

**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**

70th Sitting

2:05 p.m.

Thursday, 24th July, 1975

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

SPEAKER

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

MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT – PEOPLE’S NATIONAL CONGRESS (50)

Prime Minister (1)

Cde. L.F.S. Burnham, O.E, S.C.,
Prime Minister

(Absent)

Deputy Prime Minister (1)

Cde. P.A. Reid
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Development

(Absent – on leave)

Senior Ministers (8)

Cde. H.D. Hoyte, S.C.,
Minister of Economic Development

(Absent)

*Cde. H. Green,
Minister of Cooperatives and National Mobilisation (Absent)

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

* Cde. F.E. Hope,
Minister of Finance

* Cde. S.S. Naraine, A.A.,
Minister of Works and Housing

*Cde. G.A. King,
Minister of Trade and Consumer Protection

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

*Cde. C.L. Baird,
Minister of Education and Social Development

*Cde. F.R. Wills, S.C.,
Minister of Foreign Affairs and Justice

Ministers (5)

Cde. W.G. Carrington,
Minister of Labour (Absent)

Cde. Miss S.M. Field-Ridley,
Minister of Information and Culture (Absent- on leave)

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

*Cde. O.M.R. Harper,
Minister of Health (Absent)

*Cde. C.V. Mingo,
Minister of Home Affairs (Absent)

***Non-elected Ministers**

Ministers of State (9)

Cde. M. Kasim, A.A.,
Minister of State for Agriculture

Cde. O.E. Clarke
Minister of State – Regional (East Berbice/Corentyne)

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

Cde. C.A. Nascimento,
Minister of State, Office of the Prime Minister **(Absent)**

Cde. M. Zaheeruddeen, J.P.,
Minister of State – Regional (Essequibo Coast/West Demerara **(Absent)**

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

*Cde. W. Haynes,
Minister of State for Consumer Protection **(Absent)**

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

*Cde. F.U.A. Carmichael
Minister of State – Regional (North West) **(Absent)**

Parliamentary Secretaries (8)

Cde. J.R. Thomas,
Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of Works and Housing **(Absent)**

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

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

***Non-elected Ministers**

Cde. E. L. Ambrose
Parliamentary Secretary
Ministry of Agriculture

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

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

Cde. R.H.O Corbin
Parliamentary Secretary
Office of the Prime Minister (Absent)

Cde. M. Corrica,
Parliamentary Secretary
Office of the Prime Minister (Absent)

Deputy Speaker (1)

Cde. R. C. Van Sluytman, Deputy Speaker

Other Members (17)

Cde. J.N. Aaron
Cde. L.M. Branco
Cde. M. Corrica
Cde. E.H.A. Fowler
Cde. J. Gill
Cde. W. Hussain
Cde. S. Jaiserrisingh (Absent – on leave)
Cde. K.M.E. Jonas (Absent – on leave)
Cde. M. Nissar
Cde. L.E. Ramsahoye
Cde. J.G. Ramson
Cde. P.A. Rayman
Cde. E.M. Stoby, J.P.
Cde. S.H. Sukhu, M.S., J.P.
Cde. C. Sukul, J.P.
Cde. H.A. Taylor
Cde. L.E. Willems

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 – M.B. Henry, AMBIM

PRAYERS**ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER****Leave to Members**

The Speaker: Leave has been granted to Cde. Reid and Cde. Field- Ridley for today's Sitting.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following Papers were laid:

- (1) Annual Report of the Forest Department for the year 1973. [**The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House on behalf of the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources**]
- (2) Fourteenth Annual Report and Statement of Accounts of the Guyana Electricity Corporation for the year ended 31st of December, 1974. [**The Minister of Trade on behalf of the Prime Minister**]

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS – FIRST READING

The following Bills were introduced and read the First time:

