers from inadequate facilities and inadequate equipment. In fact, during the last Budget debate the hon. Minister was quite frank in admitting the drawbacks, the problems of the systems, the large classes, not enough schools, etc. She gave us the plans to deal with the situation but admitted at the same time the problems and the difficulties. Now, what are we going to do? To the hard-pressed teacher and student, the Government would not add duties not related at all to the educational process. We say, Mr. Speaker, that the educational system should be supported by the Government but it should not be at the Government's service.

When a parent sends a child off to school it should be with the sole purpose that she is sending the child there for education and not indoctrination. Let us leave the young people to their families, let us leave them to their ministers, let us leave them to their priests, let us leave them to their pundits, let us leave them to their teachers. Let us not embark on a process of indoctrinating them.

Now, to administer this all encompassing national Service, the Government intends to name a Director-General. As I said before, they have already advertised for Personnel. Who are the individuals being considered for the post of Director-General? Certainly the Government, if it is doing all these things, must have narrowed its choice down to a few. Let us debate the qualities of these few. Let us debate their appropriateness for appointment. Will it be another P.N.C. politician in search of a title? Will it be one of those rarities who is not at the present moment a Minister? We have got so many Ministers, who will it be? This is a serious matter. Let us understand and appreciate that the spirit, the flavour, of National Service will bear his or her stamp. Therefore, the initial appointment must have deep public trust. We are admitting that the government will go ahead and bulldoze this through regardless of what we say in Parliament and, therefore, with this knowledge we are warning that this must be given careful consideration. That person must have the deep confidence and public trust of the Guyanese people.

The choice of a political figure will rob the National Service of the opportunity of winning any public support at all. That is why we repeat what I said before that we recommend High Court Judge Akbar Khan as a fitting and suitable person for this post. [Laughter] There is laughter on the other side but can anyone deny that he is an individual whose integrity and competence could win the necessary trust and confidence of the Guyanese people? Can you deny that? Can anyone deny that in 1972 the President awarded Justice Akbar Khan the nation's highest honour? Can you deny that he is buttressed by this mark of the government's respect and he is blessed with a high personal reputation? Is he not one of the few men who might make National Service workable and acceptable to the Guyanese people? I am saying that despite what I say you will do it, I have said already that the Government has made its decision and we

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are merely rubber-stamp it, at least us make recommendation and he is the one man show who could possible make National Service a workable and acceptable institution in Guyana.

I should like to dwell on another minor point but it is a point that we should recognise. This is a Government which has promoted the shirt-jac as a symbol of its rejection of the former colonial garb. Am I not right? It is right. Yet according to this State Paper it is to be back to the uniform for the National Service staff. One can only hope that the P.N.C. decorator deluxe who was let loose with gallons and gallons of patriotic paint on this Public Buildings will not be unleashed in the tailor shop. The absurdity of many aspects of the proposed National Service could hardly be enhanced if the costuming will be of musical comedy design. You cannot enhance National Service if you do that. So the government must bear this in mind. It is a minor point but yet important.

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Now we come to something which has been glossed over by the Government. What is the projected cost of this National Service? In the long term? In the short term? This large-scale National Service that is proposed. Once again, we have been taken on a legislative journey fuelled, in these days of shortage of fuel, by verbiage but short of facts and figures. Does the Finance Minister, who last month read his dreary Budget Speech admitting that economic crisis was upon us, feel that the Government can afford further enormous commitments?

A sum of \$1 million has been voted. This is not significant. I am positive, judging from the expenditure on the G.D.F. and the Youth corps, that very early in this year we will have an application for supplementary provision. If we were to look at page 34 of the Estimates, we would see that the G.D.F. is costing \$13,598,000 and if farm produce is deducted, that is, \$250,000 and after that, the Capital Expenditure, \$3,120,000 is included, what do we find? A sum of \$15.7 million is to be spent on the G.D.F.

[Mr. Singh contd.]

