

**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**

75th Sitting

2 p.m.

Monday, 29th September, 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

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

- *Cde. H. Green, **(Absent – on leave)**
 Minister of Co-operatives and
 National Mobilisation
- *Cde. H. O. Jack, **(Absent)**
 Minister of Energy and Natural Resources
- *Cde. F. E. Hope,
 Minister of Finance
- *Cde. S. S. Naraine, A.A., **(Absent – on Leave)**
 Minister of Works and Transport
- *Cde. G. A. King,
 Minister of Trade and Consumer Protection
- *Cde. G. B. Kennard, C.C.H.,
 Minister of Agriculture
- *Cde. C. L. Baird,
 Minister of Education and Social Development
- *Cde. F. R. Wills, S.C., **(Absent)**
 Minister of Foreign Affairs and Justice

Ministers (5)

- Cde. W. G. Carrington, **(Absent – on leave)**
 Minister of Labour
- 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, **(Absent – on leave)**
 Minister of Health
- *Cde. C. V. Mingo,
 Minister of Home Affairs

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)

***Non-elected Ministers**

- 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) **(Absent)**
- Cde. K. B. Bancroft, J.P.,
Minister of State – Regional
(Mazaruni/Potaro) **(Absent – on leave)**
- *Cde. W. Haynes,
Minister of State for Consumer Protection **(Absent – on leave)**
- *Cde. A. Salim,
Minister of State – Regional
(East Demerara/West Coast Berbice) **(Absent)**
- *Cde. F. U. A. Carmichael,
Minister of State – Regional (North West)

Parliamentary Secretaries (8)

- Cde. J. R. Thomas,
Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of National Development **(Absent – on leave)**
- 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 **(Absent – on leave)**
- Cde. E. L. Ambrose,
Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of Agriculture
- Cde. S. Prashad,
Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of Co-operatives and National Mobilisation

***Non-elected Ministers**

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

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

Cde. M. Corrica,
Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of Works and Housing

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

(Absent – on leave)

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.

(Absent)

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 – F. A. Narain

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

29.9.75
2:15 p.m.

National Assembly

2.15 – 2.25 p.m.

PRAYERS

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Leave to Members

The Speaker: Leave has been granted to the Cde. Minister Green, Cde. Minister Naraine, Cde. Minister Harper, Cde. Bancroft, Cde. Ackman and Cde. Thomas for today's sitting.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following Report was laid:

Auditor's Report and Final Accounts of the Guyana Forest Industries Corporation for the year ended 31st December, 1974. [**The Prime Minister**]

PUBLIC BUSINESS

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 68(2)

The Speaker: Cde. Leader of the House.

The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House (Cde. Ramsaroop): Cde. Speaker, as you are aware, once a day has been named for the consideration of a Financial Paper pursuant to Standing Order 68(2) that Paper takes precedence over any other item of business. On this occasion I respectfully ask your leave for the suspension of this Standing

Order to enable us to do another item on the Order Paper, that is, the Defence (Amendment) Bill 1975.

The Speaker: Leave has been granted.

Cde. Ramsaroop: Cde. Speaker, may I respectfully move the suspension of Standing Order 68(2) to facilitate the Defence (Amendment) Bill, 1975 to be taken as the first item on the Order Paper.

The Speaker: Is this agreed?

[The Leader of the Opposition indicated from his seat in the affirmative]

The Speaker: Cde. Prime Minister.

BILL – SECOND AND THIRD READINGS

DEFENCE (AMENDMENT) BILL

“A Bill intituled:

An act to amend the Defence Act.” **[The Prime Minister]**

The Prime Minister: Cde. Speaker, I beg to move the Second Reading of a Bill intituled the Defence (Amendment) Bill, 1975.

Basically, Cde. Speaker, this is a very simple bill in that it seeks to reduce the age at which one may enrol in the Guyana Defence Force from 18 to 16 and to permit, with the consent of the parents or someone standing **in loco parentis**, a person up to the age of 14 to so enlist.

The first aspect, that is, the reduction of the age from 18 to 16, I think is reasonable in view of the fact that when the Defence Act was passed in 1966, the age of majority was 21 and the age at which one could volunteer was eighteen. Subsequently, the age of majority in Guyana has been reduced to 18 and it does seem both logical and reasonable that there should be a concomitant reduction of the age at which one may seek to apply to become a member of the Guyana Defence Force.

The Government has looked further in the matter and it has been suggested that the age to which the reduction should be made should be 15. But as at present advice we are not inclined to that view. However, the provision is sought to permit a person who is under 16 but not younger than 14 to volunteer for the Guyana Defence Force provided the parent or the person who stands *in loco parentis* does give the necessary consent. I may be naive, but it seems to me that there is nothing contentious about this bit of legislation the Second Reading of which I now formally move.

Question proposed.

The Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Singh): Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree. It was the subject of agreement after consultation between the hon. Prime Minister and me that the age of majority having been lowered to 18 the new age of enlistment should be 16. There is unanimity in that respect.

But I should like to correct the wrong impression given on the last occasion before this honourable House where it was said that following on that the age with consent should be lowered also thereby inferring that there was provision for consent in the existing legislation. This is not so. The existing law is as follows, on page 19, Chapter 15:01, section 18(2):

“A recruiting officer shall not enlist a person under the age of 18 years in the Guyana Defence Force.”

And that was stated very clearly and nothing else. There is no provision here for consent. Consent is consent of the parent or the person *in loco parentis* is something which is being introduced now as the hon. Prime Minister quite rightly said.

My personal view on that would have been that a person 14 years old should really be in school. However, one has to look also at the prevailing conditions and make decisions in the light of those conditions. The existing situation here in Guyana is that children have to leave school normally between 13 and 14 years of age. They can, in some cases, go higher up but, by and large, the normal school-leaving age is, I think, between 12 to 14. The child may be slightly retarded and reach the sixth standard, or whatever the new term is, at a much later age. But the usual age is round about 12, 13. That is a factual situation.

What then is a child between 12 and 14 to do if he cannot find a job? One has to look at what is the least of all the evils. With the present unemployment situation in Guyana he either roams the streets, and we all know that the devil finds work for idle hands, or, with the consent of somebody *in loco parentis*, he can go into the Guyana Defence Force. Under those circumstances I have no alternative but to agree that there should be provision in this legislation to enable him with parental control as I said the person *in loco parentis* to allow him to enter the Guyana Defence Force.

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The only one worry I have is that this should not be used as some sort of an opportunity to get hold of arms or ammunition to hold up innocent law-abiding citizens. That is one problem but I suppose it is a problem that is present and existing not only in the Guyana Defence Force

and the Police Force but in any disciplined force, perhaps in any sphere of activity where arms and ammunition are concerned. That, I suppose, is a risk that every society has to take but under the circumstances, one will have to agree that in the light of our present state of affairs we should have no objection to this Bill.

But, sir, I would like to raise a supplementary aspect of this and that is the implication in respect of costs for the G.D.F. For years now, the cost of the army to the nation has been spiralling while, on the other hand, social services have been sadly neglected. It is true we are steadily building our army in terms of personnel, vehicles and equipment. There are lots and lots of vehicles – and again I must say it – driving wildly along the roads, causing so many accidents and wrecking the vehicles. I myself have had to get out of the path of one of the on-coming G.D.F. vehicles.

One also needs to look at the list of expenditure under G.D.F. These figures would include Personal Emoluments because I have added them up. In 1966 when we first started, the expenditure was \$117,683. In 1967 it was \$3,122,313, an increase of approximately \$3 million. In 1968 it was \$3.4 million approximately, an increase of approximately \$3.1 million. In 1969 it was \$4.5 million, an increase of approximately \$1.1 million. In 1970 it was \$6.784 million, an increase of approximately \$2.244 million.

In 1971, very significantly, this figure reduced. It shows that it is possible that expenditure could reduce. In 1971, it was only \$6,122,901, a decrease of \$661,942. I am not aware that there is any special reason for it but on the face of it, it does appear to me that it is quite possible for expenditure to reduce. In 1971 it did reduce. In 1972, expenditure was \$7,141,875, an increase of \$1.018 million. In 1973, it was \$8.919 million – an increase of \$1.778 million. These increases are always over the last year. In 1974, it was \$13,848,366, an increase of \$4.9 million approximately.

In 1975 however, the amount voted in the Estimates for Personal Emoluments and Other Charges was \$17,493,725; and in today's request for supplementary provisions we are being asked to add to that figure \$9,640,000. That would make a total for this year of \$27,133,727, making an over-all increase over last year of \$13,285,359. So, this is worrying. It is worrying because of the tremendous increase between last year and this year and for example, between 1971 when it was \$6 million and 1975 when it is \$27 million, that is, an increase of \$21 million in a matter of four years. This is very worrying to us. It cannot be inflation because wages have not increased anywhere near that extent.

Of course, we have been told that the army is productive; that it is the People's Army, that it produces to feed itself and it does work. The Estimates tell us to deduct from the amount voted, Issues of Farm Produce. In 1966, 1967, 1968, 1969, there was no farm produce to be deducted. In 1970, it was \$58,000; in 1971, \$58,000; 1972, \$150,000; 1973, \$150,000; 1974, a further quarter million dollars; 1975, \$300,000.

Sir, what is further worrying with all these millions being spent on the army is that we cannot even provide money to pay for the passage of one girl – or people in her position – to go to Venezuela for a heart operation to save her life. This really worries me because if we are going to spend all this money on an army and we are also going to spend thirty-odd million dollars on National Service, surely it must be a disgrace that we cannot provide some vote, some sum of money for the Ministry of Health in appropriate cases to pay the passages of people who are in urgent need of medical attention – for them to go away and get the medical attention rather than to subject them to the kind of appeal which appeared in the Chronicle some time ago. I have the issue of the 4th September, 1975, where it talks of a girl leaving for heart surgery. Public donations made it possible for her to leave the country. Of course, the actual surgery would be free of charge at the University Hospital, Caracas.

I would strongly recommend to the Government that a fund should be created in these circumstances to allow the Ministry of Health to advance the money to allow Guyanese to go

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away for medical attention to save their lives. I think it is only fair in the circumstances. After all, a healthy population is a nation's most precious asset and I think we should get our medical facilities sorted out. We should get our priorities right. Instead of these emotional indoctrination schemes, we should try and fix our priorities so that the nation's most precious assets, its people, are well looked after medically.

Cde. Speaker: Cde. Prime Minister, do you wish to reply?

The Prime Minister (replying): Yes, Cde. Speaker. I suppose it is either an advantage or disadvantage of the Westminster system, on which it is alleged we have modelled our Parliament, that the Opposition must say something and not that it must have something to say.

I will concede from the very beginning that the point about public subscriptions to send persons who need treatment abroad is a logical one though it is irrelevantly made. It could have been made when we were discussing health but one has to give certain allowances to the Opposition. "Old habits die hard" and the old capitalist system where one purges one's sins and thefts by subscribing to objects like sending sick people away and giving to the Palms regularly, and things like that, has continued. **[Interruption]**

2.35 p.m.

Things like that have continued and it is only two weeks ago that the Cabinet made a decision that they must stop and all of these cases will be handled by the Government.

What is more, it has already been done to every case you have seen mentioned in the newspaper. There were at least six to eight cases that were handled quietly. What happens is that some people do not know the ropes, so to speak, therefore they run to the newspaper and the newspaper has not quite put an end to its old habits. **[Mr. Singh:** "It is the Government newspaper."] Yes, but I have issued a Primer for your education on the problems of the

transition. The hon. Member may remember that I gave him a copy of the book dealing with problems of the transition from capitalism to socialism. There are certain habits that go on. For instance, there is the old capitalist habit of wanting to call oneself “honourable gentleman” and “sir”. Forgive me, Cde. Speaker, for indulging in cross talk.

As I was saying before I disrespected the chair, and for which I apologise, as I understand the Leader of the Opposition, he agrees with the age being lowered and also with the further lowering provided there is the consent. But he made some remarks about the cost of the G.D.F.

First of all, the Personal Emoluments vote for the G.D.F. has not gone up out of proportion to the Personal emoluments for other sections of the Public Service. Secondly, when the G.D.F. was first established, the British found it less expensive to leave behind things like the trucks, etc., which they had here, than to take them away. Therefore, these were acquired at little or no cost. Since then, however, the G.D.F. has had to be properly equipped in terms of transportation. With the thrust into the hinterland and other considerations, the G.D.F. now has

It cannot be denied that these new conveniences, so to speak, which the G.D.F. has acquired, are used from time to time for civilian purposes: to bring out the sick and also – let us not be apologetic about it – the G.D.F. planes are used for the transportation of Regional Ministers within their regions. Some of these regions, the hinterland regions like the North West, Mazaruni, Potaro and the Rupununi, cover thousands of square miles and the places are distances of hundreds of miles from each other.

My learned and hon. Friend once before raised this question. I pointed out to him, for instance, that it was the G.D.F. that had closed the hydro-power gap at Tumatumari, for which we would have had to pay millions of dollars. The G.D.F. has an engineering corps which builds some of our interior roads. The G.D.F. is involved, in various areas where it is stationed, in a number of community activities building not only roads, but institutions as well. The G.D.F. is even involved in helping to train, in some aspects, members of the National Service. The G.D.F.

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is involved in the Mahaicony in the growing of rice and the G.D.F. farm has been the object of admiration by visiting Heads of State and Government who have been to this country recently.

The G.D.F. is, in fact, doing a great deal of community service. It is very much part of the community. In fact, it is the People's Army and instead of these carping criticisms I would hope that some time there would be a kind word for the G.D.F., an overworked institution that does so many things which could not have been done otherwise.

There was some talk about health services. My learned and hon. Friend knows that next year is Health Year; he knows about the Health Plan. It is a pity that the Year of Education did not come when my hon. Friend was in pig tails. We would have been better off here, Cde. Speaker, and you would not have had to exercise so much patience. In any case, I beg to move the Second reading of the Bill.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

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Assembly in Committee of Supply.

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

Clause 2

The Prime Minister: Cde. Speaker, I beg to move the deletion of Clause 2 as printed and the substitution thereof of a new clause 2 which amendment has been cyclostyled, circulated and approved by the Leader of the Opposition after consultation.

You will notice, Cde. Speaker, that the Leader of the Opposition consults with the Prime Minister.

Amendment -

That the following clause be substituted for Clause 2 –

**Amendment
of Section 18
of the Principal
Act.**

2. Section 18 of the Principal Act is hereby amended in the following respects –
- (a) by the substitution of the word “sixteen” for the word “eighteen” in subsection (2);
 - (b) by the substitution of a comma for the full stop after the word “Force” in subsection (2) and the insertion of the following words thereafter -
 - “unless consent to the enlistment has been given in writing –
 - (a) If the person offering to enlist is living with both or one of his parents, by the parents or parent;

Put and agreed to.

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

Assembly resumed.

Bill reported with Amendment, as amended, considered, read the Third time and passed.

The Speaker: Cde. Minister of Finance.

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FINANCIAL PAPER NO. 4 of 1975

“Be it resolved that the Committee of Supply approve of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 4/1975 – Schedule of Supplementary Provision on the Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$75,589,809 for the period ending 31st August, 1975”. [**The Minister of Finance**]

The Minister of Finance (Cde. Hope): In accordance with article 80(2) of the Constitution of Guyana I signify that Cabinet has recommended for consideration by the National Assembly the Motion for the approval of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 4 of 1975 – Schedule of Supplementary Provisions for Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$75,589,809 for the period ended 31st August, 1975.

Cde. Speaker, before the Motion is debated I should wish to make a very brief statement on a matter which I think the House would want to be informed and against which I hope the debate this afternoon can proceed. It is a statement relating to the Exchange Control matters which are all part and parcel of the whole financial system of the country.