- (1) Exchange Control (Amendment) Bill 1975 – Bill No. 28/1975. [**The Minister of Finance**]
- (2) Defence (Amendment) Bill 1975 – Bill No. 29/1975. [**The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House on behalf of the Prime Minister**]
- (3) Interpretation and General Clauses (Amendment) Bill 1975 – Bill No. 30/1975. [**The Minister of Foreign Affairs and Justice**]

PUBLIC BUSINESS**BILLS – SECOND READING****TIMEHRI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (AMENDMENT) BILL 1975**

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to amend the Timehri International Airport Ordinance.” [**The Minister of Works and Housing**]

The Minister of Works and Housing (Cde Naraine): Cde. Speaker, I beg to move that the Timehri International Airport (Amendment) Bill, No. 26/1975 be read a Second time.

The Civil Aviation laws were not included in the recently revised laws of Guyana. Consequently, the management, control and supervision of Timehri International Airport are still provided for under the Timehri International Airport Ordinance, Chapter 282. In that Ordinance Timehri International Airport meant the area bounded by the road known as Atkinson Road and, in addition, the area known as the Bomber Disposal Area and, the Radio Transmitting Station, but excluding the Hydroponic Gardens. Since that interpretation there has been substantial new installations provided at Timehri. These are as follows: the catwalk leading to the Inner Location Beacon; the Inner location Beacon site; and the Instrument Landing System location site, to provide for proper control and police protection of valuable equipment.

One of the proposals of the Bill, therefore, is to amend the Timehri International Airport Ordinance, Chapter 282, so as to extend the definition of the term Timehri International Airport to include these new installations.

Since, as Minister, I am also empowered by Section 3 of the Timehri international Airport Ordinance to make regulations for the management control and supervision of the Timehri International Airport, any regulations made under the Timehri International Airport Ordinance, Chapter 282, would *ipso facto* have relevance to these new installations referred to.

Another purpose of the Bill is to provide for the increase in the maximum penalty for breaches of any regulation under the Ordinance. There has been no increase in the maximum penalty since the days of Atkinson Airport ordinance in 1952. Thus the existing maximum penalty of a fine not exceeding \$25 or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding one month would be replaced by a new maximum penalty of a fine not exceeding \$250 and imprisonment not exceeding six months.

The reason for such changes should be all too obvious. The old maximum penalty was considered far too light and unrealistic in the present-day context of higher costs and prices. If we consider the increase in wages, prices, cost of materials and so forth, this would justify the more severe penalty.

Occasionally because of a large number of visitors at Timehri a little lawlessness takes place and damage is done to the Airport property. This costs the Civil Aviation department between \$25 and \$50 in paid subsistence and transport fees for staff whenever an offender is charged and taken to court. It is obvious, therefore, that the old penalty of \$25 or one month imprisonment in the present-day context is too small or too lenient. The Bill, therefore, seeks to correct this situation and to be more meaningful and realistic as far as penalties are concerned. This is a relatively simple Bill and I recommend it to the House for a Second reading.

Question proposed.

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Singh): Mr. Speaker, we understand and appreciate the reasons given by the hon. Minister as the reasons why this Bill was brought before this honourable House. We certainly have no objections to the Bill.

There is, perhaps, one point we would like elucidation on. The hon. Minister did not touch on that at all. That is in clause 3 which states:

“Section 5 of the Principal Ordinance is hereby amended in the following respects...”

And (b) reads:

“...by the substitution of the words “efficient operation of the Timehri International Airport” for the words “safety of the Airport and the public” in subsection (3).”

We would like to know the rationale for this. It does seem to me as though there is not a very great amount of difference between the two wordings but there must have been some reason why the government wants the words “efficient operation of the Timehri International Airport” changed to “safety of the Airport and the public”.

I would like to presume, and I feel certain that I can presume, that this does not mean any lessening of the Government’s desire for the Timehri International Airport to be efficiently operated. I would like to presume that in addition to the efficient operation of the airport the Government is also conscious and cognizant of the safety of the Airport and the public in that one does not exclude the other at all. But one would hope that the words “safety of the Airport and the public” would include in it what is being left out now. That is, the “efficient operation of the Timehri International Airport”.

