

**THE**  
**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**  
**OFFICIAL REPORT**  
**VOLUME 7**  
**PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE FIRST SESSION OF THE NATIONAL**  
**ASSEMBLY OF THE THIRD PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE**  
**CONSTITUTION OF GUYANA**

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**56<sup>th</sup> Sitting**

**2.00 p.m.**

**Wednesday, 29th January, 1975**

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**MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**Speaker**

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

**Members of the Government- People's National Congress (50)**

**Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister (2)**

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

**(Absent)**

**Deputy Prime Minister (1)**

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

**Senior Minister (8)**

The Hon. H.D. Hoyte, S.C.,  
Minister of Economic Development

- \*The Hon. S.S. Ramphal , S.C.,  
Minister of Foreign Affairs and Justice (Absent)
- \*The Hon. Green,  
Minister of Co-operatives and  
National Mobilizations (Absent)
- \*The Hon. H.O. Jack,  
Minister of Energy and Natural Resources (Absent)
- \*The Hon. F.E. Hope,  
Minister of Finance
- \*The Hon. S.S. Naraine, A.A.,  
Minister of Work and Housing
- \*The Hon. G.A. King,  
Minister of Trade and Consumer Protection (Absent – on leave)
- \*The Hon. G.B. Kennard , C.C.H.,  
Minister of Agriculture

**Minister (5)**

- The Hon. W.G. Carrington,  
Minister of Labor (Absent)
- 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 and Social Development
- \*Dr. the Hon. O.M.R. Harper,  
Minister of Health

**Ministers of state (10)**

- The Hon. M. Kasim, A.A.,  
Minister of State for Agriculture (Absent- on leave)

**\*Non-elected Ministers**

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

The Hon. P. Duncan, J.P.,  
Minister of State. Office of the  
Prime Minister

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. K.B. Bancroft,  
Minister of State - Regional  
(Mazaruni / Potaro)

\*The Hon. C. V. Mingo,  
Minister of State for Home Affairs

\*The Hon. W. Haynes,  
Minister of State for Consumer Protection (Absent)

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

\*The Hon. F.U.A . Carmichael,  
Minister of State - Regional (North West)

### **Parliamentary Secretaries (7)**

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

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

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

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

Mr. E. L. Ambrose,  
Parliamentary Secretary,  
Ministry of Agriculture

Mr. S. Prashad,  
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of  
Co – operative and National Mobilisation

Mr. J.P. Chowritmootoo  
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Education  
and Social Development

Mr. R.H.O. Corbin,  
Parliamentary Secretary, Office of  
the Prime Minister

#### **Deputy Speaker (1)**

Mr. R. C. Van Sluytman, Deputy Speaker

#### **Other Members (17)**

Mr. J. N. Aaron

Mrs. L. M. Brano

Mr. M. Corrica

Mr. E.H.A. Fowler

Miss J. Gill

Mr. W. Hussain

Miss S. Jaiserrisingh

Mr. K.M.E. Jonas

Mr. M. Nissar

Dr. L. E. Ramsahoye

Mr. J.G. Ramson

Mrs. P. A. Rayman

Mr. E.M. Stoby, J.P.

Mr. S. H. Sukhu, M.S., J. P.

Mr. C. Sukul, J.P.

Mr. H.A. Taylor

Mrs. L. E. Willems

**(Absent on leave)**

**(Absent on leave)**

**Members of the Opposition - Liberator Party (2)**

Mr. M. F. Singh, Leader of the Opposition

Mrs. E. DaSilva

**OFFICERS**

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

Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly - Mr. M.B. Henry AMBIM.

2 p.m.

**PRAYERS****ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SYSTEM**

**Mr. Speaker:** Leave has been granted to the hon. Minister of Trade and Consumer Protection (Mr. King) from the 27<sup>th</sup> January to the 7<sup>th</sup> February, both days inclusive and to the hon. Members, Mr. Kasim, Mr. Corrica and Mrs. Rayman for today's Sitting.

**PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS**

The following Papers were laid:

- 1) Offences (Application/ Certain Provisions) order 1974 (No. 167), made under section 8 of the Summary Jurisdiction (Procedure) Act, Chapter 10:02, on the 30<sup>th</sup> of December, 1974, and published in the Gazette on the 31<sup>st</sup> of December, 1974. [**The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House on behalf of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Justices**]
- 2) Annual Report of the Local Government Division of the Ministry of Co-operatives and National Mobilisation for the year 1973. [**The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House on behalf of the Minister of Co-operatives and National Mobilisation**]

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

The following Bills were introduced and read the First time:

- (1) Pensions (Amendment) Bill 1975- Bill No. 4/1975. [**The Minister of Finance on Behalf of the Prime Minister**]

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(2) Miners Assistance Bill 1975- Bill No. 5/1975. [**The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House on behalf of the minister of energy and Natural Resources**]

(3) Drainage and Irrigation (Amendment) Bill 1975 – Bill No. 6/1975. [**The Minister of Agriculture**]

(4) Evangelical Lutheran church (Incorporation) (Amendment) Bill 1975 – Bill No. 1/1975. [**Mr. Sukul**]

### CONGRATULATIONS TO THE SPEAKER

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

Your Honor, before you commence deliberation on the Public Business for the day, may I seek your leave to say a few words on a very significant occasion in the Sitting of this House, both in a minor way and in a major way. In a minor way, this meeting marks the first Sitting of the Assembly for this year but in a major way, this Sitting comes on the heels, as it were, of a very significant event in your own life.

It is now public knowledge, I think, that last Monday, on the 27<sup>th</sup> January, you celebrated your 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. In the computation of the span of the life of man, fifty years is a period that marks a landmark in the passage of time and in the life of any man. It is because of that reason that I feel this sitting is one that is important in a major way. It behoves me, therefore, and indeed, I think it would be remiss of me as Leader of this House if, on behalf of my colleagues and personally, I did not express to you, our and my congratulations upon this very significant mark in your life.

**29.1.75**

**National Assembly**

**2 - 2.10 p.m.**

Normally, this would have been the occasion to go into an elaborate catalogue of the achievements of your Honour and, indeed, for all we know, biographers might undertake that task in a short while. I feel, however, that on this occasion, it would be inelegant and inappropriate if I were only to express sentiments on behalf of myself and my colleagues. There is no doubt that over the last ten years, or thereabouts, your distinguished career in the Public Service has come to the attention of all Guyanese. Indeed, speaking for myself, I first took notice of your participation in matters of public affairs when you entered into municipal politics many years ago. Those of us who remember you as a Councillor remember the great grasp of details that you showed in the discharge of your duties as a Councillor, but, that was but the beginning of a distinguished and illustrious public career.

I am beholden to you in a rather personal way because I recall that in 1962 when I came back as a young lawyer to Guyana you did me the great service of preparing my petition for presentation before the High Court before I could have been formally admitted into the practice of my honourable legal profession.

**2.10 p.m.**

As a solicitor and a member of this legal profession, you have been held in great esteem. Indeed, you can be described as an eminent member of the legal profession of this country.

**[Applause]**

It is common knowledge that you possess a law library that is second to none amongst lawyers in Guyana but you not only possess a library, you possess the knowledge that comes from those books in that library. I felt this myself one day arguing a case against you. I felt the weight of your tremendous legal learning, your tremendous research, and your erudition, as you advised counsel against one of my clients. I have never told you this before but because of that I had to do many nights of homework to catch up on law practice.

As a man of culture and religion, you have shown also. Indeed, there is one word, I think, in Hindi that describes your quality in this direction most aptly, and that is the word “dharma.” In Hindi, I think, the word “dharma” means everything that binds society together, the great moral adhesive. In the field of religion and culture, you have shown that dharmic quality so much so that today you head one of the leading Hindu organizations in Guyana, the Guyana Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha.

Many of us here, although we may not know you in those other capacities and other occupations, know you as the presiding officer of this honourable chamber, and in the discharge of your responsibilities in this high office, you have certainly carved a niche in the history of speakership in Guyana. Not only do you show a great competence, a great knowledge in matters of parliamentary procedure, but none of us here in this House can say that there was an occasion when you did not show a calmness, an element of unflappability in this Chamber, and all of us who have been in this Chamber know that in the cut and thrust and parry of a debate it is not an easy thing to keep a cool temper. But you have combined knowledge of parliamentary matters with a mental equipoise that almost characteristic of the highest qualities of speakership in any man. You have show those qualities and we are beholden to you.

As a man, to those of us who know you, you have been a man of the world, and not in a stoic sense, not in a true epicurean sense, but maybe as a mentor to many of us. I feel on this significant occasion that we must not bypass some reference to that aspect of your total character and personality. I think it has been written in one of Shakespeare’s sonnets that “when to the sessions of sweet silent thought I summon up remembrances of thing past,”. You will forgive my rusty memory of poetry.

Today will be an important day for you, indeed, as last Monday was. It was really the fiftieth anniversary of your life. I hope that when you summon up remembrances of past things you will not look upon your fiftieth birthday as the end of your period of life but as the beginning of a new challenge, the beginning of a new period of creation and creativity, and that you will continue to show that high degree of service that you have

shown in the past not only to this Parliament but to this nation. May God continue to give you those qualities of fortitude, courage, and wisdom, that will guide you in the discharge of your duties in this House and, indeed, in the discharge of your duties, of unfolding and growing importance, as a distinguished Guyanese citizen. Thank you.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**The Leader of the Opposition** (Mr. Singh): Mr. Speaker, we in the Opposition would like very much to associate ourselves with the remarks made by the hon. Leader of the House. We would like to extend to you our heartiest congratulations on your fiftieth anniversary. In your sphere of life, with your achievement, it is indeed a landmark to remember. We wish you good health, we wish you happiness, and we wish you very many more years of fruitful service to the community.

Also, sir, on a less joyful note, we wish to express our very deep regret at having read in the newspapers that the hon. Member Mr. Mohamed Kasim is in hospital. The newspapers report said he had a heart attack. We would like to wish him a very speedy recovery.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Leader of the House, hon. Leader of the Opposition, I wish to thank you most sincerely for the kind and warm sentiments you have expressed, and truly wish that I could live up to the high qualities you express of me. With your support and with your assistance I trust that I will continue to give service to the nation of Guyana on the same high standard that you have attributed to me. Thank you very much.