What about the Youth Corps? Under my good friend the hon. Minister of Co-operatives and National Mobilisation, the recurrent expenditure is nicely interwoven in the general expenditure head. But if we look at the capital head, in addition to the recurrent, Co-operatives and Youth, Purchase of Equipment – [**Interruption.**] If you will listen, I will read the legend. Purchase of Equipment, \$300,000, “To provide for the purchase of miscellaneous equipment for the Youth Division.” And then further down, subhead 5, Youth Corps, \$1 million, “To provide for the settlement of Youth corps graduates, breeding stock and hydro-power and diesel stations at Tumatumari.” The first one is for equipment for the Youth corps, and the second one is for Youth corps graduates. It is headed “Youth corps.” That is the title of it.

It is obvious that this kind of thing costs plenty of money. Not \$1 million. As we have seen in the case of the G.D.F., \$15.7 million, and in the case Youth Corps, I am sure well over \$3 million - \$3.2 million is voted under Co-operatives and National Mobilisation as Capital Expenditure only.

Let us ask the question. Does a governmental machinery, which is understaffed in terms of competence, and overstaffed in terms of sheer numbers, does it have the ability, the sensitiveness to implement National Service? Where indeed – even though it is said, we ask the question again – does the G.D.F. fit into this? When last seen in action, the G.D.F. was transporting ballot boxes to the military compound. The re-emergence of the G.D.F. in the National Service must cast suspicions on the Government’s motives. What about the Youth corps? Surely, the Youth Corps could have been restructured to absorb the unemployed.

In the final analysis, let us fact the facts. The P.N.C. has had the reins of Government for the last nine years. The Government has had its chance to weld us into one people. It has had its chance to order our political and economic path. It has had its chance to channel our energies and our capacities. It has failed to do so. The Government’s call for National Service is a further admission of this failure. We believe that the power over our destiny belongs in the final

analysis with our diverse, our talented and our freedom-loving people. The Guyanese will reject these further bids for governmental power at the expense of their own. The Guyanese people will oppose this effort by the Government to substitute new values when their old values have served them well.

Finally, it is indeed strange but perhaps it is not so strange to those who know the facts. It is indeed very strange that a Government, which claims a two-thirds majority at the July 1973 elections, is now embarking on a plan to have the same Guyanese people, that it claims voted for it, reject their sense of values. The people who voted for the Government, how strange indeed, that their values were good enough in respect of elections but their values otherwise are no good. Let us ponder on this and therein we will find the answer to so many of our problems in this country.

The Speaker: Hon. Member, it is two minutes to half past six. Earlier on, I had indicated to the Chief Parliamentary Counsel that we would resume sitting at 8 p.m. As a result he left and there are two Private Members' Bill which we will have to do. I myself would have liked to sit through, but having given that undertaking to the Chief Parliamentary Counsel, I find myself not in a position to adhere to the request of the hon. Leader of the House to sit continuously until we are finished. In those circumstances, we will suspend until 8 p.m.

The Sitting of the House is suspended until 8 p.m.

Sitting suspended at 6.30 p.m.

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On resumption –

The Speaker: Hon. Minister of Housing and Reconstruction

The Minister of Housing and Reconstruction (Mr. Naraine): Mr. Speaker, the People's National Congress government has, over the past nine years, a most creditable record in office. We have heard earlier this afternoon some of the changes which took place while this Government was in office. We have heard some of the achievements which this Government has to its credit over the past nine years but what was not made very clear, and which I should like to point out, is that this Government over the past nine years has done a tremendous lot in improving the quality of living of Guyanese.

Evidence of this can be seen in the improvements, which have taken place in our roads, in water supply, in drainage and irrigation works, in electricity, telecommunication, Interior roads, and air transport. We can see also this improvement in the individual living standards of our people.

In or Feed, Clothe and House the Nation Programme we have seen able to open up new vistas and opportunities and challenges. Our wisdom in teaching the concept of self-reliance and co-operatives has become even more apparent during this recent year when the world and this country have been experiencing rapid escalation in prices for imported goods and service.

