

Official Report

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2015-2016) OF THE ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN

35TH Sitting

Thursday, 10th March, 2016

The Assembly convened at 2.09 p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Commonwealth Day 2016

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the Guyana Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) will join with the rest of the Commonwealth to observe Commonwealth Day 2016 under the theme: *An Inclusive Commonwealth* on Monday, 14th March, 2016.

Due to the overwhelming positive feedback received from last year's Sitting of the Youth Parliament in observance of Commonwealth Day 2015, the Guyana Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association has planned another Sitting of a Youth Parliament to further sensitise students throughout Guyana to the Commonwealth, Democracy and Parliament.

This activity will involve the participation of 38 students between the ages of 14 and 17 years from 23 secondary schools throughout the 10 Administrative regions of Guyana and include children from the New Opportunity Corps (NOC) and the Ptolemy Reid Rehabilitation Centre. Students, accompanied by teachers, will arrive in Georgetown on Friday, 11th March, 2016 and

will return to their respective regions on Tuesday, 15th March, 2016. During their stay, the students will attend training sessions on the Commonwealth, leadership, parliamentary *etiquette* and decorum, the democratic process, parliament and parliamentary procedures. All of these items will be treated prior to the Sitting of the Youth Parliament on Monday, 14th March, 2016.

Hon. Members have been asked to serve as mentors to the students and also to assist the students in finalising their speeches, developing elocution/debating skills, and honing leadership skills.

The participants will assume the roles of Speaker, Deputy Speaker, Prime Minister, Leader of the Opposition, Ministers of Government, Private Members, Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Sergeant-at-Arms. Members of the Youth Parliament will speak to a motion titled “Youth Cohesion in building peaceful and inclusive societies in the Commonwealth”. I invite Hon. Members to observe the Sitting of the Youth Parliament. If I could say Hon. Members, the Resolved Clause in that motion is that the Youth Parliament calls upon Commonwealth countries to create opportunities for youths to be involved in the decision-making process.

All participants will receive prizes and certificates of participation. A special prize will be awarded to the participant who is adjudged to be the best debater. All prizes will be distributed at a prize-giving dinner reception, which is part of the observances.

This information should have been provided to Hon. Members at the Parliamentary Management Committee meeting last Wednesday, but as Members would know, that meeting was adjourned for lack of a quorum. I might add, by way of information as this is given to us by way of information, that the efforts in relation to the observance of Commonwealth Day is entirely so far an effort by the Parliament Office to maintain what has been described as a wonderful opportunity for young people to become familiar with parliamentary work and decorum.

I invite Hon. Members to observe the Sitting of the Youth Parliament in this Chamber on the Monday 14th March 2016.

Leave from Sitting

Hon. Members I apologise to you, I should have announced that leave from today’s sitting has been granted to Hon. Members Mr. Jagdeo, Ms. Manickchand, Dr. Anthony, Ms. Campbell-

Sukhai, Bishop Edghill, Mr. Seeraj, Mr. Croal, Mr. G. Persaud, Ms. Pearson-Frederick, Mr. Damon, Mr. Dharamlall, Mr. Charlie and Mr. Gill.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following reports were laid:

- (1) The Report of the Directors of the Dependents' Pension Fund for the years ended 31st December, 2013 and 2014 respectively. [*Minister of Natural Resources*]
- (2) The Annual Report of the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund Committee for the year 2013. [*Minister of Social Protection*]

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT'S BUSINESS

MOTIONS

MEMBERSHIP OF THE PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA WITH THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

WHEREAS the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) provides an opportunity to express views on issues of international interest with the aim of bringing about action by Parliaments and provides the forum for the promotion and defense of human rights, which is an essential factor of parliamentary democracy;

AND WHEREAS the Parliamentary Management Committee, at its 13th Meeting, held on Thursday 2nd May, 2014, decided that Guyana should become a Member of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (UPI);

AND WHEREAS the Parliament of Guyana, on 27th May, 2014, made application to the IPU for membership;

AND WHEREAS, in order for Guyana's application for membership to be accepted, the IPU is requesting a resolution of the Parliament of Guyana with respect to Guyana's application,

BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves of Guyana becoming a Member of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. [*First Vice-President and Prime Minister*]