2:20 – 2:30p.m.

If I may read the section, it says:

“Any person who contravenes any of the provisions of the regulations or any order or instruction issued by the Director of Civil Aviation or the Airport Supervisors or their representatives may be removed or ejected from Atkinson Airport by the Director of Civil Aviation or any officer of the Civil Aviation Department authorized in writing by the Director of Civil Aviation, or by any police officer or constable or supernumerary constable, and on the instructions of the Director of Civil Aviation or any officer of the Civil Department authorized in writing by the Director of Civil Aviation may be deprived (and this is the important part) may be deprived of the further use of the Airport and its facilities for such time as may be necessary to ensure the safety of the Airport and the police...”

And those words are now being replaced by these:

“...to ensure the efficient operation of the Timehri International Airport.”

The words “efficient operation of the Timehri International Airport” are being substituted for the words “safety of the Airport and the public”. So we are taking out the words “safety of the Airport and the public”. So we are putting stress on the efficient operation. I did put it wrong previously. I would presume that we are not excluding the safety of the Airport and the public.

I am curious to know the rationale for this change. It may be very simple but it seems to me that one does include the other and there must be some reason for the change. That is the minor point I would like to raise in respect of that section as it was not touched on by the hon. Minister.

I would like to take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to raise once again, something which I had raised in this honourable House before. And that is the sub-standard service being offered at the airport restaurant. We must remember that this is supposed to be an International Airport. The service at that airport restaurant is slow, sloppy and the range of things available generally – ordinary things for eating and drinking – is very limited indeed. Invariably the restaurant is not open for late night flights so that if you are meeting someone coming on a late night flight you cannot get anything to eat or drink while you are waiting.

I would say, sir, that all in all the general service being offered by this restaurant is shocking and this is not only from my personal experience. It is the experiences of my friends and it is the experience of international visitors visiting this country. They have described it as very poor and very sub-standard service.

I would say that if the present concessionaries cannot or will not improve the service then take it away from them and give it to someone else who can give us a better service. After all, you must bear in mind that it is an International Airport and it is a busy airport. The hon. Minister did say in his speech when he talked about vandalism, that there are very many visitors to that airport and if we have very many visitors, as he says and as I appreciate, then we must have good service being offered. There is no reason why we should not.

I would like to raise another problem and that is the question of pure water supply – running water at the Airport. My information is, and I have had personal experience here too, that more often than not there is no running water at the Airport. Consequently, there are no properly functioning toilet facilities. The toilets cannot be flushed. I am reminded some weeks ago of one international visitor who told me that he went into one of the toilets and the smell was so obnoxious that he was forced to get out immediately because it made him feel sick.

I know that these things are not very pleasant to say in this honourable House but the fact remains that they exist and they give Guyana and Guyana's Airport a bad name. I am a Guyanese; I am proud of being a Guyanese; I am a lover of Guyana and I do not like my country and our airport to be criticised. That is why I am so concerned. That is why I would like the hon. Minister to tell us what is being done to remedy this state of affairs. We are all concerned about it. I do not think that anyone of us who has had any protracted stay at the Timehri International Airport can gainsay the fact that the services leave very much to be desired.

The Speaker: Comrade Minister of Works and Housing.

Cde. Naraine: Comrade Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition alluded to three points. The first one was why we are substituting the words “efficient operation of Timehri International Airport” for Safety of the Airport and the public.” The reason for doing this is that all the experts who have advised us on this matter feel that efficient operation includes safety of the airport but is wider in concept. In other words, safety of the Airport becomes only one little aspect of efficient running and they feel that they should be given this wider power in order to have a more efficient Airport.