Our achievement has been a proud one. But we do not boast that we have made all the changes which are necessary or the national welfare of this country; and there is still quite a lot to be done. One thing that appears to be lacking with regard to some of these challenges facing us is a process of education, re-education and reorientation towards the problems and challenges of nation building; thus providing to every citizen both the skills and attitude necessary for economic growth. Preparation for skills is a relatively easy task. But certain attitudes

encouraged by those opposed to the Government must be changed at all costs if we are to have a more worthy and strong nation.

The hon. Member Mr. Feilden Singh stated that we should not bother with National Service but we should use the values which we have with us right now. He mentioned a few things, some of them are values which we should preserve. But there are other values that people bring with them out of our colonial past and from experiences, which we had prior to the reign of this Government; and those have been exhibited in very tangible terms here in the debate today – the values of fear and suspicion. These are values to some, these are obstacles to us. The hon. Member spoke on using these values and questioned what were the values of National Service to our educational system. I should like to refer to page 9 of the State Paper. The first paragraph states:

“...National Service will ensure that the agricultural and co-operative training received at school is fully understood as being relevant to day-to-day life, and will complement the school experience by practical exercises at weekends and during the long holidays in series of in-the-field training activities. National Service, at this level, will be voluntary and will emphasise the values of the schools system – Unity, Self-determination, collective Work and Responsibility, Co-operative Economics, Purpose, Creativity and Faith, as well as those of discipline, efficiency and productivity.”

The Hon. Member mentioned discipline and efficiency. The Members of the Opposition in this House and outside of this House have made heavy weather of such factors of religious beliefs, traditional customs and a number of other issues which they consider might not be adequately provided for in National Service. But I should like to assure all that this Government has always given consideration to all the beliefs, customs and religions which exist in this country.

But with this opposition they bring with them a teaching which is most injurious to nation-building. I will allude to some of them by making a quotation from the Bhagawad Gits which is a Hindu religious book. In Chapter 16, verse 4, it is stated:

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“ostentation, arrogance and self-conceit, anger and also harshness and ignorance belong to one who is born for demoniac state.”

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Mr. Speaker, as I speak this I am so much reminded of the years 1962 to 1964 during the P.P.P. regime when this very building was surrounded by soldiers and barbed wire, when we were having general strikes in the country, racial strife and people now moving in their footsteps are accusing this Government and expressing fears of what this Government will do through National Service. These values which they wish to pass on to the people will not make for a better nation, they will make for a weak nation one that will not be worthy of the ambition of the general people of this country.

Freedom and democracy under the P.N.C. Government has been demonstrated only today outside of this honourable house when those opposed to this government have been freely picketing and demonstrating and being very noisy even when our Prime Minister was speaking, but I would like to remind those among us who have these values that are not really relevant to what are the needs of this country that putting up a show of good behaviour and donning pompous garments is ostentation and presuming oneself as superior to others is arrogance.

The Opposition has said that we in the Peoples National Congress have got away from the pomp of donning these types of clothing. We are trying to make a nation of simple, proud and good people, not one group showing off and, as the saying goes playing braiga on the other group. And, therefore, those in our society who feel in some way or the other that they are superior – this Government will not support this type of arrogance. Priding oneself on being educated, moneyed and high-born is conceit. We would like to have educated people in this country but we would like them to feel that this education is something which they must share and give to the welfare of the country.

[Mr. Naraine continued]

We must not have a situation as a dog greets another strange dog with a snarl. Those, who exhibit this harshness by showing a weak man as strong, a blind man as having beautiful eyes and a poor man as rich evince ignorance by holding uprightness as righteousness. Mr. Speaker, this has been taken from one of the religions books which is virtually universally accepted, the Bhagavad Gita. Thousands of years ago people recognised that these types of behaviour will not lend to a well-disciplined, two-way good society. Nevertheless, all these unfavourable qualities still form part of our living and many among us and from outside our encouraging them.