First Vice-President and Prime Minister [Mr. Nagamootoo]: Mr. Speaker, I would like to move the following motion in my name. This motion has to do with membership in the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

The text of the motion predates the coming to office of this Government, which has been subsequently reaffirmed at our Parliamentary Management Committee meeting. This is a consequential motion to the application to become a member of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. This union has been in existence since 1889 and has had significant influence, working along with the United Nations (UN) General Assembly and with other organisations of similar types, to bring about greater harmony in the work of national assemblies and parliaments in the world over. I believe the case had been made before for Guyana's accession to the membership of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, particularly the Caribbean Branch of the Association and the Society of Clerks at the table; Guyana has a great advantage in becoming a Member in the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

The other day we observed International Women's Day and I wish to note that one of the consistent work of this Inter-Parliamentary Union has been in the area of women - to have women's involvement, though it took almost 100 years for initiatives to be taken in by the Inter-Parliamentary Union to bring about the political involvement of women at an international level in the work of democratic reforms and for promotion of parliamentary work to be realised. I wanted to note that because much emphasis is now being placed 50/50, on being able to make our women's representation in the National Assembly equitable, fair, and just.

It may be asked, whether our membership would be at a cost? Yes. We have to pay an annual of just over \$2 million, but as I said the benefits are enormous for us, besides fostering contacts and exchange of experience among parliaments and parliamentarians from other countries. We also have a better working knowledge of how other institutions work and how we can, in cooperation with bodies such as the United Nations, bring our Parliament to a level of acceptable best standards.

I wish to note, secondly, that there are other associations and organisations with which we have some interaction. We have also benefited from participating in international fora periodically - the Parliaments of the Americas' or ParlAmericas and the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) where we just had an invitation. Unfortunately, I am not sure if we were able to attend the last UNASUR Conference to which we had been invited. We also have conferences associated with organisations related to the World Bank and the International Monetary Funds (IMF).

2.24 p.m.

These are all associations to which we believe we should move towards and work together with to bring about greater comity in parliamentary affairs and also to have exchange of ideas at an international level that would allow us to improve our work in this Parliament. In making these brief remarks, I wish to move the motion in my name. [*Applause*]

Motion proposed.

Opposition Chief Whip [Ms. Teixeira]: Mr. Speaker, I know that you have the Speaker's list so I am just waiting to be summoned, if you do not mind.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, Ms. Teixeira, do you wish the floor? I have no list.

Ms. Teixeira: I am sorry about that Mr. Speaker. I know that a list was prepared, so I apologise on behalf of both Chief Whips for that.

This is a very simple motion before the House. As the Hon. Prime Minister said, it was agreed to since 27th May, 2014. I think it is important to note that this is an important international body that Guyana should be a member of - the Inter-Parliamentary Union. It represents all the parliaments across the world, unlike the Commonwealth that specifically has the Commonwealth countries. Then there is the ParlAmericas which is specifically for the Parliaments of the Americas. I think this is an extraordinarily important body that the Guyana Parliament should be represented on.

But I thought that it would be of interest to the House as to how we get to this body. At that time the Speaker was the Hon. Member, Mr. Ralph Trotman and we were looking at a number of

regional and international bodies that Guyana should belong to, or was considering belonging to, looking at the benefits and the costs of belonging to them. Each one has a tag that one has to pay subscription fees, *et cetera*. At that point, the Parliamentary Management Committee had assigned the Hon. Member, Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon and I to sit and actually, over a cup of coffee and *round robin*, we were able to agree. Unfortunately, that style of collaboration seems to be over. But I appreciated it and the Government, at the time, appreciated the way in which we could have worked together in the past. Although Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon was afraid to come and have a cup of coffee in my office, we were able to have a virtual cup of coffee and make agreements.

In fact, we were able to make recommendations to the Parliamentary Management Committee (PMC). We then examined each of these bodies and the cost implications. We recognised that the Inter-Parliamentary Union was the number one body that we should belong to and also the ParlAmericas. We also recognised that we belonged to the Commonwealth and that there were subscription fees for that. We felt that it was important that, once the UNASUR Parliamentary Forum was created, Guyana should and must be a member of that. At that time it was in its embryonic stages and I think that it is still evolving and has not been concluded.