On the question of the restaurant I remember a little while ago this matter was raised in this House and the matter is being looked at. But I think that comrades have to realise that the concession is rented and it is sometimes not practical or, probably, it is not sufficiently attractive for the people running the restaurant to have it opened for several hours doing little or no business just for a late flight. On a late flight you may have one person or two persons needing a sandwich which they would very well obtain on the planes before they disembark. So, we are looking at this matter. We understand there are improvements necessary and improvements will

24.7.75

National Assembly

2:20 – 2:30 p.m.

be made but I think you cannot cater for all emergencies. Some people will keep on complaining even if they went to heaven.

On the question of the water supply, I would like to assure the hon. Leader of the Opposition that this matter is being looked after right now and only yesterday an additional pump was being installed at Timehri to boost the water supply. I myself will be visiting that area in a matter of a few days and I will personally check on the water supply. My understanding is that the matter became worse because there are certain areas adjoining Timehri as well as Soesdyke and so on which do not always get water due to the low pressure, and have to be assisted by Timehri. A well should have been constructed at Caledonia. However, until this well is constructed Timehri, particularly at nights, has to supply water in tank wagons so that water can be taken and given to some of these populated areas where the supply is not sufficient at the present moment.

2:30 – 2:40p.m.

We recognise these problems and we are working to find solutions to them. I hope that the hon. Member would not have to raise the question of water supply at Timehri any longer, because I am reliably informed that with the installation of the pump which has just been put in, and another one which should be here quite soon, the water supply problem at Timehri should be solved.

But I should like to point out to the House that when we order a pump it sometimes takes up to fifty-two weeks before it can be delivered. These are not things which we can get off the shelf; we have to order and wait for them to come. I hope that the hon. Leader of the opposition and the general public at large will understand some of the problems we are experiencing, and be assured that we are doing everything possible to resolve them.

Bill read a Second time.

Assembly in Committee.

24.7.75

National Assembly

2:30 – 2:40 p.m.

Bill considered and approved.

Assembly resumed.

Bill reported to the Assembly, read the Third time and passed.

The Speaker: Cde Minister of Finance.

CUSTOMS (AMENDMENT) BILL

A Bill intituled”

“An Act to amend the Customs Act.” [The Minister of Finance]

The Minister of Finance (Cde. Hope): Cde. Speaker, in accordance with article 80(2) of the Constitution of Guyana I signify that the Cabinet has recommended the Customs (Amendment) Bill, 1975 for consideration by the National Assembly.

Cde. Speaker, in moving the Second Reading of this bill, I wish merely to say that this particular Bill involves no matter of policy and no real difficulty. It is merely a Bill which seeks to bring the existing law in line with the change which has taken place when Carifta was expanded into the Caribbean Community and Common Market. As is generally known, the Customs Act has very extensive reference to Carifta. The present Bill seeks to substitute references to the Caribbean community and Common Market for references to Carifta. It therefore straddles a number of sections in bringing into effect that tidying up. At the same time, we have taken the opportunity to amend section 22 of the original Act which deals with the definition of “value” under the Brussels Tariff Nomenclature to bring that definition in line with the current definition used by countries which have adopted that particular system.

Also opportunity has been taken particularly in clause 4 to ensure that a proper valuation of goods according to the Brussels Trade Nomenclature has to be made whether the goods attract a specific duty, an *ad valorem* duty or even if it is free of duty. In the past, the obligation to declare a proper value was only in respect of goods which attracted an *ad valorem* of duty and

24.7.75

National Assembly

2:30 – 2:40 p.m.

specific rates. Goods that were entered free of duty did not necessarily require a very careful definition of value. What we have now sought to do is to ensure that all goods imported into Guyana, irrespective of the kind of duty which is attached to it or for that matter whether they are free, have to conform to the valuation in the Act.

With that explanation, I wish formally to move the Second Reading of the Customs (Amendment) Bill, 1975 and hope that the House will see fit to support it.

Question proposed.

The Speaker: Hon. Member Mrs. DaSilva.

Mrs. DaSilva: We are pleased to give our support to this Bill before the House which merely seeks, as the hon. Minister said, to regularize the position of Carifta.