Early last year in response to the external payments crisis facing this country as a result of international inflation, the Government adopted certain measures to conserve foreign exchange. One of these measures was the suspension of the foreign currency allowance for holiday travel abroad.

As a result of the strong performance of the export sector of our economy since the middle of last year, external capital inflows, and a careful management of the economy, our foreign reserves have steadily risen until today they stand at what certainly is a record level for Guyana. However, the reserves are not expected to remain at the existing high level due to the anticipated acceleration in capital investment during 1976, particularly in pursuance of our Education and Health programme as well as the recent announcement of the increase in the price

of petroleum by OPEC countries, and the continuation, perhaps even the acceleration, of inflationary trends at the international level.

However, in keeping with its promise to relax restrictions as soon as it was practicable to do so Government has been reviewing the situation since late last year, and it is now considered that the reserves have shown sufficient stability and are at a level to permit some measure of relaxation of the restrictions on travel allowances.

Accordingly, as from 1st October, 1975 a holiday travel allowance of G\$200 per person per annum or alternatively G\$600 per person every three years, will be introduced. The allowance would be available to every individual who has not had holiday travel allowance since 1st January, 1973. Persons who have had less than G\$600 during this period will of course be given the balance to make up G\$600.

In addition, the emigration allowance for non-nationals will be restored from the same date, to the amount permitted prior to the restrictions i.e. up to G\$24,000 for the first year for each family unit and G\$17,300 for each year thereafter. In other words non-nationals emigrating finally at the end of their term of employment in Guyana would be allowed to repatriate their accumulated savings to the extent I have just indicated.

Government will continue to keep the situation under review and depending on the movement of our International Reserves will consider appropriate adjustments to the travel allowance.

Cde. Speaker, that represents the statement I would wish to make on this matter and at this time I would formally move the Motion for the debate on the Financial Paper before the House. **[Applause]**

Mr. Singh: Mr. Speaker, there is just one question I should like to make before we move into Committee.

The Speaker: Just a minute. [Applause] Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Singh: The hon. Minister did not mention anything about people who are emigrating finally, Guyanese who are emigrating for another country. I wonder if there has been any change. The existing position is that you are allowed only the equivalent of \$100 (G). Has there been any change in that?

Cde. Hope: The answer is, no.

Assembly in Committee of Supply.

The Chairman: We will do the following items: 1, 19, 21, 22, 23, 25, 191 to 196, both items inclusive. Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

2.55 p.m.

Mr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, I wanted to make some general remarks and I wonder whether I should do it now if the hon. rime Minister is pressed for time. There are really remarks that would be more appropriately answered by the hon. Minister of Finance but, subject to your direction, I shall either do it now or later.

The Speaker: Let us wait for the Cde. Minister of Finance. Let us deal with item 1.

Mr. Singh: Well sir, some of my general remarks were concerned with Personal Emoluments so there is nothing I have to say on item 1. Item 19 to 21 also deals with Personal Emoluments. My general remarks would cover those. I have nothing to ask on item 22,

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National Insurance and Item 23, Contribution to the International Committee of the Red Cross. Item 25 is Personal Emoluments; my general remarks would cover that; it is merely regrading and reclassification.

Item 191, Telephones. I just want to complain about the inadequacy of the legend. The previous estimate was \$105,000. The supplementary provision now sought is \$45,000 and the legend merely states: "Previous provision inadequate." Does this \$45,000 include any arrears? Hon. Members will remember that on almost every occasion that supplementary provisions have come before the House I have been complaining bitterly about the Guyana Telecommunication Corporation not receiving its money on time from the Government coffers in order to pay its way. There have been many complaints about it. If I were to voice the complaints, probably heads would roll or be affected.

The Corporation has been affected because the Government has not been paying its Bills. One understands that there would be some cases where there would be some disagreement but Government accounting officers must give this sort of thing priority and sort it out so that the Government Corporation can pay its way. "Previous provision inadequate." Are there any arrears in this? If there are arrears, have we dealt with all arrears here? Do we have a clean slate so that the Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet will be setting the example and keeping its telephone bill up to date? I am sure that the Prime Minister would want this office to set the example in this respect.

The Prime Minister: Cde. Chairman, so far as I am aware, there are no arrears with respect to telephones but the other remarks of the Leader of the Opposition are absolutely correct and they are justified. I cannot defend an indefensible position.

Mr. Singh: The last comment is on item 196, Head 10, Prime Minister – Guyana Defence Force, subhead 2, Other Expenditure. The hon. Prime Minister has partly dealt with that. I am continuing my objection to the huge sums of money spent on the Guyana Defence

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Force. The legend here is very interesting. The previous provision in the Estimates was \$5,016,400 and the supplementary provision now sought is \$9,640,000. I do not know why it was not envisaged at the time when the Estimates came before the House in December that the Force would need nearly twice the amount that was requested. Perhaps the legend does provide some reason for it. It states: “To provide for general increase in the cost of fuel, rations, training and maintenance of aircraft by Guyana Airways Corporation.” To the extent that there has been an increase in the cost of rations, fair enough; training and maintenance of the new helicopters, fair enough. My enquiries have revealed that the cost of fuel went up early last year. **[Interruption]** It says “...cost of fuel.” The quantum of fuel is a different matter. What is reflected here is “cost of fuel.” I think it would have been much more lucid if it had been put: “As a result of the increase in the consumption of fuel.” That would have left no room for imagination; that would have been clear. But it just states “cost of fuel.”

If one says that the consumption has gone up and therefore cost has gone up as a result, one would have to understand that helicopters are very expensive things to maintain particularly when they make short hops round and about Regional Ministers using these helicopters but my information is that an executive aircraft was purchased too. I think it is reflected on the last item. Capital Expenditure, item 44, (New) Air Transport, Purchase of miscellaneous equipment. An executive aircraft has now been purchased but I suppose that would be for executive travel where there are airfields but the helicopters would be used for the small landing strips. All I say is: How many jobs this money could have created to keep our youths off the streets! It is a pity that our priorities are so wrong that we have to be spending money in the direction of aircrafts and all the rest of it here. I think it is a great pity for Guyana, for any developing country, for any new emerging country to be spending so much of its limited resources on things like fuel. Foreign exchange is involved in fuel. Very valuable foreign exchange is going out of the country as part of this \$9.64 million. It is a tragedy for Guyana.

The Prime Minister: Cde. Speaker, the legend could have been longer but I must thank my hon. and learned friend for his remarks. If there are two helicopters where before there was

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none, the cost of fuel will go up because the use of fuel will increase. The helicopters are not really for joy-rides. They certainly assist in the more efficient administration and the visits in certain parts of the country by Ministers and senior officials. In the final analysis they also assist programme chasing for were it not for the availability of some of this type of equipment, some of the projects which are moving rapidly would not have been moving rapidly.

It is true that we are poor; it is true that we are undeveloped, but at the same time we live in the twentieth century. If my hon. and learned friend wants to argue, I would say, an absurd argument, he should, on the next occasion when he is leaving Guyana, use a trawler or a schooner, or better still, resort to wind and sail.

3.05 p.m.

How does the hon. Member expect a Minister or Senior Officers to get to the North West to inspect a project and get back down to Georgetown to attend important meetings? Even Hercules could not walk so fast. The Leader of the Opposition would have these normal means of transportation so long as he is Leader of the Opposition, Cde. Speaker. If the Leader of the Opposition requires to see his electorate in North West tomorrow, I shall make available a plane for him.

The Chairman: Section 'B' items 1, 3 and 4.

Mr. Singh: Item 3, Prime Minister – Purchase of Equipment. I do not know whether these are claims. The voted provision was \$1.4 million. The previous supplementary provision requested was \$4.4 million. Presumably at that time the whole situation was studied and it was felt that all that was needed for the balance of the year was \$4.4 million which is roughly 400 percent increase. Now, at this stage, 31st August, 1975, the request is for \$10,647,000 and all the legend states is: "Purchase of miscellaneous equipment." It really is fantastic that this should make a total now of \$16,448,000. This seems to be very closely akin to the method adopted by the Ministry of National Development, seeking huge amounts with no indication whatsoever of

what it is for, no proper explanation whereby the Members of this House can see how the taxpayers' money is being spent.

Government Ministers are merely custodians of the funds entrusted to them by taxpayers and this honourable House is entitled to know how this fantastic amount of money now being requested is to be spent. The flimsy explanation "Purchase of Miscellaneous Equipment" is to my mind totally unsatisfactory. It is an insult to Parliament and I think in honour bound we should know, we should get a breakdown of this \$10,647,000 which was not at all envisaged when the Estimates came to be debated before the House in December last year.

These are the things which make me feel very emotional about wasting time over Estimates. When we come here and see \$1.4 million asked for to be spent on the purchase of equipment we say okay. But the whole thing gets cock-eyed and haywire when, towards the end of August, another \$16 million is added to it. One wonders why we spend so much time debating Estimates if this sort of thing is going to happen. There must be some reason for it.

The Prime Minister: Cde. Speaker, more than half of this sum is attributable to a further increase in our helicopter fleet. It appears as a matter of convenience because our helicopter pilots are G.D.F. soldiers. This amount is really intended for the Hydro-power Road, the Itaballi Road. If we are to complete that road in time, the clearances that have to be made will have to be staged along the road rather than only at the beginning. Therefore, equipment has to be dropped, rations have to be dropped and things like that.

In fact, at the moment, the hydro-power authority has on lease two Canadian helicopters. We are hoping that the provision of a further two helicopters of our own, to do what they are doing, would turn out much cheaper in so far as the cost of the road is concerned and then these capital goods would continue to be available for relevant services in the hinterland. It is merely put here because, as I said before, it has been decided that the helicopters pilots will be G.D.F.

soldiers. I repeat that this is not really for the G.D.F., but for the hydro-power road, the authority for which is already leasing two helicopters from a Canadian firm.

Then there is the executive plane to which the Leader of the Opposition made reference. That is a Beech craft aircraft. The hon. Members say it is a luxurious aircraft but they can inspect it at any time. It is an eight-seater, it has a long range and what, with the number of inter-CARICOM trips that have to be made by Ministers and Public Officers, a calculation has been made that the purchase of this aircraft would save us a great deal of expense as against the cost of travelling by commercial aircraft. For instance, to give an example, to get to Antigua for a meeting on Sunday, a certain Senior Officer would have had to leave on Saturday. He was able to attend a meeting in Georgetown up to Saturday night and leave by this Aircraft to Antigua on Sunday morning. When he gets back the cost of the trip, fuel, pilot and everything would be less because he is coming back with three other officers. This would be less than if he had used the commercial facility. It is not a question of high living or anything like that, it is a question of what the Cde. Minister of Finance would call careful and intelligent management.

3.15 p.m.

The Chairman: Items 79 and 80. Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Singh: item 79, Personal Emoluments. Item 80, Expenses of National Development. I do not know whether I will be any more successful than I have been in the past in respect of this. Every other Ministry sets out details. A book is produced, “**Estimates**”; it sets out all the details of how money is to be spent. This particular Ministry, which is also the Office of the General Secretary of the P.N.C., has not given one single word of detail. And there are no apologies made for this, according to the hon. Deputy Prime Minister. What then can the taxpayers do? Are they not to be excused if they come to the conclusion in the absence of any other explanation that the monies here are being used to finance the ruling party?

The original amount sought in the Estimates was \$2.5 million. That was bad enough, but to compound the matter further they came to the House and asked for an additional \$3/4 million. That was passed. I spoke about it. I spoke about it when the Estimates were being debated, and I spoke about it again when Financial Paper No. 3, I think, was being debated. Now we have what I consider to be not National Development but the national scandal of coming to this House and asking for \$7.670 million. What is the explanation given? "Previous provision inadequate."

Sir, what can one do? I laugh, but the situation is serious. What can one do under these circumstances? One meets with the kind of frustration that one does not normally meet within a life-time when this kind of situation presents itself. Here is a total of \$10.92 million, approximately \$11 million. Every other department does it. Why does the General Secretary of the P.N.C. Department, as he calls it, not do it? Have they got something to hide? Is this a reasonable presumption why a breakdown is not given? How does the hon. Deputy Prime Minister know that \$7,670,800 is the figure he wants? How did he arrive at this figure? Did he pull it out of a hat? I do not expect that he would pull it out of a hat. He must have some breakdown. Let us have a breakdown on it. But do not let us have those airy-fairy things which say, "cost of development, cost of going in the districts, and paying people's salaries but you do not know who you will recruit so you do not know how much you will pay them." Let us not have that. That is eyewash; that is window dressing. Let us have some concrete details. The Ministry produces estimates; it merely writes down these huge sums required. No one in this House except the members of the United Force seems to have the courage to dare to question the hon. Deputy Prime Minister about this \$11 million of taxpayers' money. Is there no one in this House who wants to know how this money is being spent? When the history of this House is being written it will be recorded that this Ministry supplied no details in respect of its expenditure and posterity will judge whether there were men or mice sitting in this House here and refusing to even ask a question as to how this money is being spent. Should there not be people in this country who should rise up in wrath against this misuse, this notorious misuse and

abuse of taxpayers' money, against the abuse of power because the Government has the majority in denying us the right to know exactly how this money is being spent and in refusing to comply with the Financial Regulations in respect of putting details of public money, taxpayers' money to be expended. I do not know whether I would get any answer.

The Chairman: Cde. Deputy Prime Minister.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Development (Cde. Reid): Cde. Chairman, this new sum required gives an indication of the amount of work that has to be done, work which was not done in the past. In this new thrust for development of people we are not handling things that matter in the old-fashioned way. If we continue to trust in that old way of trying to record every item of expenditure then development will go as slowly as it has done in the past. There is a new concentration on development and that is on people. Every time we come to this House we emphasise how great is this need if real development is to take place.

We will continue to come to this House for this kind of allocation, and as I said at the very beginning, at the end when the expenditure has been made we will indicate to the House how that money has been used. There is nothing to hide. It is being used in the development of people, in inspiring and motivating people not only by words but by deeds so that real action can be taken and people can go ahead producing more and more. That is the business we are doing.

This new sum is required because once we get into the exercise and see the volume of things to be done we are finding out that there is more and more that has to be done. In the regions themselves many educational exercises must go on if we are to inspire and motivate people to proceed in the development of this country. In the final analysis it is the people who do most of the manual exercises that will help in producing the goods and services. If they are left in darkness, uninitiated and unmotivated then this part of the production will not go on. Our job then is to do most of that. In doing this, we need people to manage and maintain them and it

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is not surprising that in that area alone, so as to reach people, we have spent half a million dollars out of that provision of \$2.5 million so that we can get out to reach people. Too often we have tried to do this at the centre, talking to people over the radio, trying to publicise our statements and all that kind of thing without reaching out to see what is happening to people. This Ministry is determined that this work has to be done. So we get vehicles, we have to buy fuel for the vehicles, we have to get maintenance for the vehicles, we have to get drivers for the vehicles and that alone will take not less than \$1/2 million. We need in this teaching exercise to get newsprint, papers, all sorts of equipment to roll them off so that people will have information that is valuable to them, so that they will know, they would not be walking in darkness. For stationery, printing of books and such things we have used up over \$200,000. The cost of paper is not surprising.

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In the areas we need to have places where we can meet so that people are not left to themselves without any direction, without any guidance as has been done in the past, so that they are not left unheard and unheeded. We must get out there to meet them and give them opportunity to visit places where they sit and talk and express themselves so that we can understand one another. In doing that kind of exercise we need to have furniture and equipment in the places so that people can be properly accommodated. We will take about a quarter million dollars and from time to time we will be doing this kind of exercise when we come for new allocations. So, as I promised, this is the work we will do every time.

