

**THE**  
**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE**  
**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**

---

**72nd Sitting**

**2.p.m. Wednesday,**

**30<sup>th</sup> 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

**Senior Ministers (9)**

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

**(Absent)**

\*Cde. H. Green,  
Minister of Co-operatives and  
National Mobilisation

**(Absent)**

**\* Non-elected Minister**

\*Cde. H.O. Jack,  
Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources (Absent)

\*Cde. F.E. Hope,  
Minister of Finance (Absent)

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

\*Cde. G.A. King,  
Minister of Trade and Consumer Protection (Absent)

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

\*Cde. C.L. Baird,  
Minister of Education and Social Development (Absent)

\*Cde. F.R. Wills, S.C.,  
Minister of Foreign Affairs and Justice (Absent)

### **Ministers (5)**

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

Cde. S.M. Field-Ridley,  
Minister of Information and Culture

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

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

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

### **Ministers of State (9)**

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

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

- Cde. O.E. Clarke,  
Minister of State – Regional  
(East Berbice/Corentyne)
- Cde. P. Duncan, J.P.,  
Minister of State – Regional (Rupununi) **(Absent)**
- Cde. C.A. Nascimento,  
Minister of State,  
Office of the Prime Minister
- Cde. M. Zaheeruddeen, J.P.,  
Minister of State – Regional  
(Essequibo Coast/West Demerara)
- Cde. K.B. Bancroft,  
Minister of State – Regional  
(Mazaruni/Potaro) **(Absent)**
- \*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,  
Minister of National Development
- Cde. C.E. Wrights, J.P.,  
Parliamentary Secretary,  
Minister 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 **(Absent)**

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

Cde. M. Corrica,  
Parliamentary Secretary,  
Ministry of Works and Housing **(Absent)**

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

Cde. R.C. Van Sluytman, Deputy Speaker

### **Other Members (16)**

Cde. J.N. Aaron

Cde. L.M. Branco

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 **(Absent – on leave)**

Cde. P.A. Rayman **(Absent)**

Cde. E.M. Stoby, J.P.

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

Cde. C. Sukul, J.P.

Cde. H.A. Taylor **(Absent)**

Cde. L.E. Willems **(Absent)**

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

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

Mrs. E. DaSilva

**OFFICERS**

Clerk of the National Assembly – F.A. Narain

Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly – M.B. Henry, AMBIM

30.7.75

National Assembly

2.10 – 2.20 p.m.

2.10 p.m.

## PRAYERS

## PUBLIC BUSINESS

### BILL – SECOND AND THIRD READINGS

#### INTERPRETATION AND GENERAL CLAUSES (AMENDMENT) BILL

A Bill intituled:

“An act to amend the Interpretation and General Clauses Act.” [**The Minister of Foreign Affairs and Justice**]

**The Minister of Foreign Affairs and Justice** (Cde. Wills): Cde. Speaker, I move the Second Reading of the Interpretation and General Clauses (Amendment) Bill 1975. Cde. Speaker, one of the most convenient and important fictions that absorbs daily life is the fiction that we call time. It is difficult for the layman, of course, to appreciate that time is a convenient fiction because it is so important in his life, but those of us who had the misfortune, and, Cde. Speaker, believe you me, it was a misfortune, to be exposed by an over-zealous father to the intricacies of Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, Einstein, and Planck, are only too aware how fictitious the concept of time is.

It is not, though, Cde. Speaker, that the public imagination is unaware of the problem that time is a fiction. I recall being entirely amused when one American friend of mine would his son died on 7<sup>th</sup> December, 1941, at Pearl Harbour, and the Japanese say the same son died in the same way on 8<sup>th</sup> December, 1941, at Pearl Harbour. There is no question that the public imagination is aware of the fictitiousness of time.

30.7.75

National Assembly

2.10 – 2.20 p.m.

We also get the kind of remark that somebody phones from Guyana to New York and says: “What is the time there?”, and the person says: “Look, it is eight-fifteen. What is the time where you are?” “It is eight o’clock.” And that creates some degree of sensation and some degree of a response to an unknown quantity which can at times make life very difficult indeed for the mind not trained in this kind of conceptual thinking.