National Service will remove the illusion of superiority and ensure equality, respect for each other's ability and custom and the need for co-operative effort. In National Service, Mr. Speaker, as this government has exhibited on every occasion, we will respect people's religious beliefs, we will accommodate reasonable customs and habits of our various communities, we will encourage greater understand for these various peculiarities among our people, we will have a harmonious blending of all that is good and rejection of all that is bad.

This Government has chosen the path of co-operatives and again I would like to show that this method of co-operatives has been accepted thousands of years ago as the best way of building a just society. Again I would like to refer to that Holy Book of the Hindu Religion, the Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 3 verse 9 where it explains that competition, co-operation and self-dedication are the three way in which beings made life a fulfillment. We know that competition is associated very much with the capitalistic way of living and we know that her are many great nations build on this principle. However, it is explained that the lowest order of creation exists by sheer competition. In this stage the struggle for existence is an endless warfare and this we have also seen in our life of today in this world.

“The physically strong and the fittest thrive and prosper while the weak and the feeble are either left in the background or exterminated. This law of the survival of the fittest inexorably prevails in life at the physical level.”

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8.30 – 8.40 p.m.

[Mr. Naraine cont'd]

8.30 p.m.

It explains that plants, birds, and bees bear testimony to it.

“In the life at the mental plane, cruel competition gets minimized. Intelligent co-operation gains ground here. Corporate life is more conducive to growth and progress than the competitive one. The civilization of man is mainly based on his gregarious instinct and collective peace and security are the bases for prosperity and progress in arts and sciences.”

Mr. Speaker, you will see that those among us, who are trying to tell people that this Government is moving in some kind of a wrong path, wrong direction, are misguiding those very people from the scriptures which they claim they believe in. But this is the purpose of some of these people, because I remember when the People's Progressive party was in office, the leader of that Party said, not publicly, but he did say it, that in this country there were too many temples, churches, and mosques, and many of these could be better utilized if they were converted into warehouses.

These people are telling the public that they must be fearful of National Service because it will remove them from their religious path of life. The very arguments which they are taking to the people, the untruths which they are taking to the people, in fact are removing them from their religious teachings.

The Holy Book goes on still further, and this is possibly the most important part of it, which we hope National Service will bring to our people, particularly our youth:

“Self-dedication is the highest law of life. It prevails at the ethical and spiritual planes. It is given to the enlightened man alone to practice self-dedication.”

This is why we have to re-educate our people and enlighten our people. The National Service that this Government is introducing is based on a sound religious basis and, therefore, there can be no fear that religion will not play an important part in what we are doing. The Gita says:

“Both the giver and the receiver stand to gain through this sacred act. By imparting one’s learning to others the capacity to teach increases. By sharing one’s knowledge and wisdom with the others one’s fund of knowledge and wisdom increases.”

This is what we will get from National Service, by bringing together all the various types and classes that presently exist in our society, working together, one learning from the other in his own way. We find the following in the Bhagavad Gita:

“By sharing one’s wealth with all those who have been responsible for its growth, security and further expansion are ensured and the personal weal is ever unfailingly contained in the public weal.”

Mr. Speaker, you will observe in the State Paper that this sentiment at the end here has been expressed as if the writer of that Paper had some inspiration from the Bhagavad Gita, this great Hindu religious book.

When this Government undertakes some new project, when this Government introduces some vehicles for change, you will see that we always have a well thought-out plan, a well-conceive plan in the interest of the nation, a plan which takes into consideration, the environment in which our people would like to grow up in, the real values that matter, the values that will contribute to nation building, and not those values, that some people seem to cherish, of fear, of distrust, of arrogance, of superiority. These are values not in our books. These are obstacles that must be removed.

This Government has chosen the path of the co-operative, a pattern of living which was recognised, as I have pointed out, thousands of years ago as the best way for national welfare and

lasting peach and progress. When this co-operative way of life is supported by self-dedication, then the process of nation-building must be ensured with resounding success. National Service will assist us to overcome all these obstacles which I have mentioned and will assist us to arrive at the success which the people of this country deserve.