Then the Public Service itself. We are dealing with adults who have been in the Service for years. We are not dealing with the young people or just people in their formative years but we are dealing with adults. I think one of these days the Leader of the Opposition should get that kind of experience to go through a course of development education at Madewini or Timehri to give him an opportunity to know the country and know the people. He can have a week of live-

in some place; probably at Black Bush Polder, on the East Coast or Essequibo Coast where he can have an opportunity to live with people in their homes so that he can know what is really going on in this country and the need for this kind of expenditure. For that development education alone, we have used over \$100,000. [Mr. Singh: I lived on the Sugar Estate.] The hon. Leader of the Opposition lived on the sugar estates in those days when he was blind; he could not see but now I think this course will be able to open his eyes. Many of us have physical eyes but are completely blind because we know not what to look for. This course will help him to look for certain things. He will then learn what to look for. That is most important and he must try this experiment out some time:

Put a slide under a microscope and look at it. If he does not know what to look for there will be nothing he will see. [Mr. Singh: You haven't said anything about this vote.]

Probably the Leader of the Opposition is not listening to the figures. He has so much emotion that he is not even listening to all these figures that I have been calling. This is the kind of money that has already been expended.

Then we have a lot of visits from people and we use the opportunity when we have visitors to try to mobilise and educate our people at the same time so that they will have an appreciation not only for Guyana but for what is happening in the outside world. We used those opportunities so that not only our young people but the adults themselves will know, will be able to listen and to hear what other people think of the work they are doing so that probably this too will help to inspire them and get them to move on to do the job that we have to do. Thus we have to come to the House for additional sums.

As one goes out into the district to do this work, one finds there is more and more to do; more and more people to become involved in the exercise; more and more activity goes on to

keep people uplifted in spirit and anxious to do the things that have to be done. It is very exciting to see the response of the people in all the things that they can do in their thrust to learn so that they would not be deceived by evil people who wish to misdirect others in this country. I know that it must be very frustrating to those who would wish the old system to remain when they see the interest that is shown in the ordinary man – the man that they would pass by without giving a word of encouragement. That is the kind of man that we are approaching to make sure he is not deceived by the evil ones who try to frighten him, to sell their own fears to him because they find out that he is not informed. Our exercise is to get him so informed that he will not be frightened or jittery when some of my friends on the other side attempt to frighten him about the statement **‘there is no construction without destruction’**, or when we tell people that there is need for a new religion. People will understand.

What we really need in this country is this new kind of information, truthful information, objective information, not to keep people believing in myths and all sorts of superstitions. We want to remove all of this. So, there is a massive amount of money to be spent and this sum is but a small part compared to the work that has to be done. The returns we get from this cannot be measured in terms of money at all.

I agree with my comrade, the Leader of the Opposition, that in presenting this request for additional sums there can be no apology whatever because this is to meet the needs of people in the communities and we must continue to do this work so that development can be meaningful for them.

Mr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, I have just one supplementary question. I would like to know whether it was this vote which was used to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to meet the cost of bringing back all those Guyanese students who went to Kimbia. They welcomed the chance to come back home on a holiday but they were disgusted with the brain-washing that was

attempted. Some of them spoke to me and all that the hon. Deputy Prime Minister said just now did not get through to them. It was time and money wasted.

Cde. Reid: Cde. Chairman, I would like to let the Leader of the Opposition know that I wish it had come from this vote but it did not come from this. It came from some other vote.

The Chairman: Items 83 to 90, both numbers inclusive.

Mr. Singh: Item 87. Sir, again it may well be that I am wasting time. The Ministry of Regional Development, subhead 3, Miscellaneous: The voted provision originally was \$4,000. \$2,000 is now being asked for and all the legend states is: "Voted provision inadequate." Well obviously somebody or some set of people in the entire Ministry thought that \$4,000 was adequate for the whole of 1975. The legend is so bald. Why was this not anticipated? Why was it not put at \$6,000 instead of \$4,000? Why the need to come for supplementary provision? What strange, extraordinary circumstances account for the increase of 50 percent in this Miscellaneous vote? I do not want to hear about toilet requisites because Ministries can get that from the Central Stores. I may not have known this the last time but I know now that toilet requisites could be had from the Central Stores. There is no need to take money from the Miscellaneous vote. I checked this so the hon. Minister should not list toilet paper now.

3.35 p.m.

The Minister of Economic Development (Cde. Hoyte): Cde. Chairman, may I assure the hon. Leader of the Opposition that I have no intention of following him into the sewer. The explanation for the application is very simple.

During the course of this year, the buildings which accommodate the Ministry of Regional Development were extended. Therefore, there is far more floor space and there are

more sanitary facilities. This extension was done not only at headquarters but also at places like the Amerindian Hostel and, as a result, the cost of cleaning the Ministry's buildings has gone up.

The Chairman: Under Capital Estimates, items 20 and 44.

Mr. Singh: I have no question for item 20. Item 44 appears to have been answered by the hon. Prime Minister when he mentioned about the executive aircraft. If that was answered by the hon. Prime Minister then there is nothing further on item 44.

The Chairman: Items 13 and 14; items 173 to 189, all items inclusive.

Mr. Singh: There is no question on items 13 and 14.

The Chairman: Items 173 to 189.

Mr. Singh: Item 178. I know you would not like to cut me off, sir.

The Chairman: I am sorry.

Mr. Singh: Item 178, Ministry of Finance – Accountant General – Expenses of Commissions, Committees and Conferences held in Guyana. The voted provision was \$350,000 and the supplementary provision now sought is \$250,000, which is a quarter million dollars. The legend states: “To provide for expenses of the Commonwealth Finance Ministers’ Conference in August.” Surely, when the 1975 Estimates were prepared it must have been known that the conference would be in Guyana in 1975. One obviously then has to wonder why this amount was not included in the vote. It is a quarter million dollars more and, certainly, a quarter million dollars is a lot of money to request as a supplementary provision. In addition to being a lot of money to ask for, it is a lot of money for one single Conference. To my mind a quarter million

dollars for one conference is an expensive amount. One wonders what attempts had been made to keep down expenses in respect of this Conference.

Fair enough, Guyana goes to conference. It is said that Guyana has to host Conferences in return, but John Public has been asking whether we have not been hosting more than our share of Conferences within recent times. This is an expensive business for a small developing country. First of all, why was this amount not included in the Estimates and, secondly, why is it so costly? Sir would you like me to deal with the rest up to 189?

The Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Singh: Very well, sir. Item 180, Temporary Specialist Assistance to the Ministry of Finance – Accountant General. May I make an observation? We are dealing with the Ministry of Finance. I did have some general remarks to make directly to the Ministry of Finance. Are we dispensing with the Ministry of Finance to allow the Minister to leave? I notice that it is the Ministry of Finance.

The Chairman: Deal with the items, make your general remarks and he will make one answer to them all.

Mr. Singh: Thank you very much, that is what I wondered. This item is for Temporary Specialist Assistance. The voted provision in the Estimates was \$15,000 and the supplementary provision now sought is \$20,000. This increase is well over 100 percent. The increase is exceptionally high and the question to be asked is: What is the reason for this unexpected expenditure? Certainly it was not expected when the 1975 Estimates were framed. It states here that it is Temporary Specialist Assistance for the Accountant-General. Is it confined to that or is it to the Ministry of Finance as a whole?

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There is also another question I would like to ask. Item 183, Ministry of Finance – Customs and Excise – Miscellaneous. The voted provision was \$6,796 and the supplementary provision now sought is \$500. The legend is rather unique. I have never seen this legend and I have been in Parliament since 1966. I have never seen such a legend and I think it is rather intriguing. It states: “To provide for increased cost of toilet requisites.” I have no desire to enter into any excursions in any particular area but since this is here listed in these Supplementary Estimates by the Government, one would wonder why it is that this legend is peculiar to this department and to no other department. No other department has any legend like this: “To provide for increased cost of toilet **requisites.**” It is intriguing to me and I ask the question.

Item 184, Ministry of Finance – Customs and Excise – Refunds of Revenue. The voted provision for refunds of revenue for the Customs and Excise department was \$1/2 million. Supplementary provision now sought is \$75,000 and the legend states: “**Voted provision inadequate.**” I agree with that legend because from the complaints I have received the voted provision is definitely inadequate. I have no quarrel with this. What I would want to know is whether the Minister is satisfied that this \$75,000 alone can really take care of the outstanding refunds of revenue in this department. I am told that the refunds of revenue owing to a few people alone would exhaust the entire amount of \$75,000. Would the hon. Minister give us an assurance? Complaints have been coming to me as Leader of the Opposition and I would like to know that that can, in fact, meet the outstanding amount of refunds of revenue due by the department of Customs and Excise.

Item 187, Ministry of Finance – Inland Revenue – Expenses, Operation of Road Toll System: The voted provision was \$120,000. The supplementary provision now sought is \$85,000 and the legend states: “To provide for the operation of the Corentyne toll station.” One wonders what the Government has really been doing and thinking generally. Those toll stations were erected a long time ago. There was opposition to the toll stations being put into operation. The Government must have known when it framed these estimates for 1975 that the toll stations

would have been put into operation this year. It could not have been any big secret. Why did it not put money into the voted provision at that time? That is all I have to say on that, but, further, I would want to reiterate my objection to the Corentyne toll station. To my mind it is an act of oppression against the people who live in that area.

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They have no alternative method of transport. That road has been in existence there from time immemorial almost. There has never been an alternative method of transport, the road was built and toll stations were put, but, as I said before in this honourable House, the East Coast road was also re-built and that did not have any toll station put on it.

The East Coast road approach to Georgetown is now being rebuilt to make it into a two-lane highway. Let the Government say whether it is going to put a toll station on that road because a lot of money is being spent on it. I dare the Government to say that a toll station will be put on that dual carriage way leading to Georgetown. There are toll stations leading into New Amsterdam, will there be toll stations leading into Georgetown? Is this not an act of oppression, an act of discrimination against these people on the Corentyne? Again I would register my objection to this toll station and also say that this amount should have been in the original estimates unless the Government wanted to hide it and not tell us that they wanted to put it into operation. Maybe that was the intention.

Sir, I should like to make some general remarks about the Estimates since it should be the hon. Minister of Finance who would be dealing with this and also some remarks about personal emoluments which I have not spoken on at all because I want to speak on them once and for all.

This is the fourth Financial Paper seeking supplementary provisions. The first one was exclusively for National Service, \$17,426,000; the second one was for \$3,253,355; the third one

was \$62,283,649 and in this fourth Financial Paper the total is \$75,589,809 that makes a total of \$158,553,613. If we go to the Estimates we see on page 3 that the total estimated expenditure for 1975 in this beautiful book was \$531,189,978 so that the excess of \$158,553,613 is approximately 30 percent over and above what was listed in the Estimates. If that were attempted in private enterprise I am sure lots of people would be kicked out of that private business. But this is not private enterprise; this is Government and therefore a certain amount of leeway should be allowed. However, one can only come to the conclusion that this is a national scandal when one realises that it is approximately 30 percent over and above what was listed in this beautiful book. I have been in Parliament since 1966. Never before have we had requests for such high sums of money, never before has there been such apparent laxity for financial control. Never before was there such apparent disregard for the whole purpose of preparing estimates and planning expenditure. As I said before, it makes the whole business of the Budget Speech, of preparing and debating estimates, an absolute waste of time. Of course, the hon. Minister would say, as he has said before, that they are only estimates they are not hard and fast figures. But they are not even guesstimates because guesstimates should be much less than 30 percent over and above the original estimated amount.

Further, in the Estimates on page 3 the hon. Minister set out an excess of expenditure over receipts. I read from the Estimates:

“The Budget thus projects that total expenditure (\$531,188,968) will exceed total revenue (\$492,808,520) a deficit of \$38,380,458.”

And on pages 23 and 24 of the Budget Speech – these were the documents that we dealt with so carefully in December 1974 – the hon. Minister on those pages sets out in very precise terms under the heading **“Financing the Programme – Current and Capital.”** I shall read the third and fourth paragraphs on page 24.

“In aggregate, therefore, loans, grants, credits, and a budget surplus in 1975 will finance the capital programme to the tune of \$189 million. This leaves a financing gap of \$38 million. It is expected that this sum will be met from drawing on the budgetary surplus recorded in 1974, and some limited new borrowing on the international money market and the Domestic Banking system.”

So he said in this document how this deficit would be met. It is clearly set out here what he proposes to do to meet the deficit. If the Budget Speech is to serve any useful purpose the hon. Minister must now tell us how this extra \$158.5 million will be financed. We have here how the Estimates will be financed. We have supplementary provisions before us. They go hand in hand. The hon. Minister must tell us in very clear and precise terms what he has in mind for the financing of this \$158.5 million. We must bear in mind that because of these various strikes, the sugar industry has not been performing as has been anticipated and we all know that sugar helps in a big way to bail us out of our difficulty. What will we do if sugar does not live up to its expectations in the Budget Speech? On the last occasion I asked this question and I was not answered. The hon. Minister must now tell us how this \$158.5 million will be financed. I am asking and the nation is asking and we are entitled to know on the same basis that we were given these figures in the Budget Speech last December.

3.55 p.m.

Going on to Personal Emoluments, sir, there has been a lot of regrading. This Paper shows a lot of regrading and reclassification and this, I presume, is as a result of appeals after the Job Evaluation exercise and increases which took place in 1973. But the last Paper also had a lot of this. The obvious question is: What is the position? Have we come to the end or is there still more to come? Is this going to be a continuing exercise? If not, when will it end?

Certainly, from the amount of regrading and reclassification one gets the impression that the 1973 Job Evaluation exercise was most ineffectively done. We can see that all over the

Financial Paper. People are now being reclassified and getting back-pay way back from 1973. With Civil Servants only now getting back pay and having their jobs reclassified with effect from 1973, it must mean that there was a large number of dissatisfied Civil Servants over the last three years approximately. One wonders whether this long time which has elapsed before reclassification has not, in fact, led to the inefficiency, the lackadaisical attitude and the lowering of standards generally in the Civil Service, a matter which many people have been complaining about.

I have one last supplementary point to make. In the way in which things have been going, it is difficult for the taxpayer to come to any conclusion as to exactly what the 1973 salaries revision is actually costing the taxpayer. We do not know what the cost of the revision and the award is. Perhaps the officers in this Ministry have done an exercise on it but I am sure that the Guyanese taxpayer would like to know what this increase in salaries for Civil Servants is actually costing the taxpayer. I certainly would be grateful for an answer from the hon. Minister as to how this additional sum of money being sought in the supplementary estimates will be met. From what source will it be met?

The Chairman: It is now 2 minutes before 4 o'clock. I am wondering if we may take the suspension and then return. The rules of the Assembly provide that at 4 o'clock we take the suspension.

Assembly resumed.

The Speaker: The Sitting of the House is suspended until 4.30 p.m.

Sitting suspended at 3.58 p.m.

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4.35 p.m.

On Resumption --

Assembly in Committee of Supply.

The Chairman: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, when we took the suspension you had finished speaking on the Current Estimates. Could you complete the Capital Estimates as well? There is only one item there. Then the Minister will make one statement. I think the item is item 43.

Mr. Singh: There is nothing I have to say on item 43, sir.

The Chairman: In the Capital Estimates?

Mr. Singh: I am sorry, sir. Item 43, Capital Estimates, Ministry of Finance, Loans to Guyana Electricity Corporation. The sum of \$15,000,000 was the voted provision; supplementary provision now sought is \$2.9 million for “Continuation of expansion programme.” One, of course, can have no quarrel with the expansion of the electricity programme. Also, one has to bear in mind the work being done on the hydro-power site right now and I suppose there must be plans for a tie-in: thermal power on the one side and hydro-power on the other side. But, it is a lot of money being spent.