I see from the press that this Bill has had varied responses. There are a new crop of experts that have grown up, all claiming some kind of allegiance to matters temporal, and these experts have even gone so far as to reduce the matter to amorous pursuits. It is not that time is a relevant amorous pursuit. I am quite sure, Cde. Speaker, you will forgive me the indulgence if I remind you that it was Andrew Marvell who said in his **To His Coy Mistress**,

“Had we but world enough, and time,  
This coyness, lady, were no crime.”  
“...But at my back I always hear  
Time’s winged chariot hurrying near.”,

making the point that time is a very important thing in amorous pursuits.

I am also only too aware that the poets and the writers have deliberately chosen to use the difficulty of conceptualizing time as a vehicle for the expression of emotion, but those of us who have to promulgate legislation, and order people’s lives about, we cannot afford the indulgence of relapses into poetry and matters of that kind.

Suffice it to say that as a question of fiction, it was decided to fix the meridian, which passes through Greenwich in London, as a sort of international dateline. Then, there being 360 degrees to every circle, as I think we ought to know, the lines of longitude go around the earth and each line of longitude differs by four minutes one from the other. Naturally, as one goes westwards from east, it is a different story so that the idea of local mean time arose.

Local mean time would mean that if time here is 2 o'clock, then the time some place, which is one degree of longitude to the west, would be four minutes to two, and one degree of longitude to the east would be four minutes after two. That was found inconvenient and the truth of one of Marx's more famous statements, that most things spring from economic causes, became apparent around 1880 when the leading commercial nations met and they decided that this inconvenience of local mean time and four-minute differences in longitude was insufficient to establish the then world economic order with any degree of sureness in its foundation. They decided to have twenty-four standard meridians around the world, each 15 degrees of longitude apart which, when multiplied, would give 360, and so that the time in each of those standard meridians would differ by one hour. That was decided in 1880.

I must tell you the facts, and the total facts, of which I am quite sure you, Cde. Speaker, are aware and every member here is aware, are that Guyana has 57 degrees west longitude to the east and 61 to the west. We lie in that grouping. We therefore fell into a position where we were four hours behind Greenwich Mean Time.

This continued for some time and in 1915 in the good old colonial days, a gentleman in the Executive Council felt that this four-hour difference was rather inconvenient. Those who appreciate the standards and the criteria that governed life in colonial times will appreciate that they would not change the time to suit some condition of the workers or in the interest of production. They changed the time because it was found inconvenient to pursue their recreational activities, which meant, of course, golf and what have you. They wanted more daylight in order to pursue recreation, and the interests of the working class and those unfortunate members on the other end of the plantocracy were irrelevant.

In 1915, the Executive Council here changed the position so that Guyana was three hours and 45 minutes behind Greenwich Mean Time. That situation continued until today, where we are now seeking to make it a matter of three hours. The purpose of this legislation is to make maximum use of available daylight. There is no mystery in it. There is no suggestion that we are tempering with forces of the supernatural. There is no suggestion that we are seizing the bull by



the horns and riding roughshod into cultural beliefs that have been blessed by antiquity and hallowed by centuries of application to service.

If I might advert your attention to the Bill itself, in clause 1, it states quite clearly that we are seeking to amend the Interpretation and General Clauses Act which, in effect, says three hours and forty-five minutes.

We are now amending that so that it will read “three hours.” What is stated now is:

“Subject to subsection (2), where any expression of time occurs in any written law or public document, the time referred to shall signify the standard time of Guyana which shall be three hours behind Greenwich Mean Time.”

That used to be three hours, forty-five minutes.

**2.20 p.m.**

In the second section we say:

“Nothing in this section shall affect the use of local mean time for purposes of astronomy, meteorology, navigation or other purposes”,

where there is a standard international practice. I must inform the House that there is still standard scientific use for the four minutes variation in longitude degree. In astrology, navigation, astronomy and even in arts, I understand, they occur. It is for this reason retained for purposes scientific as deviated in the Bill.

The last section states that the Minister assigned, which obviously is me:

“may, by order which shall be subject to negative resolution of the National Assembly, amend or modify any enactment for the purpose of giving effect to the provisions of section 38 of the Principal Act as repealed and re-enacted by section 2 of this Act.”