I wish to warn that this success will only come about by hard work, by self-dedication, and our people all levels must be prepared to make sacrifices. We must, through National Service and our educational system, make a new Guyana man, as the Prime Minister describes him. Whatever this man does must be more beneficial to others than himself. His doings must be, as the Gita says, a “Yajna”, a sacrifice.

“When a balance is struck between receipts and gifts, a righteous man is he who gives more than he receives.”

“Indebted is the man who appropriates more than he gives. A thief is he who grabs everything and sacrifices nothing. This seemingly prosperous man ends his career as a non-entity. The enlightened do not place themselves in that pitiable position.”

8.40 p.m.

Again the Holy Book of the Hindu states that this is how people must live. The Government, in pursuing a policy of nation-building for the future of our children is asking that we give into society more than we take out of it. Is this asking too much? Do we expect to make for a strong verile progressive nation? If you take two cups out of a bucket and return one the bucket will soon become dry.

We pride ourselves as being a righteous people, and the Opposition has been suggesting that the things that National Service depicts are not righteous things. But, Mr. Speaker, you will observe that what we are trying to do in National Service is based on sound religious teachings. I have I quoted from the scriptures I know best, but I am sure that if you quote from any of the scriptures the conclusion will be no different.

It has been asked: why do we wish to take a child at an early age to train this child in the process of nation-building? My reply to that is what I heard said by a certain priest. He said: “Give me a child at 8 and he will accept what my particular religion puts forward in this world as right”.

The simple fact is that if we are to make a success of what we are trying and hoping to do for the people of this country then we must mould them at that impressionable age. This is no question of brainwashing; this is a question of educating and training our people, so that when they have finished their education they will not be moving to the North of our coast to the attractions of this world by moving towards the South of our country. We can only do this if we instil this in them, educate them and give them an opportunity to appreciate that theirs is a beautiful country full of opportunities to make a life themselves worthy of any people any part of the world.

In this respect it seems to me that National Service to this country is like God’s blessing and it is my further belief and firm conviction that anyone who is unwilling to participate in National Service should be branded as an outcast in our society.

National Service will bring about equality of sexes. We have heard what it will do for youths. I should like to speak about what it will do for our women folk. There is no doubt in my mind, and I am sure in the mind of many others, that the women in our country are not yet liberated, that many of our intellectuals and better educated people more quickly find life partners from outside of the shores of this country than from women in this country.

Why do they do this? When visitors come to our country they always speak in glowing terms of our beautiful women, the way they dress, the way they carry themselves. We hear glowing terms about our women and yet we find important personalities in this country, people like the Leader of the People’s Progressive Party, having to select a liberated woman from Chicago because he could not find one in Guyana. How are we to make our women equal

partners? How are we to bring equality? How are we to make this egalitarian society if we do not develop our women and give them opportunities equal to those given to men?

8.50 p.m.

of our women. [**Hon. Members:** “Hear, hear”.] And if I am right it will cause the mobilisation of a substantial and big force of idl manpower when presently exist in our society. This force will become a powerful one in the economic, social and political advancement of the Guyanese nation. The hon. Member, the “Leader of the Opposition”, has said that we should build on what we have, we should empolder more land on the coast, we should add to what already exist and develop where we presently are. Where are we to find the money to do all these glorious things in the hinterland? I should like to remind the hon. Member that even if all the cultivable land was put into use in terms of our ambition for economic improvement the coastland will still be over populated. But more than that, this Government is not saying that we will develop the hinterland, we will push the National Service at the expense of coastal development, we say we will do both and while coastal development is going on, then the excess population and the growing population must find new lands, new avenues, new opportunities for giving them employment and for the national welfare. I think we must all admit the limitations of coastal development. We can develop forestry on the coastland? We cannot grow potatoes that we like so much on the coastland. We cannot grow wheat on the coastland. Our mineral resources are not on the coastland. Our large potential of hydropower is not on the coastland why should we stifle ourselves on a narrow strip of coastal area when we have over eighty thousand square miles of beautiful country ready and willing for us to conquer.