This is a large sum of money being loaned to the Electricity Corporation and one wonders what the position is as regards the Corporation being able to pay its way. I know what we normally do with some other Corporations. We allow them to borrow and then guarantee the moneys by Government Guarantee. In this case it is a straight loan. The Corporation, we must bear in mind, is supposed to run on a commercial basis. Recently it was announced that, in order to help, the Government would give some subsidy and, indeed, our light bills reflect that but,

still, the energy bills are exceptionally high. People have been complaining bitterly about the amount that their normal light bill has gone up by within recent times. One would have expected that with this kind of money being received by the Corporation, it would have been able to, at least, pay its own way to a great extent but this does not appear to be so.

4.40 p.m.

The question which has been raised recently with me is whether there is not a lack of proper management at the Corporation, whether it is not a case of mismanagement. People have complained about a super-abundance of staff, too many people are going out to do jobs and things like that. These are allegations that are true but I think in view of the over-all situation the time has come for a proper survey, a proper examination to be done of the Guyana Electricity Corporation in order to put it on a sounder footing than it seems to be at the present time, bearing in mind the development of hydro-electric power and also the high bills which the consumer is having to pay plus the subsidy which we see reflected on our bills.

The Chairman: Cde. Minister of Finance.

Cde. Hope: Cde. Chairman, may I answer some of the questions raised by the hon. Leader of the Opposition. The first question, if I recall correctly, refers to item 178, Expenses of Commissions, Committees, Conferences and so on held in Guyana. First of all, I would like to erase any impression which the hon. Leader of the Opposition may have and which, to some regard, the notes may have contributed to, in terms of the cost of this particular conference. This \$250,000 requested here does not apply purely and solely to the Finance Ministers' Meeting held in Guyana very recently. There was a very large unanticipated conference held in Guyana, a very important one in terms of our strategy for the price we get for important commodities. That conference was the meeting of the A.C.P. countries held in Guyana during May or early June. This was a very important meeting in relation to our strategy for getting the best.

The Chairman: Cde. Finance Minister, I do not wish to interrupt you but I think the point the Leader of the Opposition has been making very repeatedly is that the legends give no indication of what the expenditure is really about. Here it is again, you are confirming what he has said, that there is an additional expenditure in respect of the A.C.P. conference. Perhaps may I suggest, with respect that in future if some more details could be given it would obviate the Leader of the Opposition going into all these questions. I am sorry I interrupted but I just thought of indicating that.

Cde. Hope: Thank you, Cde. Chairman. It is a point with which I am aware. But, as I was pointing out, it is not purely a question of the legend. In fact, unfortunately, the legend is incorrect. It is not inadequate, it is incorrect and an attempt was made to correct it. Perhaps, what is before the hon. Member is not a corrected copy.

As I was about to explain, Cde. Chairman, this particular conference was not the sole reason for the request. There was this additional conference as well as there were other committees sitting which were not anticipated before. For instance, the committee which sat in relation to the Industrial Relations problem in the sugar industry. That was a committee whose cost was met out of this vote. No one, certainly not I, could anticipate in November last year when these Estimates would have been prepared, the cost of this. I wish to reiterate again that we should erase any impression that any single conference held in Guyana recently cost this kind of money.

The second point relates to item 180, Temporary Specialist Assistance. As a result of certain approaches which the Government has made to certain people who are not in the public sector, who are not paid by the Government, to do certain important pieces of research work related to the promotion of the economic well-being of the country, we have had to agree to pay certain extra emoluments. These people are not employed by the Government but they are paid,

however, for their skills to be used for certain measurable remuneration. The purpose of that, again, was not anticipated. It was an exercise which we looked at very recently and as the Leader of the Opposition ought to know, development activity is an always growing activity. It never stands still. It is something which you have to review. It represents steps to be taken, development which has to be implemented. Here is one where the Government took the decision very recently to get certain additional research work done in order to promote economic development. It is from this vote that we will be paying the persons concerned. I can assure the hon. Leader of the Opposition that I have every confidence that this sum of money will yield several-fold in terms of results for the country.

The next question raised relates to item 183 where a lot of explanation was given but I am not sure whether the hon. Leader of the Opposition was not satisfied that that detailed explanation was what he was asking for before. These things do go up in prices and it is not really true to say that all this equipment could be met from the Central Stationery Stores. Sometimes the store does not have stock and the Ministry has to purchase in the same way that the store would have to purchase, in any case. The hon. Leader of the Opposition is not quite correct and I think he has misled the House and himself into the belief that all these supplies can be got solely from the supply division. Perhaps this is the ideal thing but in supplies you can never achieve the ideal and there will be times when the Ministry wants supplies and those supplies would have to be bought from the streets rather than from the supply division which, in any case as I said, would have to buy them for itself.

The next point relates to Refunds of Revenue. Here is a case where, in the normal operation of the Customs Department and in the normal implementation of the laws of the Customs Department, there is bound to be need for refunds available. If, for instance, an importer brings in goods and those goods are in the country already but the supplier does not have all the information on the basis of which a proper entry document could be prepared, the law provides for those goods to be entered pending the deposit of money or duty against those

goods. If the information does not arrive in time, the law allows three months at the end of which that deposit is put into revenue. Subsequently the documents come and refunds are made.

4.50 p.m.

In those circumstances, I could never be able to assure this House that this is the end of the exercise, because we do not know what difficulties the suppliers would encounter in terms of information that they get from the importers. The hon. Leader of the Opposition should be the last person to suggest that we should allow the goods to remain in the bonds paying the charge or charges pending the arrival of that information.

To facilitate the importers we allow the goods to come in on the basis of a deposit. That deposit changes to revenue if it remains too long after three months. In those circumstances, we never could tell what is going to be needed. I can tell you Cde. Chairman, that these amounts are adequate for what is known and what can be suggested. If there are any outstanding accounts which the hon. Leader of the Opposition knows about but which perhaps the importer is in discussion now with the Customs authority – the problem has not yet been settled – they cannot be called arrears.

I should like to assure the hon. Leader of the Opposition that we are doing everything possible to facilitate entry of goods but I cannot give any assurance that this is the end of this amount; perhaps it is not the end. I do not think he wishes me to say that this is the end. As we need more we will come to this honourable House with the co-operation of the Leader of the Opposition to get more.

The question arose recently with regard to the loan to the Electricity Corporation --

The Chairman: I think you are missing item 187.

Cde. Hope: Expenses, Operation of Road Toll System. Cde. Chairman, at the beginning of the year one had certain, what we thought fair, ideas as to the number of people who would be required to man the toll stations. In the event when the matter was brought up in greater detail by the relevant Ministry including changed circumstances which changes took place between the time these Estimates were made and the time when we had to install the system it was necessary to put into effect certain other safeguards to ensure that money collected are fully and safely accounted for. It is under those circumstances that it now appears that it would cost a little more than was anticipated last year for installing the system and we feel, Cde. Chairman, that this kind of variation for a very new system is not an unusual variation. I am not at all troubled by the fact that there has been this variation from what we anticipated before.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition raised the question again about toll stations, the question of collecting tolls on the Corentyne Highway. I think it is wrong to imply, as the hon. Leader of the Opposition did seem to imply, that tolls are paid purely by people who live on the Corentyne. That obviously has to be wrong. Any vehicle which uses the Corentyne road from whichever part of the country it comes must pay a toll. It is not for the residents alone; that is the sole point of the toll, whosoever uses it pays. In any case I think it is right for users of the road to pay. It is right because we heard no complaint whatsoever when the Government spent in excess of \$25 million in 1967, probably at today's rate it would be \$50 million, to upgrade the road as a highway and we all know the nature of that road before it was rebuilt.

Obviously, that road has to be maintained. Could the hon. Member tell us just how he proposes that the cost of maintenance of that road be met? Could he say how the charges arising from that loan which was borrowed to pay for that road should be met? And those charges are not solely interest but they represent capital which must be repaid. I think the hon. Member should deal purely at this stage with the Corentyne road and wait to hear a policy later.

The important point is that we feel that the Corentyne road has been built; it is a very expensive road, it has cost a lot of money, and it will cost a lot of money to maintain and the users of that road, irrespective of where they reside, whether they are residents in the area or not, should contribute to the cost of maintenance of that road and to the cost of capital which went into that road.

The point was also raised under Capital with regard to the loan to the Electricity Corporation. Now the hon. Member tried to join the expansion of the thermal power which this loan implies with the hydro-power, which is eventually to come on stream. What I should like to explain is that the expansion work that is being done now at the Electricity Corporation enables the Corporation to meet the increasing demand for electricity between now and 1981. The hydro-power is programmed to come on stream from 1981, so that this in fact represents necessary expenditure if we are not faced with a situation that between 1981 the country is short of electric power for the necessary works, for the installation of factories and businesses which must take place and are projected to take place during that time.

I should also like to remind him that the electricity bills which come to consumers now, particularly household consumers, are subject to significant subsidy. I refer the hon. Member to the Estimates where he would see that the Government has provided \$3 ½ million for this year to subsidise consumers. Therefore, it is unfair to charge that there must be something wrong, the rates are too high. The rates are in fact, below the economic rates taking into account the cost of fuel. That, of course, is the reason why the Government had to subsidise because to charge at the economic rate would have meant that the consumer would have paid much more for the same amount of electricity consumed. So we must recognise that electricity is an expensive commodity. It is expensive because of the cost of inputs, a cost over which we have no control and for which we have no quarrel. If the oil producers insist on having a better price for their commodity I think we have to pay, -----

[Cde. Hope continued]

5 p.m.

but we must recognise that, having paid, the cost of electricity is going to be high; the price for electricity is going to be high. The Government has stepped in and subsidised that.

I think the hon. Leader of the Opposition should not confuse this loan with any possibility or reason for the cost of electricity falling. This is a capital expenditure to meet capital works. It does not in any way, and it cannot in any way, reduce the cost of generating electricity at this point in time or in any way increase the current revenues of the Corporation. So the two things are distinctly different. They are not entirely, or even closely, related. [Mr. Singh: The Corporation is making so much money!] I think I made myself plain, Cde. Chairman, that the cost, the price, of electricity as now charged by the Corporation is not an economic price at this point in time, bearing in mind the cost of fuel. [Mr. Singh: “I do not accept that.”] If the Leader of the Opposition does not accept that, I cannot tell him anything further. The Vice-President of Guystac is reminding me that the accounts are there for him to see.

Cde. Chairman, I think that takes care of the various and individual points raised by the Leader of the Opposition. It remains for me to make a very few remarks in response to his on a general basis of the accounts in general.

I think the thrust of what the Leader of the Opposition was saying was that we had established a certain balance between revenue and expenditure in the Estimates at the beginning of this year. He has seen, over the last eight to nine months, four supplementary papers adding up to \$158 million. In fact, it is \$155 million. The rest represents Contingencies Fund drawing from the year before and not owing to the revenue this year; it is sufficiently small to be immaterial, if one were to analyse that difference. Of course, he sees that \$155 million extra as distorting the balance which the Estimates revealed at the beginning of this year

but let us look at how that \$155 million was comprised.

Of that \$155 million in the supplementary so far, including the one we are debating, there is \$43 million for the current and \$112 for the capital. Now, at the beginning of this year, we projected capital expenditure at \$227 million. The most recent estimate would suggest that even after taking into account these figures under supplementary schedule, the expenditures would be in the region of \$200 million roughly. These are indications; they are not final figures and, of course, I am speaking without notes.

I think from the indications we have had so far that we are likely to conclude the year – it may vary 10 percent either way – at about \$200 million for Capital. Now, why is that possible when in fact we had \$227 million originally, \$112 million so far during the year and yet we project a total expenditure of about \$200 million? The reason is clear. Projects are planned to go and to be implemented at a certain rate but bottle-necks occur: there might be a supply problem. We do not control imports; we do not control delivery dates. Things which we hope to be delivered in nine months turn up to need eighteen months for delivery in actual fact. There might be certain manpower problems; there are different problems facing different projects so that one project cannot move ahead as rapidly as one would have thought or hoped.

Prior to when this Government took office, that \$227 million would have been fixed and immutable. There would have been a short-fall of \$200 million because funds could not get off the ground rapidly and then we would have spent only \$27 million at the end of the year; but then, development would have been retarded; unemployment would have sky-rocketed and so on. What we do is review our programme continuously and once we are satisfied that a particular programme is not moving fast and it is unlikely to be implemented fully, we feel free to bring in something else which can progress -- **[Interruption]** Cde. Chairman, I thought I was talking about this year.

In any case, Cde. Chairman, I am saying that we are continuously, during the course of the year, reviewing the programme. What we recognise is that we are not getting off the ground rapidly. We are unhappy about it but then we do something about it. We bring in additional programmes and unfortunately the way these estimates are done they do not necessarily show at the time, when these additional provisions are brought, what short-falls are occurring in the Estimates and in the projects which had already been approved. At the end of the year we will see this. I can assure the hon. Leader of the Opposition that despite these adjustments we will probably end the year with a capital expenditure programme very much or very near to the programme we have anticipated at the beginning of the year.

Then he worried about the question of what is happening to the balance between the revenue and expenditure. I wish to assure the House that, having looked at the figures, I personally have seen nothing to worry about. The revenues have performed; they are still performing well and I am satisfied that a proper balance will be maintained at the end of the year between revenues and expenditures, because, although in my Budget Statement I did not say that we were hoping to borrow from the external market as well as from the domestic, I think I can say that while we did take a loan from the external market, we have not borrowed from the local market for our monetary requirements. So, all in all, I think the balance will be maintained.

There have been short-falls which have to match out the extra we are asking for on the supplementary schedule and at the end I think we probably will end the year in as good a position as we had anticipated at the beginning of the year. The hon. Leader of the Opposition may rest assured on that fact.

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(Cde. Hope continued)

5.10 p.m.

Finally, Cde. Chairman, the question was raised on some of these reclassifications about the first emoluments dating back to 1973. At the time when the Public Service Union came to an agreement with the Government for salary increases, it was agreed that any disagreements with respect to the classification of any individual officer would be subject to an appeal and that appeal would go before a special Board which was to be set up. This was so because it was not just a pay increase, it was not an agreement dealing with pay increase, it was the first time we were installing a new set of classifications after the job evaluation.

In due course that Board was set up. It was headed by an eminent Counsel; the appeals were heard and, as a result of the decision of that Appeals Board, we have these classifications and reclassifications. Naturally, in fairness to the public servants who understood that any disagreements as to their classification would take effect from January 1, 1973, we have honoured that promise and it is now coming to the House for approval. The committee has sat; it has made its report and I am not aware that it is still sitting or propose to sit again.

I hope that explains and answers the various points raised by the Leader of the Opposition and I hope they meet with his satisfaction.

The Chairman: 1(a), 2 to 12, 15 to 18, 20, 26 to 50, 81 and 82; and under the Capital Estimates, items 5 and 16 to 19.

Mr. Singh: It does create some problems when we jump and skip like this. That is why one has to crave your indulgence. One has to recognise that I am being indulgent also. There is no question on item 1(a). Item 2, Supreme Court, Transport and Travelling. The voted provision was \$49,500. The supplementary provision now sought is \$8,500. The legend states:

“Additional provision due to increased visits to Land Registration areas as well as increase in the number of units to be served.” The word “units” did cause me some amount of speculation. Am I to understand from the hon. Minister that “units” mean Land Registration area units? Is that what is meant here? I did ask and I found out that the word “units” was unknown to Registry staff and from what the hon. Minister has said to me across the floor, it should not be “units”, it should be “writs”. I was speculating that “units” might have been a new name for Land Registration areas which I was not aware of.

There is just one appeal I would like to make here. This appeal is not directed to the hon. acting Minister but I would be glad if the hon. Minister of Finance could make a note of it. This deals with the head used to pay Judges’ chauffeurs. I know the hon. Minister has approved of a new set of salaries, but I understand that there is a problem about placing them on the scale. I would plead with the hon. Minister that he would give this his expeditious attention so that these men could get what they have been expecting for some time now. If he would, I should be very grateful.