That is to say, I am empowered to make orders to bring certain legislations and certain matters up-to-date to suit the convenience of this change.

For example, comrades and hon. Members are aware – and it is a notorious fact and, also, a notorious lie – that all men are presumed to know the law. Between February and September, lighting up time is between 6.30 p.m. and 5.45 a.m. and that changes between November and January. We have had this difficulty in cricket where the umpires had to change their closing time fifteen minutes later depending on whether you play after September or before, and shrewd captains always use that extra fifteen minutes of daylight when the defences are down and the person’s minds are relaxed, to make some inroads into the opposition before the next day’s play. You can more do the strategic thing by concentrating on the point as regards penetration.

Apart from things like lighting up time, there are certain bits of legislation which I hope will be dealt with more and separately. Things such as the law relating to burglary which requires that acts be committed within certain periods of night, are anomalies which, however relevant they may have been to the Victorian in England, are neither relevant to England today and certainly not relevant to Guyana today. And I would feel extremely disappointed in myself if I should allow my tenure of office, however short it is, to pass without making a frontal assault on this anachronistic kind of legislation, and the belief that the criminal law which Dickens found to be so appalling in the last century is something that must **ipso facto** apply to us here in Guyana. In the mean time we will have to make amendments in the law of burglary to suit this change of law.

We also have the power to change things like shopping hours and matters of that kind. That I would watch at very carefully to see that all sections of the community are satisfied and that nobody is victimised by any order that I may make, either because of his cultural allegiance to one faith or for any other reason.

That, in short, is the Bill which I propose to have passed for the Second Reading here today.

I must inform the Court – I am sorry, I must inform the House; but then it is not very often appreciated that this House is a Court and the highest Court too. One can understand if my comrades do not often recall that. It is a mistake which one can easily slide into. But then, of course, Cde. Speaker, you always have such a majestic manner when you preside that the assumption that this is a Court readily comes to mind. **[Laughter]**

The original intention was to move the suspension of Standing Orders to have this matter dealt with on Monday. I wish, at this stage, to go on public record as thanking the hon. Leader of the Opposition. I must thank him as it was he who brought to my attention that there were sections of the community who had reasonable apprehensions about the manner in which this Bill might or might not affect the pursuit of their religious pre-occupation. In those circumstances, I had no hesitation in asking the Leader of the House not to move the suspension and to let us have an opportunity of hearing all sections of the Muslim community and what their representations would be. I have had representations made to me on Monday, Tuesday and, indeed, today and I am very pleased to report that we heard all sides and we were able to come to an agreement with all sides. **[Applause]** I wish to thank publicly those gentlemen who took time off from their many businesses and practices to come and see me on this important matter and to avail me of their views and the honesty of their sentiments, and, above all, for their strong desire to assist this Government in the development of the nation we are trying to develop here in Guyana.

The factual position after these consultations is that where H81 of the 1972 Civil Service

Rules stated:

“Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Departments are authorised to grant requests from public servants who are Muslims for time off between the hours of 12 noon and 2 p.m. to enable them to attend service at Mosque on Fridays, provided:

- i. That it is practicable to do so without impeding or disorganising the work of the Ministry or inconveniencing the public;
- ii. that it does not result in additional expenditure (e.g. on overtime additional staff); and
- iii. that the public servant concerned make good the time so granted by working overtime in a manner satisfactory to his Permanent Secretary or Head of Department.”

The Government has agreed that should this Bill be passed into law a corresponding change in the time would be made in this rule to accommodate the advance of the clock by 45 minutes. I have been assured by the leaders of the Muslim community that their objectives would be fully met by such a change in the rule. In those circumstances, I move that the Bill be read a Second time. It is a Bill for the interest of the community at large, which is a very fundamental thing and the productive forces which govern the society. I have no hesitation in moving that it be read a Second time.

*Question proposed.*

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member, Mrs. DaSilva.