We anticipated that our recommendation to the PMC at that time would have been upheld in terms of UNASUR. We also, having recognised that it would cost this sum of money to belong to the IPU and the ParlAmericas, we decided that we would have to take these to the Cabinet. The recommendation of the PMC was taken to Cabinet in the 2014 period I believe and there is a Cabinet decision giving us the go ahead because there are subscription fees and costs involved in belonging to these bodies.

We are very pleased that the motion has finally reached here because, at the time that we had told the IPU that Guyana would agree to join, they had then told us that we needed to have a resolution because they wanted to have a document from the Parliament of Guyana saying that it was a resolution of the entire House.

This is not a controversial motion, unlike previous experiences in Sittings. Therefore, we are happy to support the motion and look forward to Guyana being represented at what I understand is an IPU meeting coming up in Zambia, where I hope that our Parliament would have

representation, once the cost and so on can be accommodated. So I wish to, on behalf of this side of the House, support the motion and call for its expeditious implementation. Thank you.
[Applause]

Mr. Nagamootoo (replying): I thank the Hon. Member, Ms. Teixeira, for her expression of support for this motion, and also, in saying that, I would like to compliment the former Government for having initiated this process towards membership of the IPU. I want to assure that, this morning as I read through the minutes of several of the meetings of the Parliamentary Management Committee. This collaboration to have our membership ratified by this House had come from the Parliamentary Management Committee. That is one of the committees of this House that I could say with some degree of satisfaction that has been working very cooperatively. I can say also that, seldom have there been occasions when we differ. We work, mostly, on a basis of consensus. I believe that this is one of the committees that we have parity, in terms of its compositions.

It augurs well if we could meet at a level of our committee, with or without coffee, although I would like to suggest that the next time we have Pomeroon coffee. I think that might help - local Pomeroon coffee. I did not know what type of coffee the Hon. Member had with the Hon. Minister, Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon, but it may not have been a breakdown of the will to cooperate, I think it might have been weak coffee on that occasion. I want to assure the Hon. Member that we appreciate the support and I know that, once we have acceded to this union, we would make every effort to ensure that the parity, as well as the representation of the our National Assembly of this Parliament, should be pursued at every one of these meetings. I now moved that the motion be put.

Question put and agreed to.

Motion carried.

COMMITTEES BUSINESS

MOTIONS

OUTSTANDING WORK OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE OF THE TENTH PARLIAMENT

WHEREAS, in accordance with Standing Order 104(1), every Committee shall before the end of the Session in which it was appointed, make a report to the Assembly upon matters referred to it;

AND WHEREAS, the Public Accounts Committee, a Standing Committee of the National Assembly of the First Session of the Tenth Parliament, was unable, owing to the prorogation and subsequent dissolution of Parliament on the 10th November , 2014 and 28th February , 2015, respectively, to conclude the work that was referred to it in that Session.

BE IT RESOLVED:

That the Public Accounts Committee of the National Assembly for the first Session of the Eleventh Parliament takes into account all outstanding work of the previous Committee.
[*Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, Mr. Ali*]

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Speaker, I have been asked by Mr. Ali to act on his behalf.

Mr. Speaker: You have the floor madam.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you. The motion of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) is one that is somewhat statutory and involves the continuation of the work that the PAC had been engaged in in the last Parliament. A number of reports are pending for the assessment of the past committee that was headed by Mr. Greenidge as the Chairperson to do with the assessment of the 2010 and 2011 Public Accounts or Audited Accounts of Guyana.

We are anxious that the motion which allows this will continue. In addition to that, the Public Accounts Committee has being meeting and has being doing its work. I have been asked by Mr. Ali to convey to the House that the PAC has set a deadline for the end of March to conclude its propositions or nominations on the Public Procurement Commission (PPC). So we encourage the Public Accounts Committee to make the deadline they have set themselves.

I have also been asked to convey, which are the concerns of us on this side of the House, the presence of Ministers on the Committee. We still register, as we did then and we still feel that the presence of Ministers on the Public Accounts Committee is really *infra dig* and goes against the grain of the Constitution and the Standing Orders. We recognise that the Public Accounts Committee involves the oversight and the accountability of Government expenditure in the entire

Government. Therefore, there is presence of two Ministers on the Public Accounts Committee - one was not a Minister when she was appointed, but she is now a Minister. We want to register on our side of the House that we are totally opposed to this as it does create conflict of interest and can compromise the Ministers and even the PAC. Therefore, we want to register this today. We call on the Government to support this motion from the Public Accounts Committee that, as far as I know, has been approved by the entire Public Accounts Committee, both sides. We asked that the motion be approved by this House. Thank you. [*Applause*]

Motion proposed.