But I should like, with your permission, sir, to take the opportunity, as it is offered now, to raise two small points that are closely connected with CARICOM. The first one I should like to deal with is the question of our relationship between the various CARICOM countries. We are told we must get to know our Caribbean cousins better. It is very relevant; we are all members of the Caribbean and we must get to know each other better; we must trade with each other more; we can share our common heritage, our ideas, our sorrows of the past and our hopes for the future and things like that. One of the questions is: How are we going to know each other better with \$15 which we are allowed to take out of Guyana when we visit our Caribbean cousins? As a matter of fact, travel restrictions have been eased from the point of view of travel documents. No longer is it necessary to have a passport. A simple travel document is acceptable, and in some cases, I think in Barbados, even our I.D. Cards are acceptable. We do the same for them as they do for us except that they have more than \$15 to travel with.

2:40 – 2:50p.m.

I am just reminded by my honourable Leader that the Prime minister of Barbados criticised our ban and said it prevented us from getting to know each other. Even if our fares are

paid in Guyana, even if we have friends in Barbados, Trinidad, or where have you and they are willing to feed us, house us – we take some clothes with us – we need more than \$15. How can this relationship be established between the countries of the Caribbean which share together in the Caribbean Common Market.

The Airlines have even made facilities easier and more reasonable for travel. For example, there is a special CARICOM flight which is cheaper. It might be interesting to note a point here. We are not saying we must not get to know and love our country. I will come to that later. But, a return flight from Georgetown to Lethem costs \$104. If one puts on \$26.90 more that would include the cost of a return trip Guyana to Trinidad which, on the CARICOM flight, with tax included is \$130.90. Even the airlines have made it reasonable for us to visit our Caribbean cousins.

Similarly, we can go to Barbados on a CARICOM flight for an additional \$10 - \$140.80 including tax. Yet we are told by our hon. Prime Minister that things are better. We have a surplus. We are glad for the sake of Guyana that things are better. But surely some of this can be passed on. I am not asking that we be granted money to have extended long leave in North America or Canada or Europe, but I am thinking of the people who would like to go on a 17-day trip which is within the range of the majority of our working people who can save their money and have a 17-day trip in the Caribbean. They will go and exchange ideas with their Caribbean cousins and come back to Guyana all refreshed for working and to carry on for another year and contribute to the work in Guyana. But until this travel ban is eased and we have a reasonable allowance to go and visit the Caribbean countries, how can we talk about CARICOM and the benefits to be derived from our sharing and learning from each other?

I will not go into the details of exchange control, that will be for another time when it comes up before the House. Our freedom of movement is not curtailed as such. We can still leave Guyana in theory. We can get our travel permit; we do not have to have a passport; we can get our tax clearance; but we are as good as kept here because \$15 cannot take anyone out of Guyana; \$15 cannot even take us up to visit hon. Regional Minister in New Amsterdam.

I wish the hon. Minister of Finance would let us know if there has been any thought or consideration given to lifting this ban.

My second point deals with a matter that is dear to the hearts of the housewives and the women of Guyana. We do not want just lip service in International Women's Year; we want some positive relief for the women in Guyana. This concerns the unfair advantage that the other countries of CARICOM have over Guyana, as a result of which we are being made to pay, as it were, to subsidise other countries.

I refer particularly to the items of foodstuff that come from Jamaica: apple juice, peas, corn and carrots. We can leave but corn, we can grow corn. I understand the hon. Minister Desmond Hoyte did not agree with this but these peas, corn, carrots and apple juice – and I understand that very product “sardines” – are put in cans in Jamaica. Apparently, the businessmen in Guyana have jumped on to the peas and carrots band wagon. They have even jumped on to the band wagon of the herrings under the name of “Solomon Grundy”. They even import the apple juice but nobody has been bold enough as yet to apply for sardines although they can quite legitimately come under the banner of CARICOM as importing peas, carrots, corn and apple juice into Guyana is legitimate from CARICOM territories. It is quite legal. They are not breaking the ban.