Item 3, Uniforms: It shows that \$2,800 was originally voted and the amount of \$750 is now sought. This is a very small sum. One would not want to grudge the people who are getting uniforms. In these days of increased costs, the people who wear uniforms are the people who desire help. The legend states: “To provide for increased uniform allowances.” What I would like to know is what the increase is. I presume this increase would be going to Marshals. I would like to know what kind of increase they have received. I am solicitous about people like these and I would like to know that they receive a decent increase and not anything of a paltry nature. It is the poor man, the messenger and the marshal whom we need to look at very carefully. They are the people who get uniforms.

We move on now to item 6, Supreme Court of Judicature. The voted provision was \$12,000 and the supplementary provision now sought is \$10,000. The legend states: “Voted

provision inadequate.” We know that this is something every Ministry has been told to include in its estimate for the year 1975. It is a new item, but one would have thought that the Ministry would have been able to gauge expenditure on the basis of the information supplied to them by the Ministry which used to pay these light bills before. When they estimate \$12,000 and then come and ask for \$10,000 more, one wonders why this amount was so under-estimated. If your light bill is normally in the nature of \$22,000 then you should put \$22,000 and not ask for \$12,000 and then come back and ask for \$10,000. Let us understand that light bills were at the same level last year, the charges had gone up long before the Estimates were prepared.

Item 9, Magistrates – Telephones. The voted provision is \$14,500. The supplementary provision now sought is \$8,500. You will remember that I have been talking about this on every occasion that supplementary provisions have come before this honourable House. In fact, I have talked about it also under the Estimates. The legend here states: **“Provision inadequate.”** Is it that this amount of \$8,500 is required to meet the bill for this year 1975 so that it would be \$23,000 for 1975? Let us bear in mind from the Estimates that the amount reflected for 1974 was \$14,000. Is it now \$23,000 for 1975 or does this incorporate some amount of arrears? If it does incorporate arrears then I would like to know that these arrears have, in fact, been paid off.

5.20 p.m.

We know the usual problem about there being disagreement on overcharges in telephone bills but this is 1975 and the hon. Minister – I think it was the hon. Minister of Finance – did tell us on the last occasion that a very serious attempt had been made to clear off all the arrears. In fact, one got the impression that all the arrears had been cleared off. That is why we would like to know that this is not incorporated in arrears and if this is so one sees an expenditure of \$23,000 for 1975 as against \$14,000 for 1974 and one wonders whether it would therefore be another \$23,000 for 1976.

Item 10, Uniforms: The small amount of \$600 is being asked for “to provide for increased uniform allowances.” Well this is under Magistrates so this should be for bailiffs and collecting officers. Would the hon. Minister say how much increased allowance these goodly people are getting?

Item 18: This must be somebody’s carelessness. It is a new head, Electricity. All departments and sections must put in electricity charges in their individual accounts and somebody obviously left this out and it is now being put in. Electricity, \$2,000 for the Ombudsman’s Office which is in the nature for which electricity has to be paid for by the Government.

I move on to items 26 to 50. I have bracketed items 34 and 35. Item 34 deals with rents, rates, insurance premiums, etc., for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the voted provision was \$1,523,000. The supplementary now sought is \$84,400. The legend states: “To provide for increase in rentals as a result of increased office space.” Item 35 states that for lighting, fuel and heating, the sum of \$32,900 is needed “to provide for (1) increased rates in electricity and heating charges at all Missions; (ii) establishment of new Missions.” We have increased office space and established new missions. Obviously the two are related. Could the hon. Minister tell us where this increased office space is and where the missions are situated?

Item 41 is Contribution to Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation. The voted provision was \$1,500, the supplementary provision now sought is \$128,800 and the legend states “To provide for increase in contribution.” Now I know something but probably not enough about this Technical Co-operation Fund and in 1973, for example, the actual expenditure was \$3,000. In 1974 it was \$1,500, in 1975 the sum provided was \$1,500 and then suddenly we are faced with this request for supplementary provision for \$128,800. Obviously there must be a reason for this, bearing in mind what the level of contribution was in previous years. Could the hon. Minister tell us why this sudden request for such a big amount? Is this a voluntary contribution or have we been suddenly told we have to say this? Perhaps for the benefit of the

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House he could tell us what benefits we will derive from this Commonwealth Fund. I think it is a good thing but the terrific increase from \$3,000 to \$128,000 demands an explanation.

Item 46, Ministry of Foreign Affairs: This is a new head, Contribution to Zambia for Non-Aligned Conference expenses. The amount being sought for the first time is \$23,550. The legend states: "Being Guyana's portion of the shared expenses of the Non-Aligned Conference held in Lusaka in 1970." We went to the Conference. It obviously was an arrangement for shared expenses and we are paying it now but I take this opportunity to ask what was the position when we had the Non-Aligned Conference here in 1972? Did we foot the entire bill? Or did we ask others to contribute? Were the expenses shared? What were the figures in respect to that August 1972 Conference? If we are to pay Lusaka one would expect that there would have been some sharing in respect of the August 1972 Conference. This is non-aligned but could the hon. Minister tell us the rationale as to what is the position when meetings generally are held here? What do we do? Do we share? Or are we more generous than these other countries as a young developing nation?

Item 82, Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, subhead 6, Library and Publications: The voted provision was \$17,000 and the supplementary provision now sought is \$3,706. The legend states: "To provide for the payment of subscription to Dunn and Bradstreet for 1975." I would like the hon. Minister to tell me who are Dunn and Bradstreet and what is the subscription for? This information is not only for me, but for all the rest of us here. The next question is why was this not anticipated before? Did we not know about it when the 1975 estimates were being prepared?

DIVISION IX – FOREIGN AFFAIRS

On the capital side item 5, Acquisition of Overseas Offices and Residences. The voted provision was \$268,000. Supplementary provision now sought is \$715,500 and the legend states: "Purchase of Chancery in Bayswater, London."

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[Mr. Singh continued]

5.30 p.m.

I had the privilege of visiting this Chancery in Bayswater in October of last year. In fact, I visited the entire building and I thought it was a very nice building and that it was a good buy too. I understand that immediately after it was purchased, the Government could have got more money for it than it was purchased for. Since I visited it in October, last year, I am a little confused by the legend. This is September, 1975; that was October, 1974. Obviously, this building was bought at that time when I visited it. Will the hon. Minister say whether this is an instalment, whether it is a balance of payment or whether it is in the entire amount of the purchase price now being paid? We would like some clarification on that. I would not have had to ask the question if just a few words more had been put into the notes.

I have nothing to say on items 16 to 19 but I do not know whether my colleague has anything to say.

The Chairman: Cde. Minister Jack.

The Minister of Energy and Natural Resources (Cde. Jack): Cde. Chairman, first of all, may we start with item 2, Head 2, Supreme Court of Judicature, subhead 4, Transport and Travelling. I think the explanation for item 2 is already forthcoming. The word is “**writs**” and not “**units.**”

Item 3, Uniforms: There has been an increase in the allowance for uniform but I cannot give the exact increase since one would have to look at the number of people involved before one could calculate what each person gets. Also, it is surprising that the hon. Member does not ask what was the original amount allowed for uniforms. These are in the nature of general

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increases, taking into account the escalation in prices of things like clothing etc. [Mr. Singh: The legend is wrong; it is misleading.] I am saying that this is an increased uniform allowance having regard to the increase in the cost of uniforms.

Item 6, under the same Head, subhead 19 – Electricity: With regard to the Supreme Court, I think that the hon. Leader of the Opposition would know that there have been increases but on the question of fixing the total amount at the time of the Estimates, one would say that this is difficult to do with absolute precision. We hope always to ensure that all officers are concerned about the use of electricity. We do not want to put a large provision which would allow for a certain laxity in the use of electricity. What we need to do is to put what we consider to be an adequate provision and if it turns out that there is necessity for an increase, then we would come to this honourable House for the increase.

Item 9, Head 3 – Magistrates, subhead 4 – Telephones. This matter has been raised, it is true, by the hon. Member before but I am instructed that part of this telephone increase is due to the adjustment of arrears. I think that the hon. Member asked a rhetorical question because he happens to know some of the answers. The fact is that at the time of the adjustment of the arrears, while the departments are still in discussion, it is not possible to anticipate the outcome and put the exact figure. He himself has been a Minister and would know that this is how the thing is done.

Item 10, under the same Head, subhead 6 – Uniforms has already been covered. Item 18, Head 6, Ombudsman, subhead 10 – (New) Electricity: I think there was the comment about this being an oversight and now being put on.

We have item 34, Head 14 – Ministry of Foreign Affairs, subhead 10 – Rents, Rates, Insurance Premiums etc. If we had dealt with the Chancery first, I think that the answers to these questions would have become self-evident. As the hon. Member says himself, he has visited the Chancery and would know that the new Chancery in London is more spacious than the one

previously occupied. This accounts for the increased utilisation of the cost incurred in rents, rates and insurance premiums in a larger area. Apart from this, there is also additional accommodation which is being provided for our U.N. personnel and for rental quarters for the permanent representative to the United Nations. Item 41 --

The Chairman: I think the Leader of the Opposition raised a question in respect of item 35 (ii) establishment of New Missions.

Cde. Jack: Cde. Chairman, there are two new Missions which the Ministry has in mind, that is, the Mission in Cuba and the Mission in Montreal.

Item 41, Head 14, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, subhead 33 deals with the contribution to the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation: Recently we have been using this fund. The voted provision was \$1,500 but at the last Commonwealth Heads of Government Conference, which took place in Jamaica in May, 1975, Guyana pledged to increase its contribution especially having regard to the increased benefits which we expect to get from the utilisation of this fund.

With regard to item 46 under the same Ministry, this is Guyana's portion. One would notice that this is for the Non-aligned Conference in 1970 and it is now being paid. The principle is that participants to the Non-Aligned Conference assist the host Government by way of contributions to the holding of the Conference. This is done by having the host Government, at the end of the Conference, send out accounts indicating the amount of total expenditure of the Conference and the various Governments then chip in and contribute. With regard to the 1972 Conference, the position is the same. We have already sent out the necessary documentation but, just as in this case, we have not yet received total payment from every one.

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Item 82, Library and Publications: Members will know that we have been engaged recently in a lot of developmental work which necessitates discussions and negotiations with a number of various companies.

5.40 p.m.

In Broad Street is a kind of Intensive Unit which supplies information with regard to the standing of companies operating abroad, particularly in the United States and in Canada and it is in the interest of any wise Ministry, when dealing with a company, not merely to accept the **ipse dixit** of the company's representative upon the presentation of their cards, but to have reputable organisations to give us information as to the standing of that company. I am sure that the hon. Leader of the Opposition would be happy to know that we are careful of the rectitude of any company that might want to come and deal with us so that we can ensure that the people of Guyana will not be caught in any trap by dealing with companies that are not substantial.

I will deal now with item 5, under Division IX – Foreign Affairs 8, Acquisition of Overseas Offices and Residences. This really is for the purchase of the Chancery, London, and the increase is due to the fact that we took the decision that rather than pay exorbitant interest rates which were being quoted, we would buy the Chancery completely. This extra money, therefore, is to pay for totalling our commitment in purchasing this building in London.

With regard to items 16, 17, 18 and 19, under Division XVII – Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, although there were no comments from the hon. Leader of the Opposition, it can be seen quite clearly that the sum of \$600 which we are asking for in item 16 is merely to cover a difference in exchange rates. We are committed to contributing our portion to the International Bauxite Association which will be meeting in November and we attach great importance to the deliberations which we expect to take place there with regard to arriving at a rational price for our bauxite.

The wood pulp project is still in the state of negotiation and we retained consultants to watch our end of the negotiations and ensure that the study as presented is both a feasible one and one that is internally consistent.

With regard to the smelter, item 18, this amount of money represents our contribution to the joint smelter project which we have with Jamaica and Trinidad and it is for the Smelter Study which has taken place so far.

The last item, Cde. Chairman, the contribution to the Latin American Energy Organisation, represents our contribution to an organisation which we hope will help us out of the serious difficulties in which the new energy crisis has placed many developing countries.

The Chairman: Item 172 under Current and item 42 under Capital Estimates of the Ministry of Trade and Consumer Protection.

Mrs. DaSilva: Mr. Chairman, item 172 which concerns Personal Emoluments and which really is not what I am going to question --

The Chairman: Well, I am afraid, I shall not allow you to question that. We will not deal with item 172 which speaks of Personal Emoluments, reclassification of one officer.

Mrs. DaSilva: All right, Capital Estimates.

The Chairman: Item 42.

Mrs. DaSilva: Could you please allow me a chance, sir, to find the page?

The Chairman: It deals with the purchase of one vehicle.

Mrs. DaSilva: Under item 42 – equipment, we have been asked to approve \$22,000 for the purchase of this vehicle for the Ministry of Trade and Consumer Protection. No doubt this vehicle will be used in the work connected with this Ministry, connected with people, whom the hon. deputy Prime Minister told us he is very concerned about. We also had the opportunity just now of hearing the hon. Minister of Energy and Natural Resources being concerned and giving an explanation to the nation. Seeing that these people who are going to use this vehicle are responsible to the nation, I think it is fair enough for me to ask the hon. Minister of Trade and Consumer Protection a question which concerns the people employed in his Ministry, the people who have a responsibility to see that goods and items get to the consumers.

From time to time consumers have difficulty in securing items of necessity for the home. I shall not go into the reasons because I do not want to be irrelevant. Why these items are in short supply and why do we have long breaks? I am merely asking the Minister if he would explain. This would give him an opportunity, as in the case of the hon. Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, to give information to the nation. Could the hon. Minister tell us why, when stocks are in the country, they are not available to the housewives?

We had the Minister of Finance, a little while ago, talking about the Customs and Excise, how the money is paid to facilitate the delivery of these goods when papers were not in order. I think particularly about the shortage we had a few months ago --

The Chairman: Hon. Member, Mrs. DaSilva, what does shortages have to do with a vehicle? I try to permit as much leeway to the Opposition as is possible, but certainly it must have some kind of relevance. Here it is we are dealing with Capital Estimates on one vehicle and you are now dealing with shortages.

Mrs. DaSilva: Sir, if we have shortages in the country we may not have to vote for the vehicle because they would not be able to afford to get the stuff to the Ministry.

The Chairman: I am not carrying on a dialogue. I am just saying let us be relevant in respect of the Capital purchase of a vehicle.

Mrs. DaSilva: May I crave your indulgence to ask that we have the same facility extended to us just for a single question for the Minister to answer as was extended to the hon. Minister Jack who answered questions that were not put by my leader?

The Chairman: I think you misconceive the whole aspect of a budget. It does not mean that because a question is not asked the Minister has no right to explain why it is on the list. Certainly he owes a duty to Parliament and the nation irrespective of whether a question is asked or not, to say why that item is on the Budget, supplementary or otherwise.

Mrs. DaSilva: Yes, sir, I appreciate that. But then the hon. Minister of Trade might be glad for the opportunity to give an explanation to the nation concerning the vehicle. As I said before, we would not need the vehicle if we do not have the stuff to give the people. I merely want to know why items which have come into the country and are in supermarkets are not on the shelves for the consumers to purchase. That is all I want to know.

5.50 p.m.

The Chairman: If I had the right I would direct the Minister not to answer that. Cde. Minister of Trade.

The Minister of Trade and Consumer Protection (Cde. King): Cde. Chairman, I can only assume that the hon. Member is referring to one specific commodity. In fact, I challenge her to name any commodity other than that which I shall name within a few seconds, for indeed, there are no commodities save and except this one on which the price has been delayed. The price on commodities is set within hours and, in fact, days before the consignment actually arrives in the country.

29.9.75

National Assembly

5.50 – 6 p.m.