Minister of Social Protection [Ms. Lawrence]: I am grateful for the opportunity to stand here as a long serving member of the Public Accounts Committee and to also represent a Government that place in high esteem, transparency and accountability. The motion before us is one which would allow the Public Accounts Committee to continue its work with regard to presentations made by the past Speaker in laying the accounts of the Auditor General's in this House. Notwithstanding that Sir, the Public Accounts Committee of Guyana stands unique within the region because like no other Public Accounts Committee, this Public Accounts Committee does have oversight of our Audit Office. It also have, within its preview, the Public Procurement Commission to ensure that we can bring to this honourable House the nominees that would come out of whatever format is used to ensure that the persons who would have been nominated to become members of the Public Procurement Commission, that we could pull from that lot the best persons to so serve this country in this esteem office. Without any further *ado*, this Government would like to endorse and support the motion before us and allow transparency and accountability to continue. Thank you. [*Applause*]

Ms. Teixeira (replying): This will be a short session; I am sure of this Sitting. Therefore, I do not wish to respond, in particular, to anything that the Minister said. However, we are anxious that the Public Accounts Committee is able to function effectively and that, on our side of the House as Members of the PAC, we will continue to give full support to the Auditor General's Office, to his work as well and efficiently and also to allow the Public Accounts Committee to function to the highest standards that are set. We look forward to when the Ministers who are on the Committee, when their agencies come before, they would wish to considered recusing

themselves from those meetings in order to ensure that there is no conflict of interest. Thank you very much, Sir.

Question put and agreed to.

Motion carried.

OUTSTANDING WORK OF THE PARLIAMENTARY SECTORAL COMMITTEE ECONOMIC SERVICES COMMITTEE OF THE TENTH PARLIAMENT

WHEREAS, in accordance with Standing Order 104(1), every Committee shall before the end of the Session in which it was appointed, make a report to the Assembly upon matters referred to it;

AND WHEREAS, the Economic Services Committee of the National Assembly of the First session of the Tenth Parliament, was unable, owing to the prorogation and subsequent dissolution of Parliament on the 10th November, 2014 and 28th February, 2015 respectively, to conclude the work that was referred to it in that Session.

BE IT RESOLVED:

That the Economic Services Committee of the National Assembly of the first Session of the Eleventh Parliament adopt all outstanding work of the previous Committee. [*Chairman of the Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on Economic Services, Mr. Sharma*]

Minister within the Ministry of Finance [Mr. Sharma]: I rise to move the following motion standing in my name.

2.39 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, as you are aware, the Economic Services Committee is presently scrutinising the Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo) and the issue of the widely debated and publicised closure of the Wales Sugar Estate. It was published in a newspaper in mid-January of this year that the Wales Sugar Estate will be closed. In fact, it is the Wales Factory that will be closed and the announcement of the closure caused a number of issues and discomfort to the community of Wales.

As Chairman of the Economic Services Committee, we immediately embarked on the scrutiny of the Commission of Inquiry (CoI) Report on GuySuCo. I am not happy to report to this honourable House that, since the deliberations had commenced, we did not receive the support of the Opposition in terms of attendance at the various sessions of the Committee. This matter is such an important one and it is being used, by the Opposition, as a political football. It is in this Economic Services Committee that we should sit and do the people's work that we were elected to do.

Not too long ago, we heard from the Hon. Member, Ms. Gail Teixeira, that these Committees have Members who are Ministers and that it should not be. It is my personal opinion that, for the Committee which I am the Chairperson of, we do have Members who are Ministers, including myself, and it is to the advantage of the Opposition knowing that Ministers are very busy and the Opposition will have command of these Committees. I wonder why, in that case, the Opposition Members did not attend the meeting of the Economic Services Committee where they would have had the opportunity to debate, wholesomely, and represent their constituency.