A lot of fears have been expressed about the fair little ones among us. The Prime Minister has stated that these fair ones will be better protected in National Service than they are presently, and it reminds me of a story which some in her have heard already and so as not to interfere with the susceptibility or any among us, I will say this story as if it happened in

Trinidad. Mr. Speaker, this is a true story, it happened in Guyana but I am giving it in a Trinidad interpretation.

And there was this young girl whose parents were not opposed to her leaving home to work for money but thought that to go to a dance or something like that she must have continuous and incessant parental control. So this young girl made arrangements with her friends to go to a dance one night and this dance was in Port-of-Spain where she normally worked. She lived in San Juan. The friends went and asked mummy and daddy; “Well, we would like to go to this dance. Would you allow Sandra to go to this dance?” And the parents were most annoyed and their objection was very loud. Eventually the poor girl was not allowed to go to the dance and as she was seeing her friends off the friends in sympathy said: “Well you know Sandra we are very sorry we would not have your company at this dance tonight but maybe your mum and dad know best and you cannot but see with them that they have you first and foremost in mind.” Sandra gave in traditional Trinidadian style long suck teeth and said: “Man, don’t worry with her every day when I gone down to Port-of-Spain she is there to watch me to see what I am doing?”

So, Mr. Speaker, it is our belief that there will be little inhibition on behalf of the youths, regardless of race or religion, to participate in the National Service. The fears will not come from the young, the fears are those artificial fears which we have grown up with and which some among us are trying to peddle as an opposition to this Government, to interfere with yet another change which is so necessary and essential to the progress and prosperity of this country.

If we do not have women participating, what will the future be if only men were to take part in National Service, and if the ultimate aim is for us to develop our hinterland based on this new orientation, based on the new opportunities which will be available to our people in these new areas? Are we going to do it by men alone, and do you think that life will be all at peace if the women do not also get this orientation and their values remained the same as they are now,

with the men's values being different? There will be disharmony if women with the old values were lifted at some point of time to become life partners of those young men who will be moving into the hinterland for development.

A question was raised, about money, but we on this side of the House feel that National Service is so important to our future development that even if it entails a substantial sum of money, which we can afford, then we must spend it, because what are we spending it on? We are spending it for the development of our people and the development of our country. We are spending it for the development of a better Guyana citizen.

So, Mr. Speaker, National Service will, we hope, remove the false values which have been brought up in this debate. It will remove ignorance, superstition. It will develop appreciation of one for the other. It will replace competition by co-operative spirit. It will break the race barrier and give more fully the common purpose of dedication. That purpose is our Guyana.

It is our hope and our wish that those who are presently opposed to National Service, and the entire population of this country, will see the wisdom for this most important change which has to take place in this country. We have no doubt that if not now, very soon, its usefulness will be appreciated, the benefits of its implementation will be felt, and the support which it gets will be so resounding that it may not be necessary to make it compulsory.

We know that many will try to disrupt it because there are many among us who do not sincerely have a feeling for a better Guyana. There are many among us who want to see themselves kept in the limelight and in certain preferred positions. They may persuade some not to co-operate but, as I say, national Service will not be secret to the Nation. The centres are not going to be concentration camps as some people seem to think. Parents and people will be allowed to visit centres and to talk to the people taking part in National Service, and those who

express fear and distrust will soon find out that National Service is for a better way of life and education for the young people of this country. We have no doubt, therefore, that this measure – and we hope and pray for this – will not only get the unanimous support of this honourable House but will get the full support of the entire nation. [Applause]

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried

BILLS – SECOND READING

HAND-IN-HAND FIRE INSURANCE COMPANY (AMENDMENT) BILL 1973

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to amend the Hand-In-Hand Fire Insurance Company (Amendment) Bill 1973.”

[Mr. Fowler]

Mr. Fowler: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the Second Reading of the Hand-in-Hand Insurance Company (Amendment) Bill 1973,

The objects of the Bill are clearly set out in the Explanatory memorandum on page 7, which briefly are: to permit the Company to carry out its operation more efficiently and to modernize certain provisions. On the whole, the Bill is non-controversial. The proposal was made by the Company and I have great pleasure in commending it to the House. I now formally move the Second Reading of the Hand-in-Hand Fire Insurance Company (Amendment) Bill 1973.