The commodity to which she is referring and which I completely concur with is powdered milk of a specific brand. By coincidence, I have, in fact, signed that Order about four hours ago. The reason for delaying that particular brand is because there are other brands which have recently arrived, or which are about to arrive in the country, which are cheaper than that particular brand. In other words, what the importer of that brand of milk sought to do was to get his higher-priced milk into the market when the market was absolutely dry and scarce. I have to use my powers to ensure that the consumers get the price of commodities at the lowest level and all I was seeking to do was to protect the consumers from a monopolistic situation which would have existed had I signed that Order three weeks ago. That commodity is powdered milk.

But let me assure this House that Orders are signed expeditiously except in cases where I have reason to believe that it is not in the interest of the consumers to do so. There are some importers who are putting forward claims for increases which they allege to be due to the fall and rise of the US dollar and other currencies. These have to be examined and in my opinion have not been justified in many cases. And therefore there will be no order signed adjusting those prices.

I think the hon. Member is suffering from a short memory. Only a few months ago perhaps a year ago – she may have been justified in speaking about shortages, but within the last couple of months I think shortages have now been something of the past. There are no shortages in Guyana of any important food items which are inconsistent with normal supply practice, or which, in fact, is in excess of prevailing situations in other parts of the world. The hon. Member ought to know that if there is a situation of continuous supply of any commodity then somewhere along the line there is excessive ordering. Unless there are periods when items are briefly out of supply then we are wasting our money, we are contributing to great spoilage and unnecessary high consumption. The ideal in ordering is to have a continuous supply even though there might be minor areas of interruption. And that I quote from the highest world authority in the field of supply. It is not always in the best interest to have your shelves laden with perishable or semi-perishable commodities.

That as I understand is the question which has been addressed to me and I hope it is the answer.

Mrs. DaSilva: May I just thank you, sir, for your indulgence in allowing me to ask the hon. Minister the question and to thank the hon. Minister for answering it. I can assure you that there was nothing nasty intended in it. It was just a question giving the opportunity for this nation to know why powdered milk is in the country and they cannot get it. There is no ulterior motive and I thank him for the explanation.

The Chairman: Items 73 to 78 and, on the Capital Estimates, items 13 to 15.

Mr. Singh: Item 74, Head 25 – Ministry of Agriculture, subhead 6 – Guyana Marketing Corporation. The voted provision was \$500,000. Supplementary provision which we have already passed in this House is \$195,000. One expected at that time that that was all the money that would have been needed for the rest of the year. But we have this further supplementary provision now of an additional \$300,000 and the legend states “To provide for an increased subsidy to Guyana Marketing Corporation on account of increased purchases of ground provision.”

Certainly we can have no quarrel with the Guyana Marketing Corporation purchasing the produce of farmers and to the extent that money is needed for increased purchases of ground provisions, we would certainly agree with that. But obviously this is something that seems not to have been anticipated by the Guyana Marketing Corporation. We would like to know in what area are these ground provisions which would necessitate a huge amount of \$300,000 for the purchase thereof. There must be some big reaping expected in some areas that the Guyana Marketing Corporation did not envisage earlier in the year. When it came for supplementary provision it did not ask for it at that time. One also needs to ask, in view of the complaints that one hears, whether the hon. Minister is really satisfied with the workings of this Corporation. They are expanding their operations tremendously. One has been regaled in this House with the

advantages of the Guyana Marketing Corporation, with the help they give to farmers. Certainly we do not deny that at all. I think that there should be greater effort to streamline operations of the Guyana Marketing Corporation and cut down its trading losses.

Further, farmers have recently written to me and complained about the lack of prompt payment for their produce. In the Coomaka/Mabaruma area, the area where the Guyana Marketing Corporation has an outlet as a buying agent, the produce of farmers is bought but their complaint is that they have to be running up and down using up very valuable gasoline for which foreign currency is needed in order to get their money from the Guyana Marketing Corporation.

6 p.m.

Will the hon. Minister please look into that complaint and see what can be done about it? If it is justified, then I know that he will give the necessary directions to have the situation remedied but it is a huge sum of money and we need some explanation on this.

Item 76, subhead 1, Personal emoluments: I had not been talking about Personal Emoluments at all but I should like to make a comment on C) of item 76. The legend states:

“for an item Personal gratuity earning allowance to Dr. B.K. Rai.”

I really do not know what this is all about. I wonder whether the hon. Minister could tell us what it is and from when it dates. One is left in the dark about that.

Item 15, Division XIII – Ministry of Agriculture – subhead 42, Sea and River Defence (Force Account): The original voted provision was \$4,000,000; supplementary provision now sought is \$2,436,000 which is more than half of what was originally requested. The legend states:

“To continue construction of sea and river defence.”

One realises that these works are absolutely necessary and I am not at all questioning these works. I have myself seen the works going on but I merely wondered, in view of the general re-adjustment of capital works which the hon. Minister of finance spoke about, whether in fact we will be able to spend this amount of \$2.436 million on sea defences, bearing in mind that the Government has deployed a lot of its expertise to the hydro-power project. A lot of the technical officers and expertise have recently been deployed to the hydro-power project in the interior area and I am wondering whether the remaining staff is really geared to spend the rest of this money between now and the end of the year. That is all, sir, unless my colleague has anything to say.

The Chairman: Cde. Minister of Agriculture.

The Minister of Agriculture (Cde. Kennard): Cde. Chairman, with respect to item 73 on the Current Estimates, as is known, the Government’s policy is to provide the farmers with economic and remunerative prices for produce so as to encourage the expansion of farming and to encourage the production of food for the people. Concomitant with that policy, is a policy of ensuring the supply of that food to the people at a low cost, a policy that could be described as a policy of cheap food for the masses. The subsidy reflected in the Budget for the Guyana Marketing Corporation is an expression of that policy for, in many cases, the Marketing Corporation re-sells to the consumer at a price lower than the price paid to farmers and this is the money really that the taxpayer pays for the execution of that policy. For example, quite recently, we have had to reduce the price of pork by some 25 cents per pound, again to bring cheap pork to the people.

With respect to the specific question as to where all this provision is coming from, I wish to say that the whole nation of Guyana has now been motivated and has become involved in the whole programme of feeding the nation – feeding ourselves – and food supplies have increased

from all areas. The consequence of this is that the Marketing Corporation has been receiving an unprecedented quality of perishable ground provisions from all the areas and centres of production and this is now being reflected in the additional subsidy which goes directly, really, to the consumer because this food is being re-sold at low prices. One has to compare the prices charged by the local retailers with the prices charged by the Guyana Marketing Corporation to see that it is a fact that the consumers are getting the benefit of this subsidy to keep the cost of living down to a reasonable level.

The Corporation is trying to achieve the supply of cheap food to all the people by establishing and increasing the number of its retail outlets. These are now being established on an increasing basis not only in Georgetown but in the other towns of Guyana. In the rural areas 18 have already been established for this year only. It is proposed to have additional outlets to bring food to the people at low cost and the small increase – relative to the population – which is being asked, that is, less than 40 cents per head of population, is reflected in the supplementary request.

Cde. Chairman, with respect to the complaint that farmers in the Coomaka/Mabaruma area have not been receiving payments promptly, I myself heard of this from the Comrade and I should like to give him my personal assurance that we will investigate this complaint tomorrow to ensure that the producer gets what belongs to him.

With respect to item 76, Head 26, Ministry of Agriculture – Agriculture- and the query concerning the personal gratuity to Dr. B. K. Rai, I should like to say that Dr. B. K. Rai is an expatriate officer who is employed as an Entomologist and Pathologist with the Ministry of Agriculture and this gratuity represents part of his conditions of service. It is now being paid. I regret that the quantum is not available at the moment but I wish to assure the hon. Member that it is within reasonable bounds in relation to his emoluments.

29.9.75

National Assembly

6.10 - 6.20 p.m.

(Cde. Kennard continued)

6.10 p.m.

Under Capital Estimates, item 15, Ministry of Agriculture, Sea and River Defence (Force Account). The sum that is now being requested reflects the basic problem which we wish we did not have in Guyana, that of defending our territory from the sea. Despite all the predictions, the sea continues relentlessly to assault our territory. We have to fight back on what is indicated there as the cost of the struggle against the sea.

Specifically, this year we have had, in the Liliendal area, the sea virtually breaking the wall and we have had to really put men and materials at work to fortify the defences there and to extend those defences further up the East Coast of Demerara. Sea defences, like a battle, we cannot predict. But I wish to assure the hon. Member that the funds requested represent what is really necessary, the minimum that is necessary, to defend our shores. We have had to import the larger quantity of a metal sheet piling than we had anticipated and this forms a great part of what has been asked for today.

Mrs. DaSilva: Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask the Minister a supplementary question on the Guyana Marketing Corporation, in view of what he has just said. He talked about the retail by the G.M.C. to keep the prices down and he also talked about the number of outlets being increased. Both of these are very admirable projects for the G.M.C. Could the hon. Minister say if any consideration is being given to controlling the amount of mark-up that the buyer puts on items bought at the G.M.C.? I speak particularly of bacon and ham. Anytime after 15th December you cannot get a half pound of ham to buy because it has all been bought by the vendors of the Bourda Market and the price there goes up considerably. So that the person who wants to purchase a small portion would have to pay a considerable amount. This defeats the object of the G.M.C. This goes on at times of scarcity. Whenever there is a shortage of ground provisions, the retailers go to the G.M.C., buy things and then they put a very high mark-up

which makes the cost of the food go up. Is there any plan that the Minister of Agriculture or the Minister of Trade and Consumer Protection has to control this type of problem?

Cde. Kennard: Cde. Chairman, the G.M.C. is aware of attempts by persons to buy its products and to re-sell these products at exorbitant prices to consumers. We are attempting to attack this problem fundamentally by creating more and more outlets to give consumers more and more places from which they can make their purchases. More outlets will be established around these marketing centres.

In addition to this, the G.M.C. has also been around the city selling food from trucks and I think, as we know, quite recently we earned the displeasure of the City Council by this practice of selling food to the consumer from trucks. But again, this is an attempt to bring food, now being produced, to the consumer.

Should this habit of the middle man who buys from the Corporation at the lower price and then resells to the consumer at a higher price continue, we might have to think in terms of introducing some form of control in terms of restricting sales to some middle men or some form of control in terms of price control for those particular items. We will have to examine this. With the establishment of more and more retail centres and if people join co-operatives, open up their own buying clubs and their own shops, it would go much further than to merely control the prices of relatively few middle men. But we should look at that aspect as well.

The Chairman: Items 51 to 64; 142 to 164; and 197. Under Capital Estimates, items 6 to 10 and 37 to 40. These items deal with the Ministry of Information and Culture and the Ministry of Health.

Mrs. DaSilva: Item 55, Head 18, Ministry of Information and Culture, subhead 8 – Films. We have been asked to provide \$70,000. The voted provision was \$38,000. The legend

states: "To provide for raw stock, news reel, short documentaries and copies of films relevant to the Guyana Scene." I would like to make a short comment about the films and the question the Minister herself has said she is going to go into. The types of films we disagree with are sex, violence and crime and if this sort of film is still being shown we feel the Government should take a hand in improving the standard of the films.

We have no quarrel with the request for this item because we believe that part of the responsibility of this Ministry is to educate the nation and if this grant is going to be used to provide for material to make news reels and documentaries, next year is going to be the year of Education and Health. It is vitally necessary for our people to be educated. Again, I want to plead with the Minister of Information and Culture to make these documentaries relevant to the problems that exist in our country today.

6.20 p.m.

A part of this is for broadcasting. The documentaries can be used to get people to realise the value of breast-feeding. We have film units but they must go out and bring items that are relevant in Guyana today and not the propaganda films showing the workings of the Party. But we can have some of those too: the work of the developing nation, the G.D.F., National Service. Could the hon. Minister tell us if it is proposed to make such types of documentaries, educational as opposed to informative?

I wish to couple this with item 59 Publishing and Publicising "to provide for increased volume and circulation of existing publications." The hon. Minister of National Development told us that a big part of his money is for the same purpose. I wonder why the hon. Minister of Information and Culture has not been able to cut hers down or are they overlapping?

I was in New Amsterdam about two weeks ago and as I passed by the Technical Institute I was horrified to see that the P.N.C. flag was flying higher than our national flag. I passed on

Saturday afternoon and saw it, and on Sunday morning when I was going to church somebody realised the terrific insult to our country and corrected it. It is rude and discourteous to fly any other flag higher than the flag of our country. I saw the flag of the P.N.C. flying above the flag of my country and I was disgusted. I nearly went to the hon. Minister for Berbice Region. By 10 o'clock somebody realised it was wrong and remedied it. This is the type of thing I should like to ask the hon. Minister to go into and use the vote for publishing and publicising in that we ought to get film shows and talks and discussions so that they would also know how to make the best use of the food that the hon. Minister of Agriculture was talking about. These are the things with which we would have no fault to find.

Items 61, 62, 63, and 64: For Item 61 we have \$42,000 voted provision and now we are asking for supplementary provision of \$150,000 for Head 18 Ministry of Information and Culture, Subhead 26 – Sports and Games and the legend states: “Voted provision inadequate.” I am not going to waste the time of the House. We all know what the Minister is going to say on this. But surely one should know what really happens to this enormous amount of supplementary provision being asked for. Could the hon. Minister tell us how these plans are drawn up?

Items 62, 63, and 64 deal with public relations particularly item 62. We have voted provision of \$50,000, supplementary provision being asked for is \$235,600. It seems to us that in this vote – and we make no apology for saying this again – many things can be duplicated. The Minister of National Development told us that his Ministry is concerned with people; community development is concerned with people, if we add up all the amounts it is an enormous amount of money. It seems to be unrealistic and no proper explanation is being given to the nation. The hon. Leader of the Opposition said a little while ago it is the taxpayers' money being spent and they ought to be told and not just presented with a block vote.

Item 64, Head 18 – Ministry of Information and Culture. This is a new subhead, Development Support Communication – Grants. The sum of \$22,500 is requested to “to initiate the new programme as part of the extension activities.

Items 148 and 149: I wish to use this section to speak generally on health. The Government has initiated the immunisation scheme for school children which I proudly say was put across by the United Force and I am very pleased that this has come forward. Could the hon. Minister use this head “**Health Education**” to get across to parents the necessity for seeing that these children take their vaccines and that they do not fall down on the days they are supposed to go?

6.30 p.m.

It makes it difficult for the staff doing the job and it makes it difficult for the other staff. But, sir, there is need for health education. We have a great many Guyanese who are diabetics and this necessitates the regular use of either drugs or insulin and we have many of these people in the country areas. I am thinking about a particular woman of about 58 or 59 years. This woman has to go about 5 or 6 miles every day to get her insulin shots. People can administer insulin to themselves. Could the Ministry of Health institute a programme on how to use these things?

Maybe the Ministry of Health could go into the idea of establishing in the villages, centres so that people would not have to travel many miles. **[Interruption]** It is all very well for us to sit down and talk because most of us have motor cars but I am thinking about people who have their farms to go to and walk many miles there. They have no cars. Before going to farm they have to walk about 5 or 6 miles to get shots when they could be taught how to administer their shots at home. There are many such people. There is necessity for the Ministry of Health in its education programme and in collaboration with the Local Authority – they can get together – to see about this question of teaching people how to administer insulin.

I am sure that people in the various districts can be found to help these people. The Ministry can use retired nurses or police etc., to assist in this programme and so save people from having to go long distances and endure unnecessary hardships. Also, there is the G.D.F., the National Service and the Youth Corps – anybody can do it as long as they can do it properly.