**Mrs. DaSilva:** Mr. Speaker, I am indeed happy on this occasion, when the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs and Justice has just made his maiden speech in this House, that the Bill before us will go across smoothly with full support from the Opposition. Again, I would like to congratulate the hon. Minister on his tolerance and understanding and for not being too big and

too great to consider that it was something worthwhile to allow for postponement of the debate until today. In fact, his greatness shows through. It is something that he was willing to admit. He was willing to listen to the Leader of the Opposition when he asked that he consult with the Muslim community so that they would be completely satisfied that we, in passing this Bill in this House, would in no way interfere with their religious practice. I will go on later to show that the Government of Guyana and those of us on the Opposition side, believe in freedom of worship and it is not good enough to say you believe in freedom of worship and only pay lip service to it. It is also necessary to make it a meaningful realisation.

**2.30 p.m.**

We are, therefore, very pleased. Once again I wish to thank the hon. Minister for having agreed, first of all, not to have the unpleasantness of having us object to a suspension of the Standing Order so that a Bill could be bulldozed through the House; and secondly, for giving time for meaningful consultation. It gives us on this side of the House great encouragement and hope that maybe all is not lost in our country and that from time to time there are such Ministers, there are such gentlemen, in the truest sense of the word, still remaining who are willing to give a hearing and permit discussion on the matter.

Also, sir, we were most interested to hear the hon. Minister's very informative dissertation on the question of Greenwich Mean Time and the Meridian and how the time factor was arrived at. I do hope that the Press will find it possible to give it much publicity. I think it is very interesting and necessary because the debate is not broadcast. I would like our school children, especially, to have an opportunity to learn from the hon. Minister's information.

The Press got a little emotional over this business of Guyana Standard Time, as they called it. We have always had Guyana Standard Time because the time here is Guyana Standard Time. It does not matter that G.M.T. also stands for "Guyana Market Time" which, as we know,

is sometimes not very reliable because the dear old Stabroek market clock, having ticked away happily for over a century is sometimes not working evenly on all four faces. I note the Mayor is having a ceremony tomorrow night to welcome in this new change in time. I will not call it new Guyana Standard Time because it is not. It is Guyana Standard Time. It is the new time coming in. We are just adjusting our time to suit ourselves, as we say. But I do hope we have the clock wound up and cleaned up and all the rest of it so that from the 1<sup>st</sup> August we will have it saying the same time on all four sides and long may it carry on in that manner.

Sir, way back in 1776, the first nautical almanac for the use of navigators and astronomers was published by the astronomer Royal. It was based on the Meridian at Greenwich in London, England with longitude measuring East and West 0 degrees. And then in 1852 a master clock, which still exists, was built at the Greenwich Observatory and Greenwich Mean Time came into being. And as the hon. Minister said, in the 1880s – I understand that it was in 1884 – Greenwich was chosen as the Prime Meridian of the world and Greenwich Mean Time became known and accepted as universal time. Based on Greenwich Mean Time the world's clocks were set and according to the position, east or west of Greenwich, their time is said to be so many hours or minutes behind or ahead of Greenwich.

In order to allow for more hours of daylight some countries, for example Britain, in 1968 and actually before that, during the war introduced what was known as double British summer time to take full advantage of the extra daylight in order to achieve her ends of increasing the output from agriculture and her factories and so on. This was done during the war. They had double British summer time but this came back in 1968 to what was known as British standard time. She advanced her clocks one hour and this brought her in line with countries in Western Europe where central European time is observed one hour ahead of Greenwich Mean Time. This was for a trial period of three years. Then they decided that British Standard Time was particularly acceptable in the summer months but not necessary particularly in the winter months, the reason being that they wanted longer hours of daylight to work in the fields and in the factory. So by an Act of Parliament which came into effect on the 31<sup>st</sup> October, 1971 British

Standard Time became law for the summer months and in the winter months she reverted to Greenwich Mean Time.

This Bill before the House, as the hon. Minister said, is nothing new or original by the Government of Guyana but indeed it is a very sensible move. It gives a faint glimmer of hope again to the Opposition that this new shining light on the Government side of the benches, who seems to be a reasonable, practicable, realistic man may be able to influence those Ministers and the others over there, who are not of his persuasion, to see where discussion and consultation do pay off in the Government's interest.