Question proposed.

9.1.74

National Assembly

9.10 – 9.20 p.m.

9.10 p.m.

Mr. M.F. Singh: Mr. Speaker, this Bill and indeed the subsequent one which we will deal with after this are on behalf of two private companies. We certainly believe in private enterprises, in freedom and competition in the private sector.

I had a few questions on the Bills but I have had consultations and I am assured that what has been put forward is what the Companies want and what was drafted by their own legal advisers. If this is what they want, by all means we are in favour of encouraging them to maintain their good work, indeed their admirable work, in the private sector which is so necessary for the survival of Guyana. I am reminded of the saying: “Kill the goose that lays the golden eggs.” Kill the private sector and you kill the goose that lays the golden egg in terms of income tax and corporation tax.

It therefore gives me very great pleasure in supporting not only this Bill but the one which we will deal with subsequently. I do not propose to speak again.

Bill read a Second time.

Assembly in Committee.

Bill considered and approved.

Mr. M. F. Singh: Mr. Chairman, before you close there is a correction. It is not very consequential but just tidying it up. Clause 4, the little note alongside it states “Repeal and Re-enactment of section 23” instead of “28”. It is a typographical correction.

The Chairman: Thank you very much hon. Member. Hon. Members kindly note the correction.

9.1.74

National Assembly

9.10 – 9.20 p.m.

Assembly resumed.

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

9.20 p.m.

DEMERARA MUTUAL LIFE ASSURANCE SOCIETY (AMENDMENT) BILL 1973

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to amend the Demerara Mutual Life Assurance Society Ordinance.”

[Mrs. Willems]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, Mrs. Willems.

Mrs. Willems: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the Second reading of the Demerara Mutual Life Assurance Society (Amendment) Bill 1974 and asked that it be read a Second time. The Bill contains amendments to the Demerara Mutual Life Assurance Society Ordinance, Chapter 211, approved by the Board of Directors of the Society and passed by Special Resolution by the Members of the Society.

Clause 2 of the Bill seeks to amend Section 2 of the Ordinance to provide new definitions for the expressions “Special resolution” and “actuary”. The new definition of the “special resolution” is intended to simplify the procedure for the passing of special resolution by the Society. The new definition of the term “actuary” is intended to bring it into conformity with the definition of the term “actuary” is intended to bring it into conformity with the definition of the term in the Insurance Act 1970.

Clause 3 seeks to repeal and re-enact Section 5 of the Ordinance to provide for greater flexibility with regard to the participation of members in the profits of the Society.

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9.20 – 9.30 p.m.

Clause 4 seeks to amend Section 8 of the Ordinance to simplify the procedure for the execution of the documents by the Society.

Clause 5 seeks to provide greater flexibility with regard to the type of policies which the Society may issue.

Clause 6 seeks to repeal and re-enact Section 11 of the Ordinance to widen the powers of the Society.

Clause 7 seeks to make provision enabling the Society to make donations to the Government for public purposes and also to charitable institutions and organizations and prescribed institutions and organizations of the National character.

Clause 8 seeks to repeal and re-enact Section 22 of the Ordinance to empower the Society to declare differential rates of bonus in those territories in which the Society operates. I ask, Mr. Speaker, please that the Bill be now read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I wish you to note one or two corrections.

In Section 1 line two, Act 1973 should read 1974. On page 4 under sub-paragraph (b) of Section 7, Section 25(a) should read 35(a) and Tax Ordinance should be amended to read Tax Act.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Assembly in Committee.

9.1.74

National Assembly

9.20 – 9.30 p.m.

Bill considered and approved.

Bill reported without Amendment, read the Third time and passed as corrected.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, “That this Assembly do now adjourn to a date to be fixed.”

[Mr. Ramsaroop]

Adjourned accordingly at 9.28 p.m.