## **BILL – SECOND AND THIRD READINGS**

### **TEACHING SERVICE COMMISSION BILL**

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to establish the Teaching Service commission, to prescribe the functions of the commission and to provide for matters connected therewith.”

**[The Minister of Education and Social Development]**

**29.1.75**

**National Assembly**

**2.10 - 2.20 p.m.**

**The Minister of Education and Social Development** (Miss Baird): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the Second Reading of the Bill intituled the Teaching Service Commission Bill 1974. There is no doubt that those who have followed the development of education in Guyana over the past fifty years will regard the Teaching Service Commission Bill 1974 as one which the teaching profession of Guyana cannot afford to be without. The idea of a Teaching Service Commission is not new. In particular, a large body of teachers will welcome the establishment of the Commission which brings to an end a system of dual control of schools in the educational system of Guyana, particularly and especially in the control and discipline of teacher

**2.20 p.m.**

When I speak of dual control I refer to the differing arrangements which even at this time distinguish between the control and management of denominational schools on the one hand and of primary schools owned by Government on the other. A system of dual control places the appointment, promotion, transfer and discipline of teacher in denominational schools in the hands of Governing bodies, which are religious bodies, subject to the approval of the chief Education officer, while conditions of service of those who teach in Government – owned schools fall within the administrative functions of the Chief Education Officer, acting through the delegation of his powers by the Public Service Commission. History records that the procedure lends itself to discrimination against some teachers in favour of those who conform to the demands of Governing bodies of denominational schools, demands which are not necessarily consistent with educational needs and national objectives as defined from time to time.

In fact, the practical consequences of dual control, that is , the allocation of responsibility for the control of schools and teachers to religious and secular bodies, have given rise to serious conflicts and dissatisfaction in the teaching service. According to the Collins report, it is suspected that in a system of dual control, merit is not always rewarded and religious consideration count more than teaching ability. It is not surprising, therefore, to find the weight of informed opinion clamoring for modification

of the system by which teachers are recruited, promoted and disciplined. Yet, as our records show, recognition of the limitations of dual control has not been matched by rapid progress towards its abolition. For, as early as 1925, an education commission appointed by the then Governor of the territory, drew attention in its report, to the need to initiate a bold comprehensive policy to replace denominational schools by Government schools.

It was in 1938 that the West Indies Royal Commission recommended complete control by Government in staff matters in denominational schools where salaries of teachers were paid by Government. Two years later, in 1941, the Hammond report focused attention on certain problems which confronted teachers in a system where, among other disadvantages, promotion can be determined by the number of school owned by one religious body or another and or by preferences of that body.

Historically, the professional Association, namely, the Guyana Teachers' Association, which represents an estimated 90 per cent of the men and women in the teaching profession, has been conspicuous for its advocacy of the abolition of dual control and replacing it by a system in which an independent tribunal will deal with the careers of teachers. It was in 1961 that the Ministry of Education advocated a Teaching Service Commissions, to function as a body parallel in functions with the three Service Commissions, namely, the Public Service Commission, the Judicial Services Commission and the Police Service Commission which were created with the promulgation of the Constitution on 1961 which ushered in internal self-Government for the territory.

It seems to be that any account of activities which has contributed to be the content of the Bill before this House today will not be complete without reference to the support which the Collins Commission of Inquiry gave for the establishment of a Teaching Service Commission as a common recruiting agency for teachers whose salaries were paid by Government, In the words of that report, the Commission expresses the view that a Teaching Service Commission was needed and that it should be a body dedicated to advancing the merit principal throughout society. The Collins Commission also sees the Teaching Service Commission as a body which will not recruit teachers on the basis of irrelevant criteria and, in keeping with egalitarian

principles, will ensure that eligible person will be given an opportunity to be considered for appointment.

We are mindful of the support expressed over the years for the establishment of a Teaching Service Commission. We are also mindful of the valuable guideline for its functioning, guidelines which have come from many sources. There is no doubt that views expressed will prove an invaluable guide to formulation of regulations which determine the role and function of the Commission when established. But, I have to remind, that if regulations are to be meaningful, they must serve desired ends. Regulations must, therefore be interpreted against the background of a particular social context preferred by a particular society. In the peculiar circumstances of Guyana, all servants and these include bodies such as commissions, have a responsibility to contribute to the development of the social order to which this country is committed. The men and women who accept task to serve must act in ways which reflect acknowledgment of responsibility to place in the Public Service persons who perform diverse roles with credits. For the purpose of this presentation there is an urgent need to supply this nation with teachers whose contributions are supportive of strategies which ensure equality of opportunity, not only to receive from citizens, but also to give willingly to citizens and State. There is an urgent need for a Teaching Force which will educate people to understand the problems that require urgent solution in the course of building socialism.

With your permission, Mr. Speaker, I now focus attention on what I consider to be a significant difference between the existing provision for staffing denominational schools and procedures which will apply after the establishment of the Commission.

At the present time the appointment, terms of employment, promotion, transfer and termination of employment of teachers in aided or denominational school rest directly with governing bodies subject to the approval of the Chief Education Officer. It should be noted that although the approval of the Chief Education Officer is required for staffing denominational schools, this Officer, the professional head of the Education Service, cannot, in his own right, act in matters relating to staffing, for in the present circumstances governing bodies have the

deciding voice since a situation arises, there is a stalemate. In these circumstances, experience has shown that periods of delay in the education decision – making should be apparent to all.

Can the education system in this young developing country set on a course of building a better life for all, afford delays that can be avoided? An examination of Clause 13 of the Bill before this House reveals provision for generous opportunities for consultation which opportunities. I believe, will reduce chances of deadlock except in cases where the wider interests of the State conflict with the narrow interests of denominational bodies.

If such conflict arises it is reasonable to expect that as long as appointments can be justified on criteria that have the potential to bring the greatest good to the greatest number, decisions will be respected and issues resolved with dignity.

### **2.30 p.m.**

We respect to clause 13 (2) (c) it should be observed that the Guyana Council of Churches prefers the word “concurrence” which is replaced in the current draft by the word “consultation”. The use of “concurrence” I believe will lead to interminable delays in the making of appointments and therefore reduce the effectiveness of the work of the Commission. It is hoped that when the Commission gets into action, by its performance it will indicate to the Council that such fears as some members entertain at present are without foundation.

To make it clear that the final choice of a candidate must be made from among applicants for a post, the Government proposes an Amendment which is being circulated to Members of this House. The Amendment seeks to delete paragraph (c) from subsection (2) of clause 13 and to introduce a separate subsection (3) in clause 13. The new provision is not dissimilar to the provision which in the legislation that consultation with the governing bodies and not conflict will form the basis of the future relationship between them the Commission. I now invite this House to consider some interesting features relating to the composition of the body to be known as the Teaching Service Commission. Here again consultation is catered for hon. Leader of the Opposition on the appointment of the Chairman. It is observed that there is to be representation by a person concerned with local government matters. As I see it, such representation on the

Commission will provide the nominee with valuable experience befitting him or her to provision for two direct members representing the Guyana Teachers' Association and the Guyana Council of Churches respectively.

To my mind this arrangement is not merely an attempt to give representation to two bodies concerned with, involved in, and knowledgeable about educational activities for over a century. Their inclusion on the Commission is a clear recognition of their experience acquired over the years and the contribution which they are likely to make to education in general and to the teaching servicing in particular.

It is common knowledge that the activities of the church in education in Guyana has historical significance. As with other historical issues the church's role has been interpreted in both positive and negative ways. Speaking in a positive sense it will be true to say that whatever the objective underlying the work of the Church in the field of education, one beneficial outcome for Guyana is that it laid the foundation upon which literate Guyanese society has been built. For this crucial input, the Government and people of Guyana are appreciative.

It is to be noted, too, that in the present era the Church demonstrates support for Government's development plans by implementing supportive education programmers. Over the years, and with increasing emphasis in the latter years, denominational or aided schools have perhaps slowly and almost imperceptibly but steadily responded to the demands of the State to provide education of a quality which will equalize opportunities for human development and for preparing the young child to build Guyana by its own efforts.

Today we approach the dawn of a new era in the administrative arrangement for appointment and discipline of teachers who receive salaries from the Government of Guyana. The Guyana Teachers' Association has unreservedly supported the establishment of a Teaching Service Commission and is in full agreement with the provisions proposed in the Bill. I invite governing bodies of denominational schools to accept the new arrangements which are indicated in the contents of this Bill, I also invite them to consider that the transfer of responsibility for recruitment from the Ministry of Education to the Teaching Service Commission does not inevitably presume change in the positive aspects of the relationship which has been built up

over the years between the Ministry of Education and interested bodies. After all, the Bill provides for active participation of concerned bodies. After all, the Bill provides for active participation of concerned bodied in the staffing of schools and the discipline of teachers. As is to be expected, the record of involvement of governing bodies, and the teachers' Association, with the Government in the important and sensitive task of staffing schools has not been without tension and difficulty yet it is to the credit of the bodies concerned that during discussions it was possible to identify a willingness to understand issues and to make intelligent compromises.

It has been said that between hope and fulfilment, between preparation and vacation in the file of young people and the destiny of the nation stands the teacher. If for no other reason than this, the Government has taken firm steps to establish a Teaching Service Commission comprised of men and women who understand the function of education in the circumstances of Guyana and its people.