As I say, it is so much more pleasant for us on this side of the House to be able to consult, agree and vote with the Government in the interest of the nation. And, as I said earlier, I am happy it happened during the Minister's first debate. I am glad that he and the Government have recognized that we in Guyana can learn from the experiences of others, that we do not cast aside something just because it was done in another country but see if it is to our advantage to learn from another country's experience. This one is particularly to our advantage when we are supposed to be always talking about our colonial past and knocking off these chains that we hear so much about, breaking with the past; we hear of Britain being capitalist and imperialist. As I showed earlier on, this change proved successful in Britain but we did not let that small thing bother us. It suited Guyana; it suits our purpose and so we are using it. It is very encouraging for the future and as I said it gives us a ray of hope that at last this Government is showing some signs of maturity and not behaving in a childish manner.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 1970, the hon. Prime Minister issued a statement in the National Assembly appointing a Committee to make recommendations for rationalizing hours of work in Guyana and this committee was under the chairmanship of Dr. Dennis Irvine, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Guyana. The terms of reference of this Committee were: To advise Government on the changes that are needed and the machinery for bringing these changes into effect.

Between October 30 and December 4, 1970, the committee held several closed meetings in Georgetown as well as three public meetings one each in New Amsterdam, Anna Regina and in Georgetown. Evidence was received from a good cross section of the community including the private and public sectors, banks, religious and political organisations, trade unions and professional people. I myself had the honour of giving evidence before this committee on behalf of the Women's Auxiliary of the United Force.

The report of the National Workers Hours Commission was published in February 1971. I do not at this stage, Mr. Speaker, propose to deal fully with it. It covers a very wide field taking in all the various aspects of hours of work affecting the different industries, for example, licensing in spirit shops, cinemas; bank hours, office hours and so on. It starts off with the recommendation of advancing the clock by 45 minutes and goes on to finally recommend a 40 hour working week and a 5-day week.

**2.40 p.m.**

Sir, I am going to read with your permission the special points I should like to quote from the Report of this National Working Hours Commission. Page 11, section 4 deals with recommendations. I should like to quote sections 36, 37 and 38. Section 36 states:

**“We recommend therefore that the clock be advanced by 45 minutes. In making this recommendation we have taken cognizance of the desirability of eliminating the fractional time difference that now exists between Guyana and the Caribbean and elsewhere. In effect what we have done is to put the clock backward 15 minutes to rationalize the fractional time difference with those countries and then advance it one hour.”**

Section 37 states:



“We wish to point out at this stage that all our other recommendations hinge directly or indirectly on the advance of the clock, and acceptance of this recommendation is a *sine qua non* for acceptance of the others.”

For the benefit of some of my friends, like me, who have to get these Latin phrases translated, this means “it flows from.” I believe the actual wording is “without which it cannot.” That if you advance the clock forty-five minutes the other recommendations flow from it without which they cannot flow.

Section 38 states:

“It is hardly necessary to elaborate on the advantage to be gained by advancing the clock, but we shall mention just a few general ones –

- (i) The extra daylight in the evening will provide extra time for sport and other leisure activities.
- (ii) Outdoor work can be carried on later in the day, and this will benefit such activities as farming and construction work.
- (iii) Production may be increased because twilight is no longer coincident with the time at which most people tire ...”
- (iv) Late opening of shops etc. is no longer restricted because of early hours of darkness.”

Of course, we have those characters who say it gives you more drinking time. I will deal with that a little later on.

The second quotation I should like to read from the Report of this National Working Hours Commission is contained in section 21 on page 6. I shall read just a part of it, but it is very important. It states as follows:

“However, because of the various representations made on the point we feel obliged to mention that change of work hours will be ineffective in increasing productivity unless there is a concomitant change in attitudes. We were disturbed by the number of references made to poor supervision, lack of interest, unwillingness to work conscientiously, and so on. Judging from the submissions there would seem in fact to be a general malaise among workers and every effort will have to be made to redress the situation if the goal of maximum productivity is to be attained.”

We strongly support those four sections of the Report of the National Working Hours Commission and offer them for special consideration by the Minister and, indeed, by the members of the Government, all back benchers and everybody in their P.N.C. group meetings. If their attitudes and approach to work are not changed this advancement of the clock would have very little effect on the country.