We are paying higher prices for these things and we are not being able to benefit in the same way in that we too could jump on the band wagon and have industries established here and import North American and European commodities that do not grow here and put them in cans to comply with the CARICOM requirements. I think the commodity must be 50 percent CARICOM origin – with the cans, the labeling and the labour and so on – and that would make it quite genuinely and legitimately an article from the CARICOM area and so it would be allowed in. I hope that the businessmen will pluck up courage, since we have to pay for these other commodities and since they are allowed to come in, and investigate the matter of sardines which are canned in the CARICOM area. For some reason businessmen seem to be afraid to apply to import sardines although I understand it is quite legitimate to do so. [**Mr. Hope:** It is coming soon.] It is coming soon. Thank you. I am not sure what the hon. Minister means. It will be very

legal and above board. Agents can apply to the minister of Trade for a licence and we will get sardines from some other country in a can with the requisite... **[Interruption]** From some Caribbean country but the sardines will come further away. I understand the ones in Jamaica come from Spain are put in the cans and sold to the housewives of the Caribbean but not of Guyana.

Item 2. It would appear that because we do not have any proper Bureau of Standards to go into this matter we are paying higher prices for these canned goods, and some of them are substandard; they are not of the best quality. Guyana appears to be getting the thin edge of the wedge, the short end of the broom when it comes to this matter of CARICOM.

Under our egalitarian socialist society, we have been told that there must be equal opportunity for all. Well, let there be equal opportunity for Guyana as against the other Caribbean countries, equal opportunity to compete against each other on an equal basis so that we, too, when the time comes, will be able to share in the benefits of getting what we should have out of CARICOM and not be given the short end of the stick.

The Speaker: Cde. Minister, do you wish to reply to the observations made by the hon. Member?

Cde. Hope (replying): Cde. Speaker, the hon. Member of the Opposition Mrs. DaSilva referred to the fact that the whole idea behind CARICOM was to increase our relationship socially, trade and otherwise, with our friends in the Caribbean. This is quite true. And she referred to the restriction which we had imposed last year in defence of our reserves, in defence of our economic survival. That restriction being the restriction which says that a Guyanese was not permitted to take any foreign currency out of Guyana for the purpose of holiday travel even though it was known that he can still take currency for business travelling. It is known that the occasions for business travel seemed to have increased rather abnormally and rather strangely over the period that the restrictions against holiday travel are in vogue.

I am not aware of affairs that a number of our partners and friends from time to time have criticised some of our economic measures. I am fortified that, despite that criticism, we have been correct if nothing else because those very countries have found it necessary to pursue, albeit almost too late for them, similar policies to the ones we had adopted earlier. We can see it exemplified in all the Caribbean countries. The policies we have adopted have, in many cases, been copied by other countries with which we have very close and extensive relationships.

The hon. Member named a particular, Barbados. This is understandable. It must be recognised that each country must adopt an economic policy which is in accord with its own economic interest. Barbados is a territory – and I have said so – where the economy depends, not quite exclusively but almost exclusively, on tourism. It would have been illogical for such a country to have adopted a restriction against holiday travel for its own citizens, because it was part of the whole survival of that country that tourism should be promoted.

Tourism is not by any chance part of our economic base in Guyana, therefore, we have no such motivation. The hon. Member needs to recognise these slight variations in our different circumstances and situations bearing in mind always that a country adopts policies, at all times, which are in the final analysis in its own economic interest and, particularly in 1974, where it was not a matter of economic interest merely but a matter of pure economic survival. I think this is very important for the hon. Member to recall.

I should like to say that the Member has referred to the particular restriction on holiday travel, that when these restrictions were imposed the government has said that they were temporary and that they would be under constant examination and review depending on the changing circumstances. I should like hon. Members to know that these matters have been under consideration and I am really hoping that I would be in a position in the not too distant future to make an announcement one way or the other, because in all circumstances, we must take our economic circumstances into consideration. We will make an announcement, in due course, on the extent to which we have reviewed, and the results of that review.