It is my confident expectation that such men and women, charged with the responsibility assigned to the Teaching Service Commission, will not fail to serve in the best interest of our developing nation. [Applauses]

*Question proposed.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member Mrs. DaSilva

**Mrs. DaSilva:** Mr. Speaker, the idea of the establishment of a Teaching Service Commission is not something that is now; it is not something that has recently exercised the minds of those concerned with education and those who are interested in the system of education in our country. As the hon. Minister rightly pointed out, this has been going on for I think she said for the last fifty years, but I can now estimate that for the last fourteen years it has been brought more into the forefront. There have discussions on the matter and on 4<sup>th</sup> January, 1968 the then Minister of Education, Mrs. Winifred Gaskin, issued a White Paper in which it is mentioned officially and I wish to quote from page 13 of that White Paper, The Memorandum of Education Policy by the Minister of Education:

**“Teachers’ Service Commission**

Discussions have been held with the Christian Social Council”-

which as we know is now called the Guyana Council of Churches

-“representing the Governing Bodies of Denominational Schools and the Guyana Union of Teachers regarding the establishment of a Teachers’ Service Commission in accordance with the terms of the Constitution. Agreement has already been reached on the establishment of a Commission which will function for teachers in primary schools in like manner as the Public Service Commission for Civil Servants. Eventually a unified teaching service will be established within the control of the Commission.”

**2.40 p.m.**

On the 4<sup>th</sup> April, 1968, a Commission which came to be known as the Collins Commission – taking its name as is the custom from the Chairman of the Commission, in that instance Dr. Bertram Collins – was appointed by the Governor General, the late Sir David Rose, to enquire into certain aspects of the Teaching Services in Guyana. Dr. Collins had with him as commissioners four gentlemen all ably qualified and suited to go into the matter. I wish to quote the terms of reference from the Teaching Service of Guyana – Report of the Commission of inquiry – Chairman: Dr. B.A.N. Collins – September 6, 1969:

“to receive representations upon, inquire into and make recommendations on –

- (i) the classification and recruitment of teachers in an independent Guyana.
- (ii) the principles on which the salaries of teachers should be fixed and the machinery for salary determination: and
- (iii) any other matters that may be deemed relevant to the above.”

Six hearings were held in public at the Guyana Teachers' Association Hall at Non Pareil, Woolford Avenue, 15 persons and groups submitted evidence and memoranda and 24 witnesses were called. The people who examined it represented a cross – section of our community and those particularly interested in education. They included representatives from the Guyana Teachers' Association, the Association of Masters and Mistresses, Aided Secondary Schools' Association, the Ministry of Education and the Head of the Faculty of Education at the University of Guyana.

The Report as one of its findings – and I quote as follows again from the Collins Report on page 18, section 4.1.

“Essential to the function of recruitment for a unified Teaching Service is the idea of a Teachers Service Commission which shall recruit, transfer, discipline, separate from the Service members of the profession whose salaries are paid by the Government. The idea of a Teacher Service Commission for Guyana is not a new one. Firm recommendation for this has been made as early as 1961 by the Ministry of Education. The intention was to create a body parallel in functions to those of the Public Service Commission, the Judicial Service Commission and the Police Service Commission. Provision for a Teaching Service Commission exists in the Constitution of Guyana.”

This, then, is a brief background to the events and the circumstances that have led up to today's Bill before this House. There can be no doubt about it that the Teaching Service Commission Bill, which we are now debating, is mainly based on the report of the Collins Commission though it is used mainly as a guideline and its recommendations are not necessarily followed verbatim. We of the Opposition, like the majority of Guyanese, especially those teachers who have suffered under the existing system of teacher appointments, appreciate the need for a Teaching Service Commission and would willingly have given our vote and wholehearted support to this Bill but there are certain sections of it that should first be put in order and most especially section 13 (2) which deals with the procedure for appointments of certain teachers in an aided school.

In the interpretation of clause 2(1) in the Bill on page 3 , an Aided School is defined as follows:

“aided school” means an elementary school within the meaning of the Education Act, or an all – age school, the managers of which receive the grants – in – aid out of public funds . . . “

Please note very carefully the words “out of public funds.” It is the money provided by the citizens of Guyana that makes these grants possible. It is therefore logical to suppose that due attention and respect must be paid to the wishes of the public in the type of education they wish their children to receive and the persons to whom they wish to entrust the imparting of this education.

It is the accepted fact that education does not only mean the learning of the three R’s. Education is a preparation for life and encompasses not just only being able to read, write and do arithmetic. Built into education and forming a vital and integral part of it is the training a child receives both by teaching and by example , aimed at achieving a high moral standard of living and of values and for formation and building of the child’s character.

Recognizing this fact, air, parents have looked around to see how best it can be achieved and where and in what type of schools these principles and ideas can be found. Statistics can prove and I am sure that this House will agree, that the majority of Guyanese parents have come up with the answer that it is to be found in denominational schools because it is in these schools that religion and teaching of religion in a particular persuasion is of first consideration. By these means by word and by example, the groundwork is laid for and complete development of the child.

I have often said in this house that we must first establish basics before going on to higher levels. In fact, I say most often when we talk about education because I always stress the need for proper primary education before we get on to secondary and university level. But it is important, as I keep saying, to establish basics first before one goes to higher levels, because what is the use of leaning the three R’s – to be able to read, to write, to do arithmetic – without

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2.40 – 2.50 p.m.

having any moral values? What is the use if the children's moral values are wrong? And, how will these moral values be taught but by religious training; training in the knowledge of, first of all, that there is a God – call Him what you will – and that He has taught us to love our neighbours as ourselves; we must not cheat; we must not steal; we must not kill; we must not choke and rob. If we do not have these basic moral values, of what use will our learning be?

We talk of building a unified nation out of our six ethnic origins, yet if this Bill goes through as it is and it is badly administered – and it is true that now we do have an excellent Minister of Education with sound Christian principles. Let me pay her credit. **[Applause]** But we do not make laws for today. We make laws for ever and tomorrow who knows – I hope it will not happen – she may not be there and only God knows whom we will have in future in this House and how these will be interpreted. That is why it is so important to remember that laws are not just made for today. **[Interruption]** It is going to be all right now. I have great faith that it is going to be all right now but I am not too sure about later on. **[Mr. Singh:** It might be Jagan next time] So it can destroy everything. The teaching of religion in schools is the only hope of achieving this ideal of sound moral values, of building a united nation.

2.50 p.m.

Government cannot do it, neither can politicians do it, and it is only religion, that teaches us to love our neighbours as ourselves, that will help us to build a united Guyana.

For this reason, the parents have been willing to make great sacrifices in order to be able to send their children to the schools of their choice, the schools that follow their particular religious persuasion. We pride ourselves in this House of freedom of religious worship. In fact, many of my friends on the back-benches do not say anything in here except to introduce a Church Bill and we all gladly give our concurrence to that. Today, we have one coming up for the introduction of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, to which everyone in this House will give his concurrence. This House prides itself on freedom of religion worship.

We are all entitled to send our children to schools where our religious beliefs are predominant. The important thing is that we must have a choice to send that child to the school

[Mrs DaSilva contd.]

we wish it to attend. If a Christian prefers to send his child to a Hindu or Moslem school, or a Hindu or Moslem prefers to send his child to a Christian school, that is all right. They must have the freedom of choice to do this. Indeed, this happens at the moment because I know many Hindu and Moslem children who go to Christian schools, and also, many Christian children who go to Moslem and Hindu schools, but the point is they have the freedom of choice to do this because there are denominational schools, and such freedom exists at the moment.

These children, whether they are Hindu or Moslem, whether Christian or non-Christian, or *nowherian*, whatever you like, all work and play together side by side and absorb, as a sponge absorbs water, the teaching and example of the teachers of the school mainly, and particularly, the senior ones at the top. They play and work in happy, peaceful co-existence. It is a great pity, sir, that maybe some members of our Government, our politicians, and, in general, Guyanese, do not carry on into their grown-up days the carefree, happy abandon of their childhood days, when they all worked together, played together, without thought of race, political belief or religion.

The point I keep stressing and I want to make quite clear is that parents must have the opportunity to select a school that practises the religion of their choice. To take away the religious atmosphere of the schools is to take away the parents' right of choice.

In order to cater for the members and the needs of their flock, the churches of the various denominations have established schools, and I should like to quote again from the Collins Report. It is on page 32, sections 8.14 and 8.15, dealing with governing bodies of denominational schools.

“8.14 As we understand it, these Governing Bodies bow seem to have common representation on the Guyana Council of Churches. They did not submit memoranda to us or offer to give oral evidence.”

I will deal with point later on.

“This we very much regret, taking note of the large part they played in the careers of teachers. We have told in evidence by officials in the Ministry of Education and the Guyana Teachers’ Association that the Guyana Council of Churches was not against the eventual abolition of the present system of dual control.”

Which is quite correct. It goes on:

“8.15 We note in this context that the Government’s White Paper on Educational Policy, 1968 states on the subject of dual control:

‘The Government acknowledges the debt which education in Guyana owes to the enduring service of the denominational schools. However, with the spiraling costs of educational services, some religious bodies are finding it difficult to maintain and equip, much less improve their schools. Accepting therefore that it is the prime duty of the state to educate its citizens, the Government adheres to the policy that all new schools erected or established wholly or partly by Government funds should be financed and run by Government and be known as Government Schools.

All grant-aided schools at present owned and managed by denominational bodies will continue under such ownership and management and will enjoy the same conditions as at presents prevail, save and except for such matters as will be vested in the Teachers’ Service Commission.’”

That is a tribute paid both by the Minister of Education in the White Paper in 1968 and the Collins Report and they have recommended that have recommended that they carry on in the same manner save and except as it affects the Teaching Service Commission.

I said I would explain later that the Guyana Council of Churches did not submit memoranda or appear as witnesses before the Collins Commission. They did not realize the full scope of the Commission and its terms of reference, but it is well known that they have met the Minister of Education several times and they approve of the establishment of a Teaching Service Commission.

There are only, as I said earlier on, a few minor points to be rectified but there is one major point at issue and this is clause 13 (2) (c ). The Guyana Council of Churches were favoured with a copy of the first draft of this Bill with which they completely agreed. We do not know why it has been changed now. Because of the change, because of the way this Bill is now written- and the Amendment that is going to come up- it is not acceptable to the Guyana Council of Churches. It poses a very real threat to the teaching of religion in their schools and this has forced them to make a statement which appeared in the press on Sunday, 26<sup>th</sup> January last. I wish to quote from the **Guyana Graphic** of that date.