Everything was spelled out in this Report of the National Working Hours Commission and I should like to urge that this report be published. If it is too long, then publish parts of it day by day or week by week in the national newspaper. Government owns both, so it can choose which paper it prefers so that the most important and relevant parts of the Report be circulated in the Press for everybody to know what it is all about, because the advancement of the clock is just the beginning out of which will flow the other recommendations. It is – due to the understanding of the hon. Minister, arising from the recommendations made by the hon. Leader of the

Opposition, that – the Minister, as he tells us, has been able to come to an amicable solution with the Muslims. He has therefore been able to tell us in this House today that their problems were satisfactorily dealt with.

We are heartened to hear this, sir. We were very disturbed about it because we also believe in freedom of worship, and we know that the Muslims are as loyal as other loyal Guyanese. We did not want to have to dissent today on this Bill. It was a very reasonable request made by the Muslims because it is a very necessary part of their religious observance that they say their prayers in the morning as soon as daylight breaks. It is also stated in the Koran, I understand, that every Friday, at 12.30 by the sun they have to say a certain set of prayers. I am so very pleased that this matter has been settled; because it proves that it is not only those on this side of the House who say they believe in freedom of worship.

I have here, an article by the hon. Minister of Information and Culture, Miss Field-Ridley, published in the Daily Chronicle of Tuesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 1975. It is headed “Try to understand other Religions.” This was when the Minister of Information was speaking to the members of the New Jerusalem Church on Robb and Light Streets, Bourda, at a Choir Day ceremony to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Church. If I may be permitted to quote, she said this:

“...although followers of one religion may not accept the beliefs of another, this should not prevent them from knowing about these beliefs since it is through understanding that love is fostered. She told the gathering...”

if you will permit me, sir, to read a little more because I think it is so important to foster unity, love and caring for your brother.

“We are too small a nation for each religious group to go its own way; we need to talk to each other more and as Guyanese we need to encourage others to be strong and help even those who might not be Christians, she declared and added that divisions have not helped our society in the past and therefore a change was needed.

She described Guyana as a country with a vitality of its own because of the religious blending of our six peoples and their rich cultures and added that this vitality must be channelled into bringing understanding and love.”

This is very important for our country and therefore I am so pleased that this afternoon’s debate has ended happily.

Now, sir, the hon. Minister told us that Civil Service Rule H81, which permits Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Departments to allow Muslims time-off to attend their mosques and to worship on Friday between 12 p.m. and 2 p.m. will now be changed and that hour will be advanced 45 minutes. Here, again, I wish to thank the hon. Minister for a very amicable settlement.

Now that the hon. Minister has spoken about going into the working time, hours of work and so on, he might give thought and consideration to changing the hours of work but not necessarily the findings of the Working Hours Commission although I suggest to him that he makes known those findings. Also, there is need to go into the recommendations for hours of work.

The Committee has recommended that we have only a five-day working week. This may not be acceptable but the Minister should let the people know what the Committee has recommended. Let them be able to discuss and come to the Minister, the Leader or their party representative so that their case may be put forward and a proper time arrived at. For example, one of the things the Committee recommends is a continuous working day with a short break for lunch. Maybe we should consider that the time has come when the long lunch break of 1½ hours, which most people enjoy, should be cut down. Maybe adjustments could be made there.

Maybe, too, in order to facilitate our Muslim brethren, work could start at 8.30 a.m. instead of 8 a.m. in the offices and continue until 12 o'clock and then have the lunch break from 12 o'clock to 1 p.m. This is just a suggestion. You are not shortening the working day. You are paying back the later start in the morning by taking half an hour off the lunch break. The lunch break would be from 12 to 1 p.m. and then we go on from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. as usual. On Saturdays we would work from 8.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. In this way, by starting at 8.30, we might be able to accommodate the Muslims better for they will be getting up later and therefore more in time with daylight by the sun rather than by the clock and it might help. I throw out that as a suggestion for the Minister's consideration. Maybe, it might be found that there is an even better way but this is just a suggestion.

A person should not criticize if he cannot offer some suggestions for thought, so this is what I am doing – giving some constructive criticisms, some thought for the Minister, instead of saying: "It is not a good thing! Don't do it!" without giving the Minister any suggestion to work on as to how it should be remedied. I trust that he will think about this and discuss it because he

did say that he would have to go into the various hours. The time has come for us to decide on this.