I now put the motion to the House. Thank you. [*Applause*]

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To divert a little bit, International Women's Day was on Tuesday and you will notice, on our side, that the speakers are all women. Although, today, there are only two of our women speaking on the four issues, we have decided to have 100% and not a 50% representation of women speaking, in the House, from our side.

Minister Jaipaul Sharma has raised a motion on the Economic Services Committee and, of course, we support it because these are procedural motions that have to be brought to the House in order for the Committee to have the authority of the House to continue its work. However, in his opening comments, he did make mention of a couple of things that I may have to respond to.

It is true that the GuySuCo CoI Report is with the Economic Services Committee but it was not sent. I think the Economic Services Committee took it on its own. That is fine. However, the announcement by the Government that the Wales Sugar Estate would be closed pre-empted and actually pushed aside the CoI Report on GuySuCo. In fact, the CoI Report, on page 30, states, very clearly, that it would not recommend – and, in fact, the majority voted on the issue - the closure of any estate, at this time, due to the dislocation it would have caused the communities

and the economy, *et cetera*. So the chagrin and the non-attendance of some of our Members were, why discuss the Commission's Report when, in fact, it has been overtaken by the decision of the Government to close the Wales Sugar Estate? Therefore, one of the key recommendations of the CoI has been cast aside. We will be there and we will fight; we will champion and we will work together.

However, the CoI Report on GuySuCo has become almost an academic exercise at a tremendous cost to taxpayers, more than \$50 million. We do not agree with everything in the Report but we do not think that it is a bad Report. However, the Government has precipitously decided to put the Report aside and to proceed with announcing the closure of this Estate, despite the recommendations of the majority of people on the Commission of Inquiry. That is one comment in relation to what my dear Colleague, on the other side, said.

The second comment is to do with the Ministers being on the Committees. I will go back to the Standing Orders. Standing Order No. 86(4) states:

“Sectoral Committees shall, in the exercise of their responsibilities, examine all policies and administration for each sector to determine whether the execution of Government policy is in consonance with the principles of good governance and in the best interest of all of the people of Guyana.”

Standing Order No. 86 (5) states:

“Sectoral Committees shall have the authority to:-

- (a) determine areas of Government activity for scrutiny or specific examination;
- (b) request the Minister assigned responsibilities for the sector to submit written or oral information, including government documents, records about any specific area of government policy and administration;”

The problem with having four Ministers on the Economic Services Committee is that, when economic services are being looked at... My dear Friend on the other side, Mr. Greenidge, knows the story well. He was the Chairman on the last Economic Services Committee. There was no Government Minister on that Committee. Now, there are Minister Greenidge, Minister

Sharma, Minister Charles-Broomes and Minister Holder sitting on the Economic Services Committee. Under the responsibilities of the Economic Services Committee fall the areas under the Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Holder - rice, sugar, National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA), conservancy and water management, *et cetera*.

Secondly, the Economic Services Committee covers the areas of bauxite, mining and oil exploration and these fall under Minister Charles-Broomes. Then there is the Minister within the Ministry of Finance, Mr. Sharma, my dear Friend who I like a lot, who sits on the Economic Services Committee, where the mid-year reports are looked at in great detail. He knows that and Mr. Greenidge knows that because they are former Members.

There were no Ministers there to cover up or to make excuses. It is supposed to be a transparent process in which, as Government and Opposition, we can examine issues in different ways. Of the five Members of the Government's side on the Economic Services Committee, there are four Ministers. Is that not a bit greedy? The Government has 10 Members of Parliament (MPs) who are not Ministers. Could you not put them to sit on the Committee? Is it that you do not trust them or is it that they are not able or capable? I am sure that they are very capable because I know some of them who are not on this Committee. We have a great problem with the presence of Ministers on the Economic Services Committee.