I make a plea for these people too with regard to the lack of doctors. Particularly, I am thinking again of the East Coast where there is no G.N.O. between Mahaicony and Buxton. There used to be one stationed at Cove and John but he is gone for about 18 months now and there is no replacement. These people need the publishing and publicising facilities and all the resources at the command of the Ministry of Information and Culture to help them to help themselves because some of them can drop dead before they get to the Georgetown or Mahaicony Hospital. I am using this opportunity to ask the hon. Minister to make full use of her vote in this Ministry of Information and Culture to teach the people health education.

Item 159, Head 67, Ministry of Health – Hospitals and Dispensaries – subhead 14 deals with Drugs and Medical Appliances and the voted provision was \$2,600,000. We are now being asked to supplement that with \$700,000 and the legend states:

“To provide for the payment of drugs ordered in 1974 but received in 1975.”

What I want to know, sir, is how long are we going to go on in this House talking about getting cheaper drugs for our people? As socialists we should be concerned – and we are concerned and we share and join with the Government – [**Cde. Field-Ridley:** You’re a socialist?] There are 400 different kinds of socialism in case the hon. Minister does not know. My leader tells me there are even more. We share with the Government this aspect of socialism because we are also concerned about people and the cost of drugs and again I have to go back to the diabetics because they need drugs to live and they need them every day.

The people who have high blood pressure also need drugs. We can get cheaper drugs. We are talking about trading with India. Would the hon. Minister tell us if any progress has been made? Drugs are obtainable from India far cheaper than we get them here and I heard one person say that the reason for that is that in India, labour is cheap. I do not dispute that but what carries up the price of many of our drugs is the packaging. We have many of our essential drugs in expensive wrappings while the Indians use an aluminium foil which is quite safe and which is far cheaper. We want to get cheap drugs for our people. What is the Government doing about pursuing this matter of getting cheap drugs for our people?

Before going on to item 10 under Capital Expenditure, there is a brief comment that I should like to make on item 9, Head XI, Ministry of Information and Culture, subhead 6 – Government Archives and National Trust. It is not that I am querying or questioning or degrading the sum of \$10,000 that is being asked for under item 9 by the Ministry of Information and Culture for the “Erection of monument to the Enmore martyrs.” I am not questioning it; I am not against it, but, I would like to ask the hon. Minister, in view of the Government’s statements again and again and the fact that we have been told that we have to change our thinking, whether we should not think in terms of scholarships instead of erecting monuments to people which may be a fine thing to do when we can afford it. There is the David Rose monument.

I am not disputing this but I think the time has come when, in order to honour loyal, heroic people who have given service to Guyana when, it would be far more beneficial – and we feel maybe if the dead could talk they would say the same thing – if we could award scholarships to these children whereby they can go on and study in higher institutions. It would be very beneficial and the scholarships can bear the names of the persons we want to honour. For example, in this instance, it would be the Enmore Martyrs Scholarship. In that way we would be preserving opportunities to further a child’s education in whatever aspect that child is gifted and in whatever aspect we need people.

There is great need for trained personnel at the managerial level, therefore, scholarships should be awarded to the right people to train them. Memorials should take the form of scholarships and not just be put in the form of wood or stone or whatever. I hear we are going to have Cuffy coming up again soon. There is going to be a monument for Cuffy. I think Cuffy might be pleased if, instead of having a Cuffy Memorial, we have a Cuffy Award for a labourer or somebody to help him to improve his standard,

6.40 p.m.

So that he can get an opportunity, though another statue is not something that is going to be beneficial. I am thinking of a man who leaves his money in trust to help children whose parents could not afford to help them. We want scholarships to help our people to educate their children so that they may have equal opportunities. This is another form of socialism with which our Party agrees.

Item 10, Division XI, Ministry of Information and Culture – Subhead 12, Guyana Broadcasting Service: This is a new head. We have been asked to vote \$185,475 to provide an additional studio at D'Urban Backlands. This is all right, we are not complaining. But I use this Head as a means of asking the Government to educate those announcers at the Government controlled National Radio Station in news media and responsible reporting. Sometimes their headlines and announcements are startling rather than startlingly accurate; because this is what they feel would catch the eye of the public. We have one Government-controlled radio station, so we do not have much choice. We want to educate people into responsible reporting. They often tell a story and the truth is slightly slanted towards the Government. They never ever give the other side of the story.

Going back to the question of socialism, a talk was given by the Revd. Michael Campbell Johnson on this subject and the papers reported the Church's attitude to socialism. There were

big headlines to the effect that the Churches supported socialism. What they did not say is what kind of socialism the Churches supported. As I said earlier, there are 400 different definitions of socialism. My leader said so also. When the radio station is reporting, it must report responsibly what people say, not putting statements in a slanting way and thus give a wrong impression as the newspapers do. The same thing happened when the Archbishop of the West Indies and Bishop Benedict Singh gave their views. In order to understand clearly what the Archbishop said you had to, first of all, read the magazine put out by the Anglican Church and you had to be either in Church or read the Catholic Standard to understand what Bishop Benedict Singh said. The reporters must learn to state the facts.

There is no quarrel with socialism; the type of socialism matters. This is what the newspapers must be told and this is what the Ministry of Information and Culture should use to train its people in publishing and publicising.

We are going to have a new studio as well as G.B.S. and, therefore, there will be more opportunities for the Government to put across its propaganda. I want them to be sure that they put it correctly.

Mr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, I would like to rise on a point of order. I admire the points raised by my hon. Colleague but I am wondering whether this House has a quorum. This House is being treated with scant disrespect. We do not have a quorum of elected Members of this House now.

The Chairman: Are you calling for a division?

Mr. Singh: Yes, sir.

The Chairman: Clerk, take the division please. **[Pause]**

Hon. Leader of the Opposition I am advised that we have a quorum.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, sir, we now have a quorum.

Mrs. DaSilva: Under Capital Estimates, item 9, Division XI, Ministry of Information and Culture, Subhead 6 – Government Archives and National Trust. There is just a short question on the Government Archives. The voted provision was \$39,000 and now we are being asked to vote \$10,000. I spoke on this Head already but there is something I forgot to mention. It is quite some time since we have had this Bill and the hon. Minister probably anticipated that I would ask about this. Could we not have some indication of the buildings being identified for the national trust? There is much speculation. The newspapers have mentioned some and most people agree. The nation would like to know and this is an opportunity for the Minister to tell us which buildings are identified for the monuments of the National Trust.

The Chairman: Cde. Minister of Information and Culture.

6.50 p.m.

The Minister of Information and Culture (Cde. Field-Ridley): Thank you Cde. Chairman. As usual we could have predicted the items of interest of the hon. Member, but the one new input is that she has declared herself a United Force socialist.

In posing her points the hon. Minister said there is need for further education on what the ideology implies. The hon. Member first sought the assurance that the films produced by the Ministry of Information and Culture should be relevant to what is happening in Guyana. She said she had no quarrel with the sum asked for although she thought it was rather large. I think it is useful to let the House know that an hour and a half colour documentary film costs about \$40,000. A recent full length film produced not by the Ministry cost over \$70,000. This gives you the kind of idea of the savings. But I challenge the hon. Member to say which one of the

films produced is not relevant to the country. Our programme is geared to inform people what is happening in the country. As a matter of fact, we need to do more films and I agree with the hon. Member and perhaps it would be good to make the point that our requests next year will be larger.

Under item 59, Publishing and Publicising, the point was made about the need to educate our society about relevant values and concepts as well as areas which would benefit them – breast-feeding. We have already done these both in terms of written material and audio visual aids. We have published information on agricultural topics, health topics, and educational topics in terms of values of the society. These are built-in productions by the Ministry whether they take the form of written material, film or anything like that.

I think the hon. Member has some problems in some specific areas and I think they are personal problems.

One of the points she made was whether we need this vote in view of the work being done by the Ministry of National Development. The two Ministries work together. As a matter of fact we complement the work and that is why our public relations programmes are

The Hon. Member transferred her attention to item 61, Sports and Games, and wondered why we had not asked for the sum before. If the hon. Member had been reading the newspapers she would have seen that Guyana has participated in many international sporting events. Indeed the Caribbean Chess, table tennis players have gone to Nigeria. We have made our mark in international sport and I think we should be proud.

Items 62, 63, 64 were taken together. They are all concerned with people. Any socialist Government is concerned with people. That is what the whole exercise is about and therefore you cannot expect us to apologise for anything. These three items all recognise our need, the

need to work, the need which we recognise to ensure that people are informed about what is happening. To do this we need to have trained people. These items represent pre-service training.

Item 64, Development Support Communication – Grant, attempts to give some support to the radio stations. From our radio station anti-development messages are frequently carried by advertisements of the wrong kind. Item 62 deals with overseas publications primarily. I am sure that hon. Members are aware of the need that exists not only for Guyanese within Guyana but also Guyanese overseas to understand what is happening in their country, the fundamental changes that are taking place, why they should be proud about their country and for them to come home and help us in the task. In this we propose to put a broad emphasis on our Guyanese overseas with a view to encouraging them to come home. This represents a start of this programme. It is by no means the total sum needed to finance a programme of this dimension. This represents the amount to be used for preparatory work. We need to have someone charged with the responsibility of public relations. This gives us the first input of those officers and the preparation in terms of ... overseas so that during the coming year can mount a full scale programme to educate Guyanese overseas.

7 p.m.

I think the hon. Member's next problem concerned the Ministry of Health and there were the same points which were made under the Ministry of Information and Culture: Health Education. We have been working along with the Ministry of Health in this programme. We have planned a film on breast feeding and that should get on the way the coming week.

On the question of immunisation, I think the success of the programme which has been going on is shown in the school system this year where, the majority of our children have been immunised and where the programme of immunisation is still going on.

The hon. Member is aware that there are many diabetics who administer insulin themselves. As part of our Health Education programme, however, it is possible to increase this education and it is something worth taking into consideration.

In terms of the lack of doctors, there is a distressing lack of doctors in Guyana. That is why during next year there will be great emphasis on education and on health. The hon. Member mentioned the fact that many students had been brought back home to Guyana to be given an opportunity to see what is happening in Guyana. One of the reasons, we feel, why there are not many committed professionals in the health services of Guyana is that they have not been given an opportunity to be made aware of what is happening in Guyana. They probably adapt very easily to the facilities etc., of the societies in which they are trained and therefore orientation is a necessary part in the training of any professional. It is not just a matter of skill.

Perhaps as important or even more important than the skill one acquires is what one does with that skill and that is why we are ensuring that all the overseas students have an opportunity to know what is going on in Guyana. With that kind of programme in hand, we can have perhaps more fruitful returns from the investments we have made in the Guyanese students who had been selected by the Government, trained by the Government and sent overseas for further training by the Government. Not having had such a programme is probably one of the reasons for the shortages in health but, as I said, next year there will be emphasis on health.

The hon. Member wanted to know under item 159, Head 67 – Ministry of Health – Hospitals and Dispensaries, subhead 14 – Drugs and Medical appliances, what is happening about cheap drugs; how soon can we have cheap drugs? **“Cheap”** is a very relative term. There are not many Governments like the Guyana Government which has taken very seriously its policy of subsidising certain fundamental things that are needed like food. We have been purchasing drugs from India. They are of good quality and lower in price than those we have been purchasing before but they still cannot be described as **“cheap”**.

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There have been discussions at a Caribbean level and those discussions are going on with a view to implementing plans which have been formulated for assisting in this production of drugs so that the small man can have easy access to them. Of course, the final result is in what we are attempting to do in Guyana which is to provide facilities so that every Guyanese can have easy access to both preventative and curative drugs.

Under capital expenditure, the hon. Member looked at items 9 and 10 which deal with the Government Archives and National Trust and the Guyana Broadcasting Service respectively. I was not so sure about the quality of the complaint made against the Guyana Broadcasting Service by the hon. Member but it is true that the members of the Press need orientation. They are in sensitive positions and like many other Guyanese, they need orientation of the correct sort. Correct orientation will produce efficient reporting.

We recognise the need to have trained professionals in the communications field, therefore, from last year we have increased the scholarship facilities for people who want to be trained in this field and we have sent some students to the University of the West Indies to be so trained.

The hon. Member spoke about the press report of the speech of a certain member of her church who gave his views on socialism – or perhaps I should say – on what he described as socialism, at the Critchlow Labour College. That speech was broadcast live on more than one occasion – I cannot think why. I myself had the questionable privilege of listening last Monday night to a broadcast of a discussion at the Critchlow Labour College by three persons who aired their views on socialism. As a socialist myself, I was completely confused. **[Interruption]** But his views were aired live on more than one occasion. What more does the hon. Member want? I do not know. I think the Press has stretched too far on the wrong side.

On the question relating to the National Trust, perhaps I can deal with the scholarships under this item later. The hon. Member wanted to know the buildings identified. There is a

booklet on it and I do promise to let her have a copy of it but some of the buildings are: the St. George's Cathedral, the Town Hall, the Law Courts, some of our Mosques, parts of the West Coast of Berbice where there are structures over a hundred years old.

Almost all of these buildings reflect a period that we are leaving behind. Then, there are some old logies. For example, I think there is an old logie at Leonora Estate which has been identified. Government is building and rebuilding on the estates but we are keeping, in memory of our history, at least one of those logies. We have of course, the Timehri Rock Carvings, etc. The hon. Member was careful to say that she did not object to the buildings of monuments to the Enmore martyrs. I wonder whether she did not protest too much. There is a proposal to build a monument to Cuffy during the coming year.

The hon. Member mentioned scholarships being named after these people. But is it not that we are looking at a situation which is rapidly moving from the kind of thing that goes on in a capitalist society? In that society, as the Comrade Leader said in another context, in order to ease the conscience a little, a few scholarships are given and there is a suitable name by which the scholarship is named. As was said before, what we have been doing in Guyana is establishing a system where education is completely free and under which there is no need for scholarships.

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Every child will have access to completely free education. Text books have been imported to ensure this. Therefore the whole subject of scholarship in education is an idea not consistent with the new philosophy of the United Force. I think that that answers all the questions asked.

The Chairman: Ministry of Education, items 109 to 141; 190; 209 to 212; and under Capital Estimates 30 to 36. Hon. Member Mrs. DaSilva.

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Mrs. DaSilva: Sir I am advised by the hon. Prime Minister that it is getting late.

The Chairman: I am not worried about that, I am quite happy to be here.

Mrs. DaSilva: I am sorry that we are going to do the Ministry of Education now because we do not have any reporters here to take down the Minister's words of wisdom and her replies to my question. Item 114, Head A1, Ministry of Education and Social Development, subhead 35 – Contribution to Caribbean Examinations Council. We voted a provision of \$59,000. Now we are being asked to approve a supplementary provision of \$19,200 to meet the increase in contributions for 1975. We have had pronouncements made in this House. If the rest of the Caribbean are not going to join with us and get on with this Caribbean Council which is to be started by 1976, are we carrying on with it alone? I would like the hon. Minister to tell this House and the nation. I am looking for Prince Mason (G.B.S.) and I cannot even see him here.

Item 116, Ministry of Education and Social Development, subhead 46 – Contribution by the Government of Guyana towards the publication of a Dictionary of Caribbean English usage. I would like to ask the hon. Minister to give us some idea about this dictionary. We have had many discussions and dissertations on the use of creolese as opposed to the use of English spoken, of course, with the Guyanese accent.

English is our language of communication and this has been looked into many times. Is this dictionary going to just consist of creolese expressions translated into basic Guyanese English? I would like to know because it will be interesting for us to know what form this dictionary will take. I wonder if the hon. Minister would tell us who are the publishers of this dictionary and what other countries in the Caribbean are contributing or whether we are going on with this alone.

Item 119, Head 43, Ministry of Education and social Development – Primary and Secondary Schools. This is a new subhead for the Purchase of Basic Text books, subhead 16.