**“GCC AGAINST CLAUSE IN TEACHING BILL**

“The Guyana Council of Churches, while welcoming the formation of a Teaching Service Commission, states categorically that the proposal contained in Clause 2(c) of Section 13 of the Bill is quite unacceptable to the Denomination.

This clause gives the Commission power to appoint to a Denominational school as Head, Deputy Head or Senior Assistant, a teacher who may be quite unsuitable to the Denomination.

The Council favours the provision made in a previous draft of the said Bill which requires the concurrence of the Governing Body of the Denomination before such appointments are made.”

The Guyana Council of Churches are only asking that the Government, in controlling the Teaching Service Commission, should not have in its power, the power to impose on the governing body someone who is not acceptable. All they are asking the Government is to go back to the first draft which calls for concurrence. This would save the governing body, the Teaching Service Commission, and the teacher from embarrassment and friction.

I am sure that we all appreciate that the members of Teaching Service Commission will know that the ultimate power lies in their hands. They will have this knowledge always at the back of their heads. They are not going to bend over backwards to try and make a special effort

to try and come to a compromise. That is the difference. Because they have the final say, they do not have to bend over backwards, they do not have to really try to achieve a compromise. It is as simple as that.

If the religious denominations lose the right to have the persons of whom they approve as teachers in their schools, then the whole denominational character of the school will be changed and there would be no reason or incentive for them to continue running the

### **3.00 p.m.**

denominational schools. Later on, when I go on to show how much contribution the denominations have made to education in Guyana, you will wonder who will really suffer. If you are really using your consciences, you will realise that Guyanese will suffer if denominational schools decide to pull out as a result of this Bill.

At this stage I think it is well that I give you some idea of the magnitude of the task and the enormity of the contribution of the denominational schools. These figures were taken from the Digest of Educational Statistics, 1970-1971 compiled by the Planning Division, Ministry of Education, Georgetown. If you want the telephone number for that division it is 60264. In the education system in Guyana, we are divided into ten educational districts in the country. There are 388 primary schools and 44 secondary schools. The 388 primary schools are made up as follows: Government Schools- 157; denominational schools- 244; plus 4 undenominational schools, where the hon. Prime Minister may send his children and 3 Hindu Schools, making a total of 388 primary schools. I would like to take the opportunity of letting you know the contribution in secondary education. Although this Bill deals with primary education under Clause 12 of this proposed legislation, the Minister has the power by Order, to extend the legislation and the Order will immediately become law and it will only come to Parliament for debate if the Opposition tables a Motion to annul the Order. So the secondary schools definitely can come in at a later date. That will be dealt with in due time by my Leader when he comes up with the amendment.

As I was telling you about the Government – aided secondary schools, there are 13 Government – aided Secondary Schools. Of these 13, 4 are denominational schools, 3 belong to the Roman Catholic Church and 1 to the Lutheran. The other 9 undenominational schools also

include Hindu schools. From these figures, it can be clearly seen that the various religious denominations have contributed to a very great extent to our education system and have been actively involved over the years. It is not just of historical significance as the hon. Minister has been telling us. It is more than historical, it is practical, positive contribution that the denominations have made to education over the years and, indeed, they can be counted as partners with the Government in this country in the education of our children, particularly in the interior areas, where many of the Georgetown teachers do not want to go. There are no cinemas and electric lights, no dance halls, no beer gardens for the gentlemen if they like to drink. But it is the denominational schools that have opened up the interior area. They have opened up North West District, Mabaruma, Hosororo and so on. Only recently Government has come into the set, as it were, in providing education in the interior.

At the primary level, the number of schools provided specifically by the various denominations, as I showed you, far outnumber those provided by Government. There are 224 specifically denominational, plus 3 Hindu ones and 4 undenominational ones making a total 231 schools provided by the denominations as against 157 by Government.

I would like to give more of a breakdown of what the denominations have contributed in the educational field. It is interesting that the primary level, in the ten educational districts, denominational school outnumber Government schools in every one of the districts except four. That is, on the Corentyne, West Berbice, East Coast Demerara and West Demerara. It is worthy of note, too, that in New Amsterdam and Georgetown, primary school have been provided by the denominations. In the case of New Amsterdam they more than double the Government schools. There are 31 denominational schools in the new Amsterdam area and in Georgetown there are four times as many denominational schools as there are Government schools. There are 28 denominational schools as against 7 Government schools. Also, in remote areas like the North West District and the interior, had it not been for the denominational schools, our children would not have even had a chance of a basic education. In the North West District, denominational schools are almost seven times as many as Government. There are 27 denominational schools as against 4 Government schools and in the interior there

are over six times as many. There are 44 denominational schools as against 7 Government schools.

[**An hon. Member:** “So what?”] What does the hon. Member mean by asking, so what? The denominations are providing the majority of schools. The parents who finance and help to keep these schools have a right to say what schools, they want their children to go to. In the secondary denominational schools, St. Joseph’s High School, St. Rose’s High School and St. Stanislaus Collage, rank among the top schools in Guyana. It is fitting here, I think, that, as we now embark on a new era of teacher appointments, an approach to educational appointments and the end of dual control as we knew it in the past, that we pay tribute in this House, in this chamber, in this the highest form of the land, to the invaluable contribution made to education by all our denominational school.

To most of the men and women who work in the denominational schools teaching is more than just a job. They do not take up teaching because they cannot go and work in Water Street or some other place. Teaching for them is ranked like the profession of medicine and nursing ought to be ranked, that is, as a vocation. The pertains to the denominational schools, They , also, more than anyone else, realise that moral requirements built into education cover mire, that this is a transaction between the teacher and the pupil. We will be eternally in their debt.

It dual control as we know it has to go we hope that what will be introduced now will not deprive us of the services and expertise of introduced now will not deprive us of the services and expertise of these devoted people. Just in case there is anyone here who does not realise it, a denominational school does not impose its particular religious persuasion on any child of another faith or a non – Christians.

Prayers are of an ecumenical nature and children not of the denomination concerned are not forced to attend religious instruction. A Hindu or Moslem child is not compelled to attend religious instruction in a Christian school nor is a Christian child compelled to attend a Moslem or Hindu lesson in their religion in their schools. So you cannot accuse the denominational school of trying to convert the children to their particular faith.

Since 1855 religious instruction was made compulsory in schools which receive Government grants and naturally if you going to comply with that you must have the people who can give religious instruction in the school of their faith. You cannot ask a Hindu teacher to instruct a Roman Catholic child in the Roman Catholic faith in a Roman Catholic School. nor can you ask a Lutheran teacher to instruct a Hindu child in the Hindu religion when he is a Lutheran teacher in a Hindu School. Since 1876 an Ordinance dealing with elementary education made education compulsory for children between the age of 6 and 14. Actually, we take them from 5 years 9 months and in 1918 primary, that is elementary, education became free by law.

The religious denominational in making their contribution to education in Guyana were not only rendering a great service to our country, they are providing religious and moral training and it will be a sad day for Guyana if religious and moral training were to be withdrawn from our schools especially now that we have so many young people who are becoming delinquent.

The religious denominations co-operate with Government in providing for education, buildings and land worth millions of dollars and managerial services which, if they had to be undertaken by Government officials, would cost the taxpayers many thousands of dollars in salaries and travel costs. They are providing a service to Guyana which otherwise we the taxpayers would have to pay.

I should now like to deal with the Bill as it is before us. As I indicated earlier on, we will be willing to give this Teaching Service Commission Bill our wholehearted support and our vote but it is impossible to do this because there are certain section which have to be put in order and most of all section 13(2)(c). Hon. Members have the Amendments before them which we have circulated and they will be dealt with in due course.

On page 4, Clause 3 which deals with the establishment of a Teaching Service Commission in paragraphs (2)(a), (2)(e) and (4) no mention is made at all of consultation with the Leader of the Opposition. I appreciate what she said and her good intentions and knowing her I know they will be carried out but, as I said earlier on, a law is made in this House not just because Miss Baird is the hon. Minister of Education, but for all times. As I said, tomorrow we may have somebody else and we do not know how she will think. These things should be written

into the law. I am surprised that at ministerial level, Cabinet Ministers who proclaim loud and clear that they have the greatest use for the Opposition, that they want an Opposition, that they want consultation, have not seen the necessity for this. As usual, they are merely paying lip service and their actions belie their words.

Reference has been made several times to the Teaching Service Commission as it is set out in our Constitution. I should like to quote from article 95, subsection (2) on page 61 of the Constitution:

“The Public Service Commission shall consist of not less than five nor more than six members who shall be appointed as follows, that is to say –

(a) Three members appointed by the President acting on the recommendation of the Prime Minister after consultation with the leader of the Opposition;”

And here we have in clause 2(a):

“(a)one person appointed as Chairman of the Commission by the President acting on the recommendation of the Prime Minister after the Prime Minister has consulted with such bodies as appear to him to represent teachers;”

No talk about consultation with the Leader of the Opposition. And there it is they are basing it on the Constitution and this is ignored. Similar consultation is necessary for two persons appointed by the President on the recommendation of the Prime Minister and for the appointment of the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman. It is laid down quite clearly. Informal consultation not written into this Bill is not acceptable.

It is not only the Constitution that refers to consultation with the Leader of the Opposition, the Collins Commission Report also refers to it and I wish to quote from section 4 10. Where it states specifically under Appointment to the Teaching Service Commission:

“ . . . The Chairman should be selected after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition. ”

It is clearly stated here and on page 11 in the White Paper on Education:

“The Teaching Service Commission is accordance with the terms of the Constitution.”

And the Constitution recommends that the Leader of the Opposition be consulted. There you have it, the Constitution, the White Paper, and the Collins Commission Report specifically recommending it and it is being ignored.