The Minister also spoke about the laws with regard to lighting up time and burglary and so on. I would like him to consider these things. It may be a solution especially if the Government feels that right now we are not ready for a five-day working week. As a matter of fact, sir, the Government has started off this acceptance of the 45 minutes advancement; I wonder if the hon. Minister is in a position at the moment to say what other recommendations of the Working Hours Committee are acceptable to the Government.

Again, I say that the hours of work for shops, buses and the rest of these things will have to be gone into. As a matter of fact, the female nurses have made representations to the President of the P.S.U., Norman Semple, who has already taken the matter up with the Ministry of Health because these women and others like them will be going off to work in the early hours of daylight. In this International Women's Year I am not asking for any special concessions because they are women, but we have to consider very carefully the situation that exists in our country with regard to choke and rob and the need for upping the police protection when these people will be up in the early hours of the morning in the dark. There is need to see that the street lights will stay on longer, that the bus services, the hire taxi services and so on are available to pick them up at this earlier hour; and of course, that the Georgetown ferry and, to an extent too, the New Amsterdam ferry are running because the Corentyne people would be coming down to do their shopping.

I should like to remind the P.N.C. members about the famous statement in the Declaration of Sophia to the effect that Government members must declare their assets by 31<sup>st</sup> March. They realize now that – as we have been told – that there were various reasons why it could not be done – administrative difficulties and other problems – and they have seen fit to extend the time to get these matters in order. I think, we are now supposed to have that declaration by the end of this month. Well, sir, in the same way, with this National Working

Hours Commission, it may be seen that some of the recommendations are not necessarily acceptable right now due to the changes that are taking place and so on and that other changes have to be substituted.

This is the time to go into these matters and the Minister can go about by publishing first of all the Report of the National Working Hours Commission, by asking for comments on it and, most important of all, by letting us here in the House know, if possible this afternoon, what is Government's thinking on the matter; what the Government proposes. In this way, when the time comes for changes in the working hours or changes in weekly hours of work or for the implementation of the shift system or what have you, there will be more understanding amongst people and the Bill can come forward this afternoon and go right through this House without problems as happened in this case. The Bill is now guaranteed a smooth sailing.

**Mr. Singh:** Mr. Speaker, I had not intended to speak but I think for the record I should say a few words. I shall be brief. [**Cde. Member:** Hear, hear!] There are those who are normally not in the habit of speaking or being allowed to speak in the House and perhaps they envy my being able to get up and speak. I sympathize with them.

First of all, I want to associate myself with the remarks of my hon. Colleague and, indeed, to pay tribute to the hon. Minister for the excellent way in which he handled and revealed the objections to the proposed legislation. I am assured that the matter has been amicably settled and, indeed, I think that the whole nation should be proud of the way in which the hon. Minister handled the matter.

One thing that struck me when the hon. Minister was speaking was that there was no reference at all in his speech to the report of the National Working Hours Commissions and I think it should be put on record that there is a tie-in with the report of the National Working Hours Commission. I am under the impression that there was not any reference made to it but I think one should recognize that when a Committee is formal and when a Committee does work and works very assiduously and produces a report, some public tribute should be paid to the

members of the committee for the hard work they have put in. This should be done at no cost to the taxpayers and in the public interest.

I think it is also important to put on record what these recommendations were. Very briefly, there is a summary of the recommendations:

- “(i) The clock should be advanced by 45 minutes.
- (ii) There should be a 5-day work week of 40 working hours for all categories of workers.

Remember, as my hon. Colleague said, (i) is a **sine qua non**. Without (i) the rest cannot follow and with (i) one would like to know what is the position as regards the others. I would like to endorse what my hon. Colleague has said and ask for the Minister’s thinking and, indeed, Government’s plans in respect of what follows. After the *sine qua non* there is:

- “(ii) There should be a 5-day work week of 40 working hours for all categories of workers.
- (iii) The continuous work day should be adopted, and the lunch break reduced to half hour, except in the case of manual and related workers who should be given the option of a half hour or one hour lunch break.
- (iii) The continuous work day should be adopted, and the lunch break reduced to half hour, except in the case of manual and related workers who should be given the option of a half hour or one hour lunch break.
- (iv) Consideration should be given to the introduction of a shift system along with the 5-day week where possible so as to increase employment.
- (v) The working hours for various categories of workers and businesses should be staggered so as to relate more effectively to consumer requirements, as well as relieve the present traffic congestion.” We all agree that this is a serious problem.