We are asked to approve \$1,500,000 to provide for the issue of free text books to schools. We had much propaganda on the radio and from the hon. Minister of Information and Culture about all these free books. First of all, we had big headlines. Then we heard a big report that the books were not here so the Government had to bring them in by air. But the Government must have planned in advance that it was going to use the September term 1975 as the starting point for distribution of books. Why should the Government have to use taxpayers' money to fly these books in and still there are not enough school books?

I am told on reliable information that many of these books can be bought from the old suppliers far more cheaply than they can be purchased from Guystac. The prices can be checked. Also, too, I see that there is an attempt to shift the blame. I am told, sir, that my Leader is going to see the hon. Minister about this at 7.30 a.m. to get the problem settled. The blame is being shifted to the Minister of Trade and Consumer Protection. They are trying to shift the burden from the shoulders where it belongs and push it on to somebody else's. But it is not correct to blame our colonial past. They did not order the books and that is why enough were not supplied. I think the hon. Minister of Education should let us have an explanation about these free text books.

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The Speaker: Cde. Minister of Education.

The Minister of Education and Social Development (Cde. Baird): Cde. Chairman, in response to the hon. Member's query on the position with the Caribbean Examination Councils I have some information that I should like to call attention to – the stage at which the Council has reached first of all. The Council has a phasing period. In 1979 the Council proposes to have examinations in Maths, English, History, Integrated Science and possibly Geography. By 1980 the additions will be Agriculture, Business Education and Spanish and by 1982 Technical and Vocational Education. This includes Industrial Arts and Home Economics. Perhaps it will be

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interesting for you to observe that for the past year subject specialists have been preparing syllabuses for these examinations in every territory in the Caribbean. These subject specialists are engaged in preparing programmes of work.

At the moment in Guyana we are particularly concerned not only about the content of the examination because a change in content does not necessarily affect the kind of outcome of evaluation which is required. We want an instrument that will evaluate our students' performances not only their performances and responses to educational experience, but we want to identify potential, and we are therefore concerned about the kind of examination; the testing technique used. Particularly we don't want to rely on the essay type question to which we are accustomed, but the Examination Council, so far, has decided to continue some of their essay type questions, some as objective questions, and they want to introduce evaluation through continuous assessment or continuous evaluation.

We in Guyana – and I think Jamaica – we are considering the use of tests of aptitude. We would like to see tests of aptitude introduced in examinations because they will identify potential in students and thus prevent a lot of wastage in terms of time, skills, etc.

As far as Guyana is concerned, we are observing the situation. Fortunately, we have the expertise for developing meaningful forms of evaluation. We have already developed curricula and are preparing syllabuses. If it is necessary, we will have some material for mounting a local examination. We are not, however, pre-occupied with an examination that replaces the GCE O'Level because at the moment this country is developing its own examination to facilitate at other levels of secondary and of primary education.

At the moment we are approaching the stage where some of the existing examinations will be phased out – I do not use the word “abolish”; it is not a question of abolishing examination; one kind of evaluation will supersede another since, if we are using new curricula, new programmes, and new approaches, we have to structure evaluation procedures that relate to

the kind of programme we are using, so in this sense we will have a new examination. For example, in evaluation of one kind of secondary education we will have a new examination. I am not sure what it will be called, but it will be a valid evaluation for secondary education of another kind, the kind to be given in secondary departments of all-age schools. The examination that will evaluate the students in the community high school, for example, and I want to stress – I have said this before in this House – that there is only one form of evaluation and we want something that is more effective and more valid so we are concerned with evaluation especially from the time they enter school to the time they leave; other forms of evaluation that will support an examination.

I hope I have answered your query. Now, you referred to the dictionary of Caribbean English Usage. First of all I want to say this is a project that is operating in the University of West Indies because it is organised and supervised by a distinguished Guyanese, Dr. Allsopp.

Now, I think it will be useful to this House for me to give you some insight into the role of the dictionary of Caribbean English Usage. As we know, English Language in the Caribbean as it stands at present is without any regional lexicon record, authentic or otherwise, and this dictionary will be the first organised act of cultural stock-taking of the English speaking Caribbean as a whole and as such is an instrument needed by people identifying themselves internationally. It is comparable with the earliest British and American dictionary and more recently with the dictionary of Canadian English.

Researchers are going to use some techniques, for example, by cross-referencing variant data among the English speaking sub-cultures of this Caribbean region. It will close gaps of ignorance both within the Caribbean and between the Caribbean and the greater English-speaking world and it will show, we hope, the place of the Caribbean and West Indian English -- certainly it will provide a basis for certainty and acceptability of Caribbean words and structures and will be an advantage to teaching, and a basis for conversation in the region whereas the present situation is one of cultural insecurity and regionalism.

At the moment without this dictionary there is a vacant role and we will find that when the dictionary is compiled that dictionary we hope will fill the vacant role as an authentic record of the established freely cultural regions. Dr. Allsopp feels, and educationists in the Caribbean support him, that the absence of such a dictionary from the standard international dictionary is a disservice to the Caribbean people and culture, and to the English Language as a world language.

Now, I have got some more information here because I think this is important. The educational service of the dictionary to the region. You know that there is an increasing need for producing text books relevant to the nation's need and there is a great thrust, a great effort, to produce text books throughout the Caribbean. Whether these efforts are succeeding in other parts of the Caribbean I am not in a position to say but in Guyana, for which I can speak.

I think we are progressing in the task of producing textbooks. At the moment we are contracting for the writing of textbooks in Social Studies, in some of the subjects, and because we have the need to write our own texts, I think this Caribbean dictionary will provide a phonic Caribbean lexical reference. The people who are writing books will need to use the Dictionary, then for the Caribbean secondary school examination, the people who are concerned with examining – the examiners who are now being trained – will require the use of a phonic common record of established Caribbean usage and this dictionary will perform that service.

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I think I have been able to give members of the House, very briefly, what purpose the Dictionary of Caribbean Usage will serve in terms of education and in terms of the Caribbean culture. So I think the financial contribution made by this Government is money well-spent. The other territories are contributing to the project in some measure.

I think, Cde. Chairman, that the hon. Member is a bit confused with this issue of basic textbooks. It is important to note that the Government undertook to provide basic textbooks for

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children of secondary school age attending secondary schools. The provision of basic textbooks is free of cost, and I am advised that so far, children have received six basic textbooks for various subjects.

Why I am saying she is confusing the issue, is because if these basic books are intended to be free, there is no question of lowering price. Government is bearing the cost of the textbooks. There was a problem: we advised the Ministry of Trade and Consumer Protection to advise dealers to make available textbooks other than those which Government undertook to provide. The dealers failed to provide these textbooks and so Government has taken responsibility – and Government is happy to take responsibility – to order these books so that they can be supplied to schools. I shall repeat that. The basic textbooks were to be provided by Government, and dealers were given the responsibility to provide the other books so that they can keep in business. They did not accept their responsibility, I am reliably advised, so Government has undertaken to provide for the children.

I should like to point out, as the Cde. Minister of Information pointed out, that we have begun to introduce free education in Guyana. Members will remember that this was initiated by giving free exercise books and this was swiftly followed by providing free basic textbooks to secondary school children. As time goes by, provision for free education will be completed. Education is free at university level and perhaps I should remind members that from next year nursery school education will be introduced in the system and by nursery school I mean education provided for the children before they enter primary school. This free nursery school education will be offered to children between the ages of 3 years and 5 years 9 months, that is, during the period before they enter primary school. Books and materials will be free of cost.

At the moment, primary school children purchase books but this year the cost was reduced considerably because of Government's intervention. Government purchased the books in bulk – a very tremendous order – so that they could be provided to the parents at a low rate. I hope that I have answered the hon. Member's questions.

The Chairman: Items 24, 164 to 167, 168 to 171, 213; and item 2 on the Capital Estimates. Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Singh: I was going to ask a question on item 24, Head II Parliamentary Affairs, subhead 2, Transport and Travelling. \$500 is being requested “To provide for increase in personnel.” I was tempted to ask what increase of personnel there is, in respect of item 24.

Items 164 to 167. Item 164, Head 69 – Ministry of Health – Palms, subhead 1, Personal Emoluments. Items 165 and 166 are also Personal Emoluments under Head 70 – Ministry of Co-operatives and National Mobilisation and Ministry of Co-operatives and national Mobilisation (Local Government) respectively. Item 167. This is a small point on item 167 but maybe I should reiterate my point. This Miscellaneous vote, subhead 3, Ministry of Co-operatives and National Mobilisation (Local Government) was originally voted at \$10,857 and \$3,000 is now sought. The specific legend states:

“To provide for increased cost of maintenance of office equipment and purchasing of stationery from firms.”

Now stationery may be obtained from the Central Stationery Stores and if that Store does not have enough money to stock with stationery it should be given more money to do so. Why have Government Central Stationery Stores if Government Departments are going to be allowed to go outside and buy?

I have nothing to say on items 168, 169, 170, 171 and 213.

The Chairman: Items 2 and 41 on the Capital Estimates.

Mr. Singh: I have nothing, sir.

The Chairman: Cde. Minister of Parliamentary Affairs.

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Cde. Ramsaroop: Cde. Chairman, the item here is self-explanatory. I do not think I need to go any further. The legend “To provide for increase in Personnel” means to provide for increase in personnel of the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs. The other reference that has been made is with respect to purchases of stationery from firms. I am surprised that the hon. Leader of the Opposition, who was former Minister of Works and Hydraulics, has lost sight of the fact that at times the Government Stationery Department is out of stock.

The Chairman: Items 65 and 72; 91 to 208, 11, 12, 21 and 29.

Mr. Singh: I do not have any questions for items 65 and 72. My colleague perhaps has one question. Item 94, Head 34 – Ministry of Works & Housing (Works), subhead 19, Miscellaneous. The sum of \$20,000 was provided for miscellaneous works and services and the supplementary provision now sought is \$30,000. That is 150 percent increase “**to provide for unforeseen requests by various organisations for works and services.**” Could the Minister give us some idea of these unforeseen requests?

Item 96, Head 34 – Ministry of Works & Housing (Works), subhead 32, Central Stationery Store. The amount voted was \$478,500 and the supplementary provision now sought is \$100,000. The legend states: “Previous Provision inadequate due to increased costs.” There was a stage where the hon. Minister did not know whether the stores had the items or not but the legend states that stationery would be bought from outside stores. What a ridiculous state of affairs! The whole purpose of this Central Stationery Store, which was explained to me in detail when I took over as Minister of Works and Hydraulics, is to provide Government departments with stationery and things of that kind. If the stores in Water Street have it and the Ministry can go and buy it, then the Central Stationery Store can buy it also.

Item 105, subhead 5, deals with outstanding telephone accounts for the Head 37, Ministry of Works and Housing (Communications). This is the usual type of thing.

Item 107, Head 38, Ministry of Works and Housing (Communications), Post Office, subhead 7, Uniforms. I hope now that when this amount of \$28,210 is granted the postal employees will not have to work bare-footed. I am very glad to see that they are having an additional issue of shoes. I hope the shoes have been bought and issued to them already. *[Laughter]* That is the kind of reaction we get, laughter at the postmen's misfortune. It is a terrible state of affairs.

Item 198, Head 19, Ministry of Home Affairs, subhead 7 – Repatriation. The voted provision was \$12,000. We approved supplementary provision previously for \$2,000 more and now an additional amount of \$6,000 is sought for to provide for unforeseen additional expenditure. Could the hon. Minister expand on that? What is this unforeseen additional expenditure? This explanation is too bald.

Item 201, Head 19, Ministry of Home Affairs, Subhead 16, Republic Day Celebrations. The sum of \$25,000 had been voted for the Republic Day Celebrations. It was what the hon. Minister of Finance, I would expect, considered to be adequate to meet the cost of Republic Day Celebrations. Now we are being asked to vote another \$19,200 and we are told that the previous provision was inadequate. Obviously, what is necessary is for the celebrations to be planned to keep within the amount of money voted. We must stop this business of merely overspending all that is provided and then coming to ask for more. In future, let us provide a sum of money and let the Ministry or Committee concerned be told that they must keep within the amount of money voted and not overspend.

Item 202, Head 19 – Ministry of Home Affairs, subhead 17 – National Honours. The amount voted was \$4,000 and the supplementary provision now sought is \$8,900. The legend states: "Previous provision inadequate." This may be a new order of badges or something

along those lines. I do not know but, perhaps, the hon. Minister would like to tell us why this is unforeseen and what is this amount to pay for now

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Items 11 and 12 deal with the Corentyne Toll Stations and I just want to mention something I noticed from having gone up to Corentyne and passed through the toll stations. If you leave one toll station and you go just a short distance and you come back you have to pay another dollar. So if you leave the toll station and you go down the road and come through back you have to pay twice. I think that does operate as a hardship to those people who live on one side of the toll station and merely want to go a short distance away further down to visit a relative perhaps and then come back. What I would like the hon. Minister to look at is some sort of system whereby, if it is possible, you can, when they come back they - - [*Cde. Hope: "They must walk."*] Will the hon. Minister please listen? I am making a suggestion. You can reject it when you have listened to me. It cannot be rejected unless you listen to it.

I will continue after the hon. Minister has finished his discourse. [*Cde. Hope: "They can walk."*]

The Chairman: Will the hon. Minister please permit the Leader of the Opposition to carry on.

Mr. Singh: The point I am making is that people who live near the toll stations and have to go a mile and a mile and a half away, have to pay twice. I would like the hon. Minister to look at some system whereby when they are coming back they can show the ticket that they have paid before and on the basis of that ticket they can pay not a dollar but perhaps 25 cents or 50 cents for the second closing if they are merely going to a point between the two toll stations. Some system along those lines could be adopted to help to ease the hardship which these people are

experiencing at the moment. It seems, to my mind, unfair that the hon. Minister should sit in his seat and merely shout out, “**Rejected**”, in respect of anything to do with the Corentyne toll road. It smacks of the kind of callous attitudes which one perhaps has to those particular people living in that area. This is not the best thing for the kind of egalitarian society which we are talking about in Guyana. If we are going to talk about egalitarian society, if we are going to talk about hearing people’s views, consultative democracy and the rest of it, then one would expect that these kinds of suggestions would be listened to and would be given some kind of consideration rather than have the Minister merely shouting “Rejected” from his seat. That is an area where traditionally P.N.C. has not been able to get a significant amount of votes. I think this is a wrong attitude. I say that because that seems to be the rationale which is the deciding factor in respect of the imposition of tolls on the Corentyne Road. That is very wrong.

The Chairman: I think you are on the Capital estimates.

Mr. Singh: Sir, I don’t know if it is possible, for us to have some details in respect of the purchase of miscellaneous equipment under item 21, Division XXI – Ministry of Works and Housing (Works), subhead 11 – Equipment. The Ministry is asking for \$1,337,658 for purchase of miscellaneous equipment. We would like some details.

Item 24, under the same Division, subhead 22, Quarry. The sum of \$756,000 was originally voted and the supplementary provision now sought is \$2½ million. The legend states, “To reactivate the quarry at Kaituma, North West Region.” Obviously, to reactivate the quarry would cost a lot of money. The \$2½ million is not to my mind unreasonable for reactivating a quarry but what we would like to know from the hon. Minister is the reason or the motivation for reactivating this quarry at Kaituma. There must be some reason for it bearing in mind, of course, that lots of money was spent on opening up Glasgow/Teperu Quarry. The Glasgow/Teperu quarry is in operation and I think the Makouria quarry is still in operation also, so that this will be the third quarry in Kaituma at a cost of \$2½ million as shown here. Could the hon. Minister say why?

And the other one is Special Projects, Item 27. Can the hon. Minister give us some idea of additional projects. The legend states: **“To complete additional projects.”**

Mrs. DaSilva: With your permission I just have three items so that the hon. Minister will have the whole thing together.

The first question deals with items