Why waste the money to write, print and issue a White Paper? Why waste the money to establish a Commission like the Collins Commission? Indeed, why bother with as sacred an instrument as the Constitution of our country when its recommendations and dictates are completely ignored? That is what we object to. The Constitution is a sacred instrument. We therefore take very strong objection to the appointment of a Commission with the assurance – and I firmly believe that it will be done by the hon. Minister – that there will be consultation. This is acceptable from the Minister. I know she will do it but, as I said, laws are written for all time and when we go into this matter in committee stage, clause, I will comment on it.

Now, we come to the matter of clause 13(2)(c) which is the one point that we have the strongest objection to. If a simple matter like carrying out the instructions and dictates of the Constitution – as well as the Collins Report and the White Paper – is conveniently ignored and made to suit the condition, is it not necessary to be quite sure about clause 13(2) (c) which affects the matter when it really gets to a stalemate, after the parties have consulted?

I want to make the matter quite clear here. The Minister, when she was talking about the old way of dual control, said the list went first to the governing body then to the Ministry of Education. There is no objection to the matter as it stands now in this clause 13, the list going first to the Commission. There is no objection to this at all, the Guyana Council of Churches or the parents of the children in denominational schools have no fault to find with this. But, what is the problem? The problem is when it comes to the end of the consultation and the two parties do not agree on the appointment of a senior teacher and a head teacher, then the power rest in the hands of the Teaching Service Commission. As the Minister says, the new amendment is put in:

“(3) Where the Commission and the governing body have failed to reached agreement on the list compiled by the government body the Commission may, after consultation with . . .”

“After consultation with “ – these are the operative words. The governing bodies want “concurrence with” not “after consultation with”. I can consult with you and we do not agree. If I know that I have the final right to appoint, I do not try very hard; I do not make every single effort to reach a compromise. I go on just as much as I can and afterwards I will tell you: “I am appointing so and so.”

Face the facts. What will happen in any school if a teacher is appointed to a school, which is not welcome in that school, who is not wanted in that school? What will the position be? I am not talking about government body: I am talking about the atmosphere that is bound to exist in the school- the parents do not want the teacher, the children do not want the teacher; I do not think any teacher in his right sense would want to go to a school where he is not welcome because he would want to have co-operation in the school. The Teaching Service Commission has the power in its hand and the members of the commission know that if the matter goes on they do not have to try very hard, they can say: “Oh no, so and so must go to this school” whether that teacher is suitable or not.

It is quite wrong to say that religion is irrelevant and to classify religion with race of a person or the colour of his skin. It is not in the same order of things. Religion is a most

### **3.10 p.m.**

important matter. In a denominational school, there must be, particularly in the case of the Headmaster and senior teacher, persons of that religion’s persuasion. so, for that reason this Bill cannot be accepted by us. The denominations have a right; they represent the wishes of the parents who send their children to those schools. Nobody forces a parent to send a child to a denominations school. The parents do so of their own free will because they wish the child to be brought up in that particular school. It is up to any Commission to see that this is adhered to.

I have endeavored to state everything as clearly as I can, as simply as I can and those who do not understand do so because they do not wish to understand. They want to make all sorts of excuses for having the final say left in the hands of the commission. Whether it will upset the governing body, whether it will upset the parents, the children, the discipline of the schools, or the teachers themselves, it does not really matter to them. If they think so and so must go there, regardless, that person must go there. I have made it quite clear and if hon. Member do not understand, they do so because they do not wish to understand.

We have expressed the views of the parents of the children, of the teachers of denominational school and also of the Guyana council of Churches as expressed in their statement in the Press. There are the people who largely maintain and keep the schools. They get a pittance from Government by way of aid, for example a thousand dollars a year to maintain a denominational school. Some of them carrying two and three times the number of children they ought to have and then the Government comes and wants to dictate to those people who, by much sacrifice, keep the denominational schools going. These are the people we are representing and we are trying to get the matter across to everyone on the other side of this House.

In conclusion, I think that the Government should give serious thought to what would be the position if the denominational schools, as represented by the Guyana Council of Churches, were to decide that the denominational character of the schools has been so seriously erode that it is no longer worth their while to continue, that it would be more

### **3.20 p.m.**

meaningful to them to close down the 224 primary schools that they run in this country and concentrate on running evening classes in cultural activities and religious education. If they said, "Let the Government take the schools; let it start them; let it run them." Who is going to lose? You have to consider this very carefully because it is Guyana that is going to lose, not the denominations. It is our Guyana children who will lose if they pull out of primary education; our

country will lose if they pull out of primary education; our country will lose; not the denominations. **[Interruption]**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, will you please allow the Member to speak?

**Mrs. DaSilva:** Thank you, sir. If they pull out of primary and secondary education, we would all suffer. We just cannot afford to do this and we cannot afford to ignore what seems to be a very reasonable request by the Guyana Council of churches to accept the provisions of the Government's own first draft of this Bill, drawn up by the government law officers in concurrence, no doubt, with the Prime Minister, the Cabinet and the Minister. They accept the first draft and not the second draft of this bill. This Bill, as it stands, is not acceptable to us because of the clauses I have mentioned, most particular of all, clause 13(2) (c) and therefore, sir, we in all conscience, cannot support this Bill.

**3.30 p.m.**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Minister of Education, do you wish to reply?

**Miss Baird** (replying): Mr. Speaker, I should just like to make a few comments on what I consider to be issues pertinent to this debate. With respect to freedom of worship, I am amazed at the comments of the hon. Member because I think she remarked that the whole situation had changed. I want to remind her that freedom of worship is enshrined in the Constitution, that article 11 of the Constitution provides for freedom of worship, and Regulation 67 of the Education Code has not been changed. As a matter of fact, I think we have a record of what has happened elsewhere.

Although we have it enshrined in the Constitution I must remind the hon. member that there is the opportunity to carry out religious instruction in schools, in churches, in Sunday school, and so on. Nobody has abolished religious instruction and freedom of worship in Guyana. So far as I know, parents still have the right to choose the school which their children will attend, and they do choose the school their children will attend.

With reference to the objections raised in relation to clause 13, I think it is interesting to tell house that this was the single point of dissent on the Bill when we had discussions with the Guyana council of churches, and I think after the discussions and explanations the members were led to appreciate that the whole of clause 13 provided ample opportunity for discussion. I want to remind the hon. Member that in the final analysis some decision must be taken and that decision must be taken by the competent authority – the commission. I think I mentioned in my presentation that any slow crawl in decision making in education cannot be encouraged.

If we look at the provision in each subsection of the Bill we will see that at every point the governing bodies have the opportunity to discuss, to explain, and to listen to explanations and to discussions, and in the final subsection which is amended as to be clause 13 (3), we find that the word “counsultation” has been substituted for “ concurrence”, “consultation” there meaning that it would give us an opportunity in the final stages, when the list of applicants is being considered, ensure that all the relevant criteria for the recruitment of teachers are obtained.

That is why we have consultation but, having said that, I must emphasise that a decision has get to be taken. We cannot wait interminably for on other people to advise, and we cannot have the interminable delays that we experience in the appointment of teachers. The final authority rests with the Commission and I really cannot see that the governing bodies will have any cause for fear or discontent because in the final analysis if they are really interested in the development of the country, if they are really interested in what happens to the children of Guyana, I am quite sure that they will accept the decision of the commission as being final. [  
**Applause]**

*Question put and agreed to*

*Bill read a second time.*

*Assembly in Committee.*

*Clause 1.*

**The Chairman:** I wish to draw to the attention of the House that clause 1 should read “This Act may be cited as the Teaching Service Commission Act” appears, the year will now read “1975.”

*Question put and agreed to .*

*Clause 1, as corrected agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Clause 2*

**Miss Baird:** Mr. Chairman, I am proposing an amendment to the definition of “government school” in clause 2 (1). This has been circulated.

*I should like to make an insertion in paragraph (d), as circulated.*

*Amendments –*

(a) That the word “a” be inserted immediately after the word “be” in paragraph (b) in the definition of the expression “government school”

(b) That the following paragraph be substituted for paragraph (d)-

“(d) any other school or other place of education established and maintained wholly out of monies provided by Parliament as may be specified as being included in the expression for the purposes of this Act by the Minister by order;”

*put and agreed to.*

*Clause 2, as amended, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Clause 3*

**Mrs. DaSilva:** I rise to move the Amendments that stand in my name for clause 3, which have been circulated. As I said during the course of the debate, this clause deals with the establishment of the Teaching Service Commission and then goes on to tell about the composition of the Commission.

3.40 p.m.

We take great exception to the fact that the consultation with the Leader of the Opposition has been completely ignored in spite of the fact that it is stated quite clearly when dealing with Public Service Appointments, certain section which are also applicable to this, that the leader of the Opposition should be consulted, when the Collins Commission recommended that the Leader of the Opposition should be consulted and when the Minister of Education in her White Paper in 1968 also recommended consultation with the Leader of the Opposition. As I said, we accept in good faith the words of this hon. Minister about informal consultation but I wish to stress once more that laws are not made just for today, laws are made for all time. There is no point in having Commissions, printing and circulating White Papers and having a Constitution if their dictates and requirements are ignored. I ask that the amendment standing in my name pertaining to Clause 3 be entertained by the Members.

**Mr. Singh:** Mr. Chairman, I am somewhat mystified at the lack of acceptance of these amendments of the principle of consultation with the Leader of the Opposition and I rise because I want to say that the Constitution provides for consultation with the Leader of the Opposition in respect of appointments by the Prime Minister to the Judicial, Police and Public Service Commissions. I have, as a fact, had consultation with the hon. Prime Minister in respect of the recent appointments to the Judicial Service Commission, to the Police Service Commission and to the Public Service Commission. I have in fact, been consulted by the Prime Minister about that. That is written into the law.

The hon. Minister has said that there will also be consultation with the Leader of the Opposition in respect of these appointments. All of the authorities have recommended that the streamlining should be done as in the Constitution in respect of Public Service, Judicial Service and Police Service Commissions. If all the authorities have recommended that, if the principle is accepted, why then the objection to have it written into the law? Why the objection in view of the fact that this has been accepted, in view of the fact that consultation has taken place in the past along these lines? Surely it is an easy matter to insert, as in the Constitution, "after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition." they say they will do it, why can't we put it in

the law? I am mystified about this and I would ask the Government to re – consider this in the light of the Government’s own pronouncements.