“(vi) Specific working hours recommended for various categories of business workers are as follows:-

- |     |                                   |   |
|-----|-----------------------------------|---|
| (a) | Office workers:                   | 8.00 a.m. to 4.30 p.m.<br>half-hour lunch break.  |
| (b) | manual and related workers (fixed | 7.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.;<br>one hour break or hours):<br>7.00 a.m. to 3.30 p.m.;<br>half hour break. |
| (c) | shift workers:                    | 6.30 a.m. to 2.30 p.m.;<br>2.30 p.m. to 10.30 p.m.;<br>10.30 p.m. to 6.30 a.m.                      |
| (d) | other workers:                    | no change.”   |

**3 p.m.**

“Other workers:	no change
Schools:	8.00 a.m. to 1.30 p.m. wherever possible; two breaks, 15 minutes and 30 minutes respectively.”

And they go on to deal with shops and banks, and licensed hours in relation to drinking time of which there will be more, as some people say, and the time for the closing and opening of cinemas. They in fact also give a very short summary of implications. The first implication is:

“Canteen and washroom facilities have to be provided for all major work places. Canteen and washroom facilities will also have to be provided in schools, or alternatively, Government might introduce free school snacks.”

We may stop there. I fully appreciate that this cannot be done overnight but I should like to hear some of the Government's proposals. When we introduce this from 1<sup>st</sup> August, as with the present feeling of the House it seems that it will be passed, when it is passed, it will become law; these things cannot be done overnight. Let us understand that. All these things will take some time but we would like to know what the proposals are, what the Government will implement. It may well be that the Government does not agree with some of these. If it is at all possible for the hon. Minister to tell us at this stage, we would like to know. If it is not possible, fair enough; at least, tell us what the position is.

I should like to read the fourth implication because it is worthy of consideration immediately:

“In order to allow for gainful utilization of the extra hours of leisure arising from the continuous day”,

“various programmes will have to be embarked upon. The following are suggested:

- (a) programme of adult education;
- (b) extension of co-operative and self-help activity especially in the agricultural sector;”

And they go on in this strain. I am sure hon. Minister must be aware of the recommendations and the implications, and I crave the indulgence of this honourable House to ask the hon. Minister to let us have the plans and, if possible, a summary of what the Government intends in this respect.

**Cde. Wills** (replying): I am pleased that both members of the Opposition found merit in my presentation and found merit in the way I approached the enactment of this legislation here today. It is their duty, indeed, to be vigilant and in that they have certainly not failed. I am grateful for the many remarks they have made bringing things to my attention and I would have

thought the hon. Leader of the Opposition had not left the pastures of law such a long time that he failed to appreciate the distinction between the latent and the patent omission. My failure to refer to the Working Hours Commission was an omission. Whether it was latent or patent, I was quite sure he appreciates it. Nevertheless, I would say this.

I take note of what they have said and I am sure I shall be quite vigilant to make sure that the points that they have made are met. In relation to their main thesis, they would wish to learn the Government's plans and objectives; it seems to me like the trying out of the new batsman with a slow bowler. I am not that young that I cannot see that kind of bowling when it comes. I will give him this piece of advice, if they will permit me to give them. If they wish to know the plans and objectives of the P.N.C. on the Report of the Working Hours Commission, the best thing for them to do is to join the P.N.C. [**Applause**]

*Question put, and agreed to.*

*Bill read a Second time.*

*Assembly in Committee.*

*Bill considered and approved.*

*Assembly resumed.*

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

**The Speaker:** Cde. Minister Wills, may I take this opportunity of congratulating you on piloting your first Bill through this House, and may I say what a pleasure it was to have listened to your presentation.

**30.7.75**

**National Assembly**

**3 – 3.05 p.m.**

**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 3.05 p.m.**

**\*\*\*\*\***