I will give an anecdotal example. We are dealing with the CoI Report on GuySuCo. The Minister, who has brought it to the House, is a Minister and a Member of the Committee, Minister Holder. When the CoI Report for GuySuCo is discussed, will Minister Holder be sitting in the seat for the Government or will he be sitting at the end of the table when the Committee summons Ministers before the Committee? Does the Minister have to change seats during the meeting? When he is being examined under GuySuCo, he would have to sit at the top of the table and, when he becomes a Member of the Committee, he would have to switch seats and go back into his normal seat. It is absurd and, most important of all, Comrades, Ministers and Colleague MPs, is that oversight... It is my Friend, on the other side, Mr Ramjattan, who talked a lot, in the last Parliament, about collective responsibility and ministerial collective responsibility. Therefore, it is unthinkable that a Minister sitting on a Sectoral Committee, which oversees Government's policies and Government's performance, is the one who will break

Government's solidarity or ministerial collective responsibility to criticise one of its own sector, Ministry or even the Government itself. Of course, that will not happen.

I believe that the Government is missing a critical point. When there was the Constitutional Reform Commission, of which Minister Roopnarine and the Hon. Prime Minister were a part of, all of the issues to do with the Government had to be scrutinised, whether it was in its accounts, in transparency or in its policies, and that is how the four oversight Committees came about. I think that it was a wonderful invention and innovation of the Parliament of Guyana and we, as Guyanese, should be proud of it. But now when we have come to implement it, because the Government has 33 seats, it wants to take it all. In the oversight Committees, the Government is hurting itself and not the Opposition. When it is time to scrutinise the Government, which is part of the constitutional responsibility of the oversight Committees, the Government will be compromising itself and creating a conflict of interest that it will not be able to unravel.

I am promising you that, and it is not a threat. I am telling the Government that it will face some immense problems. How can the Government talk about transparency and accountability when the Permanent Secretary (PS) of a Ministry comes before the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and his or her Minister sits there as a Member of that Committee? Do you think that the PS will say anything that he or she should not say? You have to be joking.

This is not an academic exercise. I am not trying to make life hard for you. I am asking you, as Government, to unravel the nonsense in the Sectoral Committees. You have the capacity to do that. There are Members who are not Ministers and they can sit on these Committees. Let us uphold the constitutional requirements.

Yes, you can argue with me – I am not a lawyer - that the Constitution, at article 119B, does not state that a Minister cannot sit on the Committee. However, in the Constitutional Reform Commission and the Parliamentary Reform Committee... go back to the needs assessment which you all talked about when you were in Opposition. The Sir Michael Davies Report, the Pinder Report and the Bradford Report became the omnibus consolidated Needs Assessment of the Guyana Parliament.

One of the things that that Committee, which incorporated Members from both sides, recommended was... Mr. Murray, Dr. Ramsammy and even the Prime Minister were on the

Committee, when the Prime Minister was on this side, and that is why he was very clear in what he knew had to be done. It was that Parliamentary Special Select Committee that took the Needs Assessment report and recommended that, in order to uphold the intention and the objective of the Constitution, Ministers were not to be part of the oversight Committees.

I have been on the Economic Services Committee for a long time and I believe that it is an excellent Committee and opportunity to help Government. For Mr. Greenidge and others who have been on the Committee with me, we have been able to use this Committee to make recommendations to the Government on the National Insurance Scheme (NIS), on the East Coast Water Conservancy, on the Guyana Power and Light (GPL) and on the NDIA. It was used in a positive way to push. With the configuration of four Ministers being on the Economic Services Committee, I am fearful as to who will take the Committee's recommendations to Cabinet and say that they supported those recommendations. That would be interesting to see. I do not want to judge them. We will see.

We are happy that the motion has come before the House and we support it. Thank you very much. [*Applause*]

2.54 p.m.

Mr. Sharma (replying): Thank you for the opportunity to respond. I must say to the Hon. Member that I must agree to disagree with her first point. I do not believe that a committee of Parliament is a rubber stamp or does not have any power. So, to say that you are not going to attend a meeting of the Committee on Economic Services because, apparently, the decision was made already to close the Factory is a misnomer. Basically, this is because the Committee is an arm of this honourable House and it will be reporting to this honourable House, not the Executive.

To add, the Hon. Member's fear is that, apparently, the issue of Cabinet solidarity will be affected. The Hon. Member should know that I am not a Member of the Cabinet and I am the Chairman of this Committee. So, the issue of Cabinet solidarity and ministerial collective responsibility will not apply to me. There was wisdom in selecting a Minister who is not a Member of the Cabinet to chair the Committee on Economic Services.