**Miss Baird:** Mr. Chairman, with respect to the comments made by the two hon. Minister in relation to consultation, I have to say that I have been assured by the hon. Prime Minister that he has assured the leader of the Opposition that he will be consulted and, in fact, I understand that there is such consultation in the other matters.

*Amendment--*

- a) that the words “ with the Leader of the Opposition and “be inserted between the word “consulted” and the word “with “ in subsection (2)(a).
- b) that the words “after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition “ be added after the words “Prime Minister” in subsection (2)(e).
- c) that the words “after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition “ be added after the words “Prime Minister” in subsection (4).

*put, and negative.*

*Clause 3, as printed, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Clauses 4 to 11 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill*

*Clause 12.*

**Mr. Singh:** Mr. Chairman, I beg to move the Amendment standing in my name to the effect that in the second line of Clause 12(1) where there is written “negative resolution” it should read “affirmative resolution.” I would have thought that this amendment would have been completely acceptable and welcomed by the Government in the light of the Government’s professed philosophy of consultative democracy. Let us look at what is involved. The clause states:

“The Minister if he thinks fit may, by order which shall be subject to negative resolution of the National Assembly, extend the jurisdiction of the Commission to

include teachers in schools (other than government schools and aided schools) in respect of which the employers of the teacher receive grants out of monies provided by Parliament.”

There is a proviso and we must also read the proviso. It reads:

“ Provided that no order shall be made under this section unless the Minister has consulted with such bodies as appear to him to represent teacher in schools to which the order will relate and the employers of those teachers.”

This Order, therefore, will apply to schools which – and I am told within recent times - have started to receive grants from the Government , schools, which for years, from their inception , had been raising monies to up – keep the buildings and to pay their teachers, schools like St. Stanislaus College which the hon. Minister , Mr. Hamilton Green and I had the honour to attend, some short time, as well as St. Rose’s High School, St. Joseph’s High School and the Lutheran School. Under the proposed legislation, the Minister may, by the stroke of a pen, decree that these schools – schools which are receiving only a grant at the present moment to meet part of their expenses – shall be subject to have their teachers appointed by the Government’s dominated Teaching Service Commission.

### 3.50 p.m.

The Government pays only part of the expenses of these schools and it wants, by Order, to have the right to completely control the appointment of teachers in these schools to which it makes a partial donation of expenses , I am sure there may be lots of Members of this honourable House who may not appreciate what “negative resolution” means, and therefore it is necessary to explain it. Many of them know about introducing church legislation, to which I have no objection, but we must tell them what “negative resolution” means and I quote from the Interpretation and General Clauses Act, 1970:

“17(1) The expression ‘subject to negative resolution’ when used in relation to the making of subsidiary legislation shall mean that such subsidiary

(Mr. Singh continues)

legislation shall be laid before the National Assembly with all convenient speed . . . “

whatever that may mean-

“ . . . after the making thereof of and if . . . “

and only if –

“ . . . the National Assembly within such period as shall be prescribed by the standing orders of the Assembly . . . “

and that period has been prescribed by an addition to the standing orders. That period is 40 days. It is stated in standing order 69 A -

“ . . . resolves that the subsidiary legislation shall be annulled the subsidiary legislation shall be void as from the date of the resolution but without prejudice to the validity of anything done there under or to the making of now subsidiary legislation.”

To put that in simple language it means that as soon as the Minister promulgates her order straight away it becomes law. The Interpretation and General Clauses Act states that with all convenient speed they must bring it before the House. Surely that is subjective. Perhaps we may have to go to the courts to interpret what “with all convenience “means. But that is the wording and by the Amendment which was passes some time ago that will then be subject to our bringing a Resolution to have that legislation which is law annulled but anything that is done in the meantime under that law it is perfectly all right. The Government has forty days within which to have our resolution debated and passed or thrown out. But the thing is law immediately. On the other hand, what is an affirmative resolution? I shall read section 17(2):

“The expression ‘subject to affirmative resolution’ used in relation to the making of subsidiary legislation shall mean the such subsidiary legislation

shall not have the force of law unless and until affirmed by a resolution of the National Assembly.”

So affirmative resolution means it is not law, it must be brought before the House and the Government with its vast two – thirds majority, by whatever selection it was obtained, will then be able to pass it and make it law. It may not be the most desirable thing. Let us understand that even though there is a proviso here which states there must be consultation with these bodies who for years have been providing this service, consultation is not concurrence. It is reported in the newspapers that the Guyana Council of Churches are objecting to a clause in the Teaching Service Commission Act. In the same way the governing bodies after consultation may object. There may not be concurrence. Surely, if this the highest form in the land, is worth anything at all, if debate is worth anything, if consultation and consultative democracy is worth anything, what is the objection to bringing it before the House before you make it law?

The Government can call a meeting of Parliament at any time by sending out notices. Within a day the Government can, with its majority, take a Bill through all its stages.

This does not need stages: it is only on Order, and at that one sitting of the House the Government can with its majority make that thing law, but at least do us the courtesy of giving us an opportunity to come before this House and say what the objections of the governing body are. We can speak freely without fear of any repercussions. At least up to now we can speak here freely, so give us the opportunity. What is the objection?

An affirmative resolution is not law until the House passes it, the House has a majority, the House can meet within a day or two and pass it and make it law right away. If you say the Opposition means anything let us have the opportunity if debating it in this House or else let us pack up and go home if we cannot exercise our right to consultative democracy in this House.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Minister.

**Miss Baird:** Mr. Chairman, I should like to direct the attention of the hon. Leader of the Opposition to paragraph 2, clause 12 (1). I think this paragraph states very clearly that no

teachers and employers of teachers. I should like to point out that a negative resolution gives the Opposition an opportunity to debate the matter in this House. I think the hon. Member knows quite well that the resolution has to be placed on the Order Paper within a specified time and this give the Opposition an opportunity. He has no one to blame if such members are not vigilant enough to take advantage of the opportunity to debate the issue in the House.

Also I want to point out that in educational matters it is sometimes necessary to take swift action. There are many instances in which it is necessary in the interest of all concerned, of teacher and of the children, to take swift action to regularize a lot of undesirable practices in education. I therefore do not accept the request for a modification or an amendment to that clause.

**4 p.m.**

**The Chairman:** I will now put the Amendment by the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

*Amendment*

That the words “affirmative resolution” be substituted for the words “negative resolution” in subsection (1).

*put, and negative.*

*Clause 12, as printed, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Clause 13.*

**The Chairman:** Hon. Member, we will now deal with clause 13. There are amendments by the Minister as well as amendments by the hon. Member Mrs. DaSilva.

These amendments can be conveniently taken together so I propose putting the amendments together and member will be free to speak on them. I will then put the amendments by Mrs. DaSilva and then those by the Minister.

**Miss Baird:** Mr. Chairman, I would like to move the amendment to clause 13 standing in my name. I want to refer to paragraph (b) where there is a reference to paragraph (c). Where there is a reference to paragraph (b) where there is a reference to paragraph (c) it should read paragraph (b).

**The Chairman:** Hon. Member Mrs. DaSilva.

**Mrs. DaSilva:** I take it, sir, that that is all the Minister is saying on the amendments. Is she going to speak on her amendments?

**The Chairman:** I will put both amendments so she will speak on her amendments as well as on your amendments and when your turn comes you will speak on your own amendments as well as those of the Minister.

**Mrs. DaSilva:** Thank you, sir, I wish formally to move the amendment that stands in my name and which has been circulated among hon. Members.

*Amendments proposed.*

**Miss Baird:** Mr, Chairman, I would like to make a few comments on clause 13 (2) (c). The amendments are made in the interest of clarity. There seems to be some doubt, Mr. Chairman, about the interpretation of sub- section (3) and the modification is intended to make it clear that selections will be made from among applicants after consultation with the governing bodies. I do not want to repeat myself but I think I have called attention to the fact that at some point in time a decision has to be made and I think sub – section 3 gives full opportunity to all persons concerned to consult, to discuss, to explain, and therefore there seems to be no need, as far as I see it, for the amendment proposed by the Opposition.

**The Chairman:** Hon. Member Mrs. DaSilva.

**Mrs. DaSilva:** Sir, as the hon. Minister said herself, she made her points quite clearly during the course of the debate and I feel that I have done the same thing during the debate. I do not wish to take up the time of the House unnecessarily but I wish to emphasize once more, the absolute essence of the whole matter and to stress the need for concurrence. There is no point

arguing that the stage may not be reached by the Commission where it is forced by lack of concurrence to impose a teacher on the governing body when a stalemate is reached and the parties go on and on and never come to a decision and somebody has to make the final point. The fact is that the proposed legislation gives the Commission the power to impose someone on the governing body who may not be acceptable to them. As the Minister states, “after consultation with the governing body” can never be the same as “with concurrence.” The first draft is what we have advocated and it is what I should like to put for the consideration of the House:

“With the concurrence of the government body, appoint an applicant to fill the vacancy notwithstanding that there is no agreement between the Commission and the governing body on the list compiled by the governing body.”

The amendment being put “after consultation” gives the Commission the power, in the final analysis, to impose an unsuitable person on to the governing body and I wish to repeat that the knowledge that they have the power to do this will make it less likely for them to try and reach a compromise. I therefore place the amendment that stands in my name asking for the concurrence of the governing body, which we feel is in the best interest of all.

**The Chairman:** I will now put the amendment moved by the hon. Member Mrs. DaSilva.

**Amendment-**

(1) “That subsection 2 (c) be deleted and the following be substituted therefore:

“(c) with the concurrence of the governing body, appoint an applicant to fill the vacancy notwithstanding that there is no agreement between the Commission and the governing body on the list compiled by the governing body.”,

*put, and negative.*

**The Chairman:** I will now put the amendment moved by the hon. Minister.

*Amendments-*

- a) That the words “to fill the vacancy” be inserted immediately after the word “teacher” in paragraphs (a) and (b) of subsection (2):
- b) That a full stop be substituted for the semi-colon after the word “list” at the end of paragraph (b) of subsection (2) and all the word following thereafter in that subsection be deleted;
- c) That the following subsection be inserted as Subsection (3) of the section-

“(3) Where the Commission and the governing body have failed to reach agreement on the list compiled by the governing body the Commission may, after consultation with the governing body, appoint an applicant to fill the vacancy.”