On the question of goods imported from CARICOM countries, the hon. Member said nothing new. She has, in fact, no doubt, perhaps unknowingly, reiterated most of the views

expressed by the Ministers who represent Guyana in the CARICOM Councils; views which have been expressed at the most recent Council of Ministers Meeting at Montego Bay in Jamaica.

In the final analysis people import in response to demand. If housewives find that a thing is too expensive, particularly if it is a non-essential for which there are numerous domestic and lower priced alternatives, there is no excuse if housewives choose to buy those substandard goods and those high-priced goods. The choice is fairly and squarely in the hands of the housewife and it is a little bit difficult to understand a complaint which says: "I have seen a substandard but high-priced commodity on the shelves; it is a commodity for which I recognise there are cheap, domestic substitutes, but I must buy it and pay this high price, therefore, I complain"

Certainly, the things will not be imported if our consumers refuse to buy them, and, certainly, they will not be imported if our merchants take the national interest into account and do not seek so assiduously after profits. In effect, the difficulties which the hon. Member has raised with us at the moment, are matters which lie in the hands of Guyanese whether those Guyanese are consumers or they are merchants. If those two groups of people recognised that they were getting the short end of the stick, as the hon. Member so lucidly put it, then the solution is in their hands. This ought to be recognised.

Quite apart from that, it is also a fact that the Government, while recognising that the solution fundamentally lies in the hands of Guyanese, also takes the view that there are some Guyanese, I hope they are not too many, who apparently are not capable of taking care of their vital interests, and the Government will of course, as is usual, step in to protect those interests.

It is known that the CARICOM Ministers, particularly those from Guyana, have been particularly strong on the question of how to solve the problem of sub-standard commodities coming into Guyana, and which goods can still come to the country because they qualify for CARICOM treatment. The solution clearly lies in a change from the current mode of establishing entry, the current criteria for determining liability or obligation to accept those goods in.

24.7.75

National Assembly

2:50 – 3:00 p.m.

Up to now, we are using a set of criteria, one of which is the Basic Materials List, which is a fundamental part of the current criteria we are using. Under the Basic Materials list a number of goods which are not of area origin would nevertheless be regarded as of area origin for the 50 percent value added for entry into the country. For instance, the peas which the hon. Member referred to may not have been of regional origin but they may have found themselves on the Basic Materials List and that basic Materials List would have deemed that particular input as a regional good therefore enabling that particular commodity to qualify on the basis of 50 percent criteria.

We know that that Basic Materials List was in a sense a compromised list and anybody examining that list would find this is very extensive. I believe that all the CARICOM Minister now take the view that at this stage in our history the Basic Materials List should be removed as part of the mechanism for determining whether goods should qualify...

3:00 – 3:05 p.m.

... and, in effect, that we should use another mechanism. That mechanism is called a “processed list” where the criteria for entry would be determined not so much by the origin of the inputs that went into producing the particular commodity, but rather the process that was utilised for producing the particular commodity.

We are confident that when that process comes into operation as the mechanism for determining entry, most of these problems would be removed. I have been advised by the Cde. Minister of Trade that very recently, stemming from the last Council of ministers meeting, a special working group has been set up to examine the situation and to go into it thoroughly with a view to replacing the basic materials list with a more relevant process list. When these come into effect I suspect, as I said, that many of the problems, legitimate in many cases, that the hon. Member has pointed out, would be solved.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

24.7.75

National Assembly

3:00 – 3:05 p.m.

Assembly in Committee.

Clauses 1 to 6 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 7

Mr. Singh: Sir, I think there is a small typographical error in clause 7, schedule 3(c). There is a duplication of the second to last line of (c). The Words “or any person” appears twice.

The Chairman: Thank you very much.

Clause 7 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Assembly resumed.

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

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved,

“That this Assembly do now adjourn to Monday, 28th July, 1975, at the hour of 2 p.m. [The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House]

Adjourned accordingly at 3:05 p.m.