In addition, I reiterate that the busy schedules of Ministers will prevent them from attending and, in that case, it is the Opposition that will dominate these Committees. So why does it not take the opportunity to dominate? We, on this side of the House, gave the Opposition the opportunity to dominate and it is not taking that challenge and that opportunity. So it is something to think about.

There are a number of other issues which we could deal with here but we need to get down to dealing with the issue and the issue is how this Committee will handle the issue of the closure of the Wales Factory, the issues of the people and so many things.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity and I commend this motion to the House.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

OUTSTANDING WORK OF THE PARLIAMENTARY SECTORAL COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SERVICES OF THE TENTH PARLIAMENT

WHEREAS in accordance with Standing Order 104(1), every Committee shall before the end of the Session in which it was appointed, make a report to the Assembly upon matters referred to it;

AND WHEREAS the Social Services Committee, a Sectoral Committee of the National Assembly of the First Session of the Tenth Parliament, was unable to conclude the work that was referred to it in that Session.

BE IT RESOLVED:

That the Social Services Committee of the National Assembly of the First Session of the Eleventh Parliament adopt all outstanding work of the previous Committee. [*Chairman of the Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on Social Services, Mr. Adams*]

Mr. Adams: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We all are aware that the Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on Social Services, like many other Committees, was unable to complete its work due to the prorogation and subsequent dissolution of the Tenth Parliament. I wish to move the motion now standing in my name. [*Applause*]

Dr. Persaud: I would like to wish, at this point, all the women in this Parliament a belated happy International Women's Day and I would like to tell them that the mandate of the Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on Social Services will continue to work with regard to women to ensure that we achieve gender parity which is aimed for 2030. It will be "50/50", so I would like to say that that will be part of the work that we will be doing. You have our commitment where that is concerned. [Ms. Ally: When did we vote for gender parity?] Well, my Chief Whip wants it before 2030 and, if you are all passionate about women's affairs, like we, on this side of the House, are, I am sure we can achieve it if we continue to work selflessly and dedicatedly towards achieving that.

Today, the Report is laid in the Parliament and I would like to support the laying of that Report in adopting all outstanding work of the previous Committee. However, I would like to support my Colleague, Mdm. Chief Whip, Ms. Teixeira, on the point she has made quite clearly as it relates to the membership or the constituents of our Sectoral Committee.

We are teetering on the brink of a precipice in that four or five Ministers are in our Committee. The Committee is there and it is geared for objective scrutiny of the sector, ensuring transparency and accountability. When one of the Ministers' Ministry is being scrutinised, how can you say that there is objectivity when she and those who comprise her Ministry will have to come before this Committee and answer questions? I want to say that we are very disturbed and disappointed. It does not lend to the vision of our country where we want to see more objectivity, transparency and accountability. I feel that, if we want to proceed in a manner where this Committee can be recognised for the work that it is doing, we need to rectify this. I want to say also, "Let us have more women on this Sectoral Committee." We also want to see more persons on this Committee, who are not Ministers, so that the work of this Committee can proceed in a very transparent way.

I would like, at this point, to say that, while we unhesitantly support the laying of this motion, we do not support Ministers being in the Committees. Also, the Chairperson is a part of the Government. When we think about representation, it is very top-heavy; it is always tethering to one side of the House. If we want to go forward and we want to go forward in this frame where we talk about all these grand things, then we have to walk the walk. We have to ensure that we

follow what was there before so that people could be represented in a fair manner and so that, when we have to scrutinise, we can do so in a manner that is completely objective.

Also, I want to say that we have been laying a number of Reports but we have not moved beyond this. So I would like to follow-up on what was done before and say that we need to have some response following the laying of these Reports. I hope that, in this session of Parliament, we can have that done in the future. I want to also commit this side of the House to working tirelessly and assiduously on this Sectoral Committee and to say, once again, going forward, we must not have Ministers on these Sectoral Committees. Thank you very much. [*Applause*]

Mr. Adams (replying): I wish to thank the Hon. Member, Dr. Vindhya Persaud, for her support and her party's support and to say that we look forward to working together as a team and that we must look beyond the Ministers being Members of the Committee and seek to build trust and get the work of the Committees done. I now put this motion to Mr. Speaker.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Speaker, I move that this House be adjourned until Wednesday, 4th May, 2016.

Adjourned accordingly at 3.05 p.m.