*put, and agreed to.*

*Clause 13, as amended, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Clauses 14 to 16 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Clause 17.*

**Miss Baird:** I beg to move an amendment to clause 17(1) to substitute the word “Minister” for “President” because that is in keeping with our constitutional arrangement.

**The Chairman:** Hon. Members, I will also wish you to note that there has been a printing error in the third line. “(1)” should be inserted before “unauthorized”.

*Amendment-*

That the word “Minister” be substituted for the word “President” in subsection (1).

*put, and agreed to.*

*Clause 17, as amended, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

29.1.75

National Assembly

4.10 – 4.15 p.m.

4.10 p.m.

*Clauses 18-23 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*First, Second, and Third Schedule agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Assembly resumed.*

*Bill reported with Amendments: as amended, considered, read the Third time and assed.*

**Mr. Speaker:** The Sitting of the House suspended for 30 minutes,

*Sitting suspended at 4.15 p.m.*

4.40 p.m.

*On resumption--*

## MOTION

### GUARANTEE OF CREDITS TO GUYANA RICE BOARD

“Whereas the Guyana Rich Board requires overdraft facilities of up to thirty – five million dollars to carry out its function properly;

And whereas the Guyana National Co-operative Bank, the Royal Bank of Canada and Barclays Bank International Limited, are prepared to enter into Agreements with the Boards to provide overdraft facilities not exceeding the sum of \$35 million provided the credit are guaranteed by the Government of Guyana:

Be it resolved that this National Assembly authorizes the Minister of Finance or such other person duly authorized by him, acting on behalf of the Government of Guyana, to enter into Agreements as guarantor to the Guyana National Co-operative Bank, the Royal Bank of Canada and Barclays Bank International Limited for the purpose of guaranteeing credits by way of overdraft facilities to the Guyana Rice Board amounting in the aggregate to \$35 million.” **[The Minister of Finance]**

**The Minister of Finance** (Mr. Hope): I wish to move the Motion standing in my name. The purpose of the Motion is really to seek the authority of parliament to enable the Government to guarantee an overdraft amounting at the peak to a sum of \$35 million for and on behalf of the Guyana Rice Board.

The Board, as hon. Member would know, has always operated with an overdraft, the overdraft being provided by three commercial banks, Barclays Bank, The Royal Bank of Canada, and, latterly, the Guyana National Co-operative Bank. That amount has proved insufficient and now the best estimates indicate that the Board will need a sum of the order of \$35 million in to order to finance its working capital requirements.

The question may be asked why at this stage the Board needs an increase in its overdraft facilities? The answer is quite simple. It is, in fact, a reflection of the very successful policies the Government has pursued last year and is currently pursuing in the rice industry by virtue of which, in the calendar year of 1974, the industry has produced an estimated 168,000 tons of rice, and now, for the coming year 1975, the anticipations are that production in the rice industry will go up to at least 180,000 tons.

This has meant that the Board has had to take in much more rice than in the past. In fact, these production figures are record figures for the industry. Consequently, a lot more money has to be made available to enable the Board to carry out its statutory obligations to taking farmers' rice as soon as that rice is delivered to the Board, and paying practically in full for it.

#### **4.45 p.m.**

In addition to that, the Board has gone much beyond merely buying up of farmers' rice and keeping the rice in stock until it is shipped to markets. The Board has also taken on the very important supply of fertilizers at reasonable cost. The implications of that are that the Board has to carry stocks not only to terms of rice purchased and held prior to export but also to carry stocks of fertilizers. We know that fertilizer price have double in some cases and have quadrupled in other cases as a result of the oil crisis that arise last year. Petroleum prices, as well as the by-products for the products of petroleum, have skyrocketed and fertilizer happen to be

one of those commodities. So, quite apart from carrying greater volumes of stock of fertilizers in order to facilitate the cultivation of expanded acreages in rice, the price and the cost of that fertilizer have at least quadrupled in many cases.

In addition to that – in order to facilitate harvesting and to avoid bottlenecks which could certainly occur when these large acreages become ready for harvesting – the Board has also acquired a number of combines. I am told that the Board has forty- six combines and seventy – one tractors which it has as part of its assets. That is for 1974 and I expect that those numbers will increase in 1975.

Quite apart from the capital cost of carrying such equipment, there is the very important current cost of maintaining a stock of adequate spares. The purpose of recounting these is to really point out to this House the much greater demand which the Board is experiencing now for working capital in order to carry out its statutory and developmental functions. In addition to all of this the Board uses up some of its working capital in lending farmers working capital and the figures which are before me indicates that the amount outstanding so far is at least \$7 million in small loans to farmers. All of this has placed a substantial burden on the Board in terms of working capital requirements.

While we indicate that the Board wants to borrow for working capital up to about \$35 million, I think it is very important that no one misconstrues the purpose of the working capital. I have already indicated the reason why it is needed but it is very easy for persons to feel that borrowing at this level for working capital implies in some strange way that the Board is in a loss position or will make losses. But, sir, far from that, the advice I have got is that the Board is, in fact, in a very strong financial position in terms of surpluses and this, despite the fact that the Board is subsidizing fertilizers, fertilizer prices which farmers pay when the Board supplies them with fertilizer is not anywhere near the real price of the fertilizer, the price at which the Board itself acquires those fertilizers. The result is that there is in that respect, a subsidy to farmers. The loan which at the moment, as I said , has an amount of \$7 million outstanding, carries rates of interest which are below what the farmers would have to pay if they were to borrow under normal commercial circumstances.

In Addition to that, it should be known to the House that sometimes these things need to be reiterated and emphasized. The Board in a sense is making rice available to the residents and consumers of this country at what is, in effect, a subsidised price.

The Board is making available to consumers in this country rice at a subsidised price, and taking into account the quantity of rice consumed and the level of this subsidy per bag, I am advised that the value of that subsidy is in the region of \$8 million. In this, of course, one sees the policy of the Government reflected because it is not only rice, as this House knows, that is being subsidised in this way. We know that sugar is very heavily subsidised if one looks at the price at which sugar is controlled in this country and the price it is sold for abroad. The very essential foods- rice, sugar and flour – are all, subsidised and despite the subsidy on rice the Board I still in a profit position. Therefore, it is very important that we do not at all confuse the requirements for working capital of \$35 million with any concept that the Board is not in anything but a strong financial position.

As a matter of fact, despite the Government guarantee which is involved in this exercise, I think that the commercial banks involved would not have given the credit if they were not satisfied of the viability of the Board's operation and of its profitability and of its ability to pay the interest charges as well as to reduce those loans in due course.

That is the nature of the reasons why we come to the House and seek the authority of this House to give the Government power to guarantee the overdraft which is involved. As I said, the overdraft is likely to amount to about \$35 million. The cash flows of the Board indicate that in the course of the months which ensue the need for the overdraft at that level will decline. The \$35 million we are talking about is the peak figure. It will not be at that level throughout the year. We expect that as the Board disposes of its rice stock, the overdraft will, in fact, decline but it is important to know that the Board is carrying these larger stocks of rice, fertilizers, spare parts and increased loan to farmers and, therefore, require larger working capital.

**Mr. Singh:** Mr. Speaker, we have no objection to the Government guaranteeing necessary overdraft facilities to any of its agencies in order to carry out its functions. In this particular case, however, a lot of questions need to be even further answered than the hon.

Minister has done. I commend him for the explanations he has given but there are still further questions left to be answered.

The Guyana Rice Board wants overdraft facilities to the tune, or as the hon. Minister says, to the peak of \$35 million. We presume that the interest rate would be the interest rates which are currently being charges by the banks, but I did have one instance given to me recently where there were different interest rates, particularly the interest rate at the Guyana National Co-operative Bank was different from one other bank, at least. Perhaps the hon. Minister would say whether my presumption is correct and that the interest rate is the same in respect of all three Banks and it is the current rate. We certainly would be grateful to know what that rate is.

**4.55 p.m.**

Sir, further point that we have been told that the rice industry has been doing very well recently. Indeed we have been told this **ad nauseam** and we all know that there is a substantial difference between the price paid to farmers for their produce by the Rice Board and the selling price received by the Rice Board from their overseas markets. We also know that farmers have been complaining very bitterly within recent times that their rice was being down – graded and that as a result they were getting much less than their rice was worth.

As a result of all of this, it must necessarily follow that the Guyana Rice Board must have been making substantial profit and the hon. Minister has gone to great pains to assure us that the Rice Board in “in a strong financial position”. We have not been afforded any figures to back up this statement. There must be figures and we certainly would like to know what the figures are.

What has been happening to all these profits? The hon. Minister has told us that the Rice Board is now keeping reserve stocks of fertilizers, that they need more money for meeting the increased amount that they would need to purchase an increased crop etc. The hon. Minister has also told us that there are reserves. What are the reserves? The natural question that spring to our minds is this: Why can the Board not use its profit and its reserves in addition to its present overdraft facilities that did not necessitate coming to the honourable House. It made profit last year. It has reserves, so with the profits, with the reserves and with the overdraft facilities that

existed last year. Why is it that we need as much as the peak of \$35 million for this year? Can the hon. Minister tell us in what areas expenditure has gone up as much as \$35 million? I am presuming that the \$35 million is over and above the existing overdraft facilities. If that is not so then my argument is reduced. If this is a blanket measure where all the exiting overdraft facilities will be merged into this \$35 million, the situation is not as bad as it would be if this \$35 million were over and above the overdraft facilities that the Board enjoyed last year. Last year we had a record crop. Last year we had all the activities and still we did not need to come to the House for any overdraft facilities for last year.

These are question which arise which we would be grateful to the hon. Minister if he could answer so as to clarify the present situation. It is important in this House to have views aired and to have the air cleared because the problem with the rice industry is that for dome considerable time now it has been used as a political football first by the P.P.P. and now by the P.N.C.

It is a known fact that the Rice Action Committees which had out vast sums of money every year are P.N.C. dominated. They are, in fact operating as mere political arms of the P.N.C., to hand out favours in the areas. Members are, by and large, activists of the P.N.C. The decisions of the Rice Action Committees are made by the local politicians; they are not made by the officials of the Rice Marketing Board. I am not necessarily casting aspersions on the officials of the Rice Marketing Board, because they are not involved in these on – the – spot decisions. the P.N.C. Member and that is the tragedy in this situation. We need to take politics out of the rice industry and let us have in the rice industry genuine rice farmers, non – political rice farmers, genuine businessmen who can be genuinely involved in the industry.

I recognize the tragedy of the situation. It is that the Guyana Rice Producers' Association is merely an arm of the P.P.P. This is where the problem starts; this is where we have the big tragedy, the Rice Producers' Association being an arm of the P.P.P. spouting what the P.P.P. says, being used by the P.P.P. Perhaps the Rice Action Committee feels that it has an obligation to be political in order to counter the Rice Producers' Association.

**29.1.75**

**National Assembly**

**4.55- 5.05 p.m.**

Maybe that is the situation. All I am calling for is to let us get politics out of them, both the Rice Producers' Association and the Rice Action Committees. My advice to rice producers is to either change the present leadership of the Guyana Rice Producers' Association, change it into a genuine non – political producers' association, or they should get out of that and form a new association, form a genuine non – political rice producers' association that can be genuinely involved in this industry without all the politics that is rampant. When that happens – and I say “when”, because I am hoping that it will happen – the rice producers should then demand and should be given representation on the Rice Marketing Board so that they may be able to safeguard and to be watch – dogs over the interest of the rice producers. I say this fortified by the hon. Prime Minister said in this honourable House. I have a copy of the speech as reported in Hansard of 1<sup>ST</sup> March, 1971 on the occasion of the nationalization of DEMBA and these were his words:

“In that context, . . .”

he referred to something before –

“. . . I can say that what the pledge of the R.P.A. to co-operative with the Government in doing something for the rice industry, the Government loses any interest in the political sympathies of any member of the R.P.A. and is prepared to let the R.P.A have representation on the Rice Marketing Board.”

The hon. Prime Minister made it even more elastic than I am saying. I will read it again for those hon. Members who do not seem to understand what their own Prime Minister said:

**5.05 p.m.**

“...I can say that with the pledge by the R.P.A. to co-operate with the Government in doing something for the rice industry...”

He does not “...the pledge by the R.P.A. to divorce itself completely from politics”. The hon. Prime Minister has made it even more elastic. He says all he wants to pledge by the R.P.A. to co-operate with the Government in doing something for the rice industry. If he gets that pledge, the

Government loses any interest in the political sympathies of any member of the R.P.A. and is prepared to let the R.P.A. have representation on the Rice Board. I agree that the pledge has never been given and this is why I call on rice producers to let us have that pledge and I am calling for even more: let us take the politics completely out of the rice industry.

The P.N.C. can put out as much propaganda as it likes about the rice industry but the fact remains that there was genuine dissatisfaction and great concern by rice farmers over the state of the industry at the present time. It is in view of this that I repeat my request that the Guyana Rice Board be made into the Co-operative as an answer to the problem.

I called for this so many times before. Why can the Government not do this? Why does it not want to make the Rice Board into a Co-operative? The Government believes in co-operative; it believes in co-operative philosophy; it believes in this to such an extent that its whole accent is placed on co-operatives. Why then have we got such double standards? We would like to see the Guyana Rice Board made into a co-operative do that the profits can go back to farmers. That is where they belong.

The main concept of co-operativism is that those who work in the industry, those who are involved in it, should reap the profits, should reap the benefits from it. What answer has the Government for not making this into a Co-operative? We talk so much about co-operatives. Why not in the rice industry? Is there some special reason? Is it because of some particular class of people that may be involved in the industry that they do not want to do this? For too long rice farmers have been suffering at the hand of the politician. [Interruption] Mr. Speaker, I dear the hon. Member to go into any rice district and let him come back and tell me. I would presume that he would not offer terminological inexactitudes when he comes back. I know his propensities are like but I would hope that go that occasion it would not happen. In any area where he goes he will find that there is gross dissatisfaction among the rice farmers. Gross dissatisfaction in what is the rice industry today. I will make a final plea to let us get the politics out of it and let us settle down--- [Interruption].

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members pleas allow the Leader of the Opposition to speak.

**Mr. Singh:** It is such a simple thing for us to really put this industry on a proper footing and take the politics out of it. It is not a difficult insurmountable task; it is a simple thing to do. All it needs is a genuine effort on the part of the administration. They have the capacity; they have the will; they have the determination to deal with any possible saboteurs; they have the power to do it, so they do not have to be afraid; they can handle any situation like that. What it needs is a conscious effort on their part to get the politics out of it and this what appeal for at this present moment. I would appeal also to make this rice industry into a co-operative.

Finally, I cannot resist the temptation of pointing out that of the three banks involved in the extension of credit facilities, two are foreign banks and I would appeal to our politicians to remember when they are inclined, as they often are, to spout out their ideological nonsense about the dirty foreign capitalist. Let them remember that two of the banks helping the rice industry are foreign banks. [**Hon. Member:** “With whose money?”] We should all be grateful that the foreign banks are still in this country.

**Mr. Hope** (replying): I think, if there is any dissatisfaction in the rice industry, it springs from the kind of misrepresentation, misleading information and propaganda that we have heard a moment ago come from Leader of the Opposition. [Applause] He has said sir, let the rice farmer gain and get the profits of the industry. Now, let the Leader of the opposition ask himself: Who gets the profits of the industry? Is it the farmers themselves? How do they get it? By increased prices for rice. Last year, the price for a bag of rice went up by \$12 per bag, enabling farmers in the rice industry to profit by \$12 million in terms of increases only. In addition, to that it goes to the farmers in the form of cheap fertilizers. I am told, sir, that in one year the fertilizer use to be about 3,000 tons. It is now projected that that usage would be doubled increasing to about 6,000 tons enabling a greater yield because what we want in this industry is not just acreages. What we want is a greater yield per acre and this is the real purpose for ploughing into the industry all of these fertilizers and at subsidised prices for the farmers, despite the fact that fertilizer prices to the Board have more than doubled.

It is important that we recognize the various forms in which the yields to the industry, the profits of the Board, go to the farmer. I mentioned the increased price of rice; I mentioned the

larger amount of fertilizers at reduced and subsidised prices; I mentioned the availability of tractors at reasonable cost; I the availability of loans at rates below the market rates. Now, somebody has to pay the cost of all of these things and it is the Board that meets these things. In fact, in that way, the Board is channelling back to the industry to return to the industry.

It must not be forgotten as well that it is the Government that used its influence in order to ensure that the maximum prices were secured overseas for rice in this country. So, the Government has used its influences to ensure the country got the maximum prices possible and in addition to that, through the Board, is channelling practically all of this back to the farmers and I think these are facts which must be observed.

If we had have people like the hon. Leader of the Opposition who continues to spout the type of propaganda that we have heard, is it any wonder that we will continue to have dissatisfaction in the industry?

### 5.15 p.m.

In addition, I think the proof of the pudding is in the eating and if the Government's policies in the industry had not been the right policies, how then do we explain the massive increase in output that we had last year and that we project to have this year? These are the fact that must be known.

The member also spoke of the Rice Action Committees. They do not disburse money. They do not administer any money. They are there to organize the rice farmers to produce. They are there to observe the problems of the industry in a particular region, and they have the responsibility of bringing to the attention of the Board difficulties and bottle-necks in the industry, so that these difficulties and bottle-necks can be removed to the advantage of the industry in the final analysis. They do not disburse money. The Board itself disburses funds.

The member also goes on quite strangely to sing the praises of the foreign banks as if it was their money that was being lent. We have explained over and over to this House, and up to now apparently the hon. Leader of the Opposition has not really understand the A.B.C. of

banking, that is that the foreign banks do not have any money in this country. All the money they have at their disposal now represents the saving derived from the people of this country. So whose money are they lending? They are lending to the industry the money that belongs to the people of Guyana. If they leave tomorrow, that money will still be there to be lent by the indigenous bank that takes over from them, so it is immaterial, it is inaccurate and shows a degree of ignorance of banking to that the foreign banks are doing us an extremely great favour.

The bank have got to lend the money and they are quite happy to lend it at 7 ½ per cent. How else would they make a profit? And incidentally, I think I have answered one of the questions asked by hon. Member: What is the rate of interest? It is 7 ½ per cent, I am advised, and all three banks involved are lending to the Board at the same rate of interest.

There was another misconception which was evident in what the hon. Member said. I did not say that the Board has a reserve. Possibly the Board does have a reserve but I did not think it was entirely relevant and I did not say so.

I should like to clarify one point which the member was not certain about. The \$35 million which we are talking about is not in addition to the overdraft facilities that were available to the Board in the past. It is part. It is part of it. In other words, the difference is subsumed in the \$35 million. That is the total.

The hon. Member also spoke about down-grading in the grading of rice. This is a complaint we have been hearing for years. It is nothing new in the rice industry and I am not sure that the hon. Member is unaware of that fact. Farmers are always complaining of the gradings. It is not confined to the rice industry in Guyana. It exists almost anywhere in agriculture, where a person's pay depends on the grading, or the measurement of his output. This is not a matter which the hon. Member needs to dwell upon unless he want to mislead.

I think in those very few words I probably have dispensed with the very lengthy deliveries to which the hon. Member subjected this House a moment ago.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

29.1.75

National Assembly

5.15 – 5.20 p.m.

*Motion carried.*

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Resolved,** “That this Assembly do now adjourn to a date to be fixed. [The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House]

**Adjourned accordingly at 5.20 p.m.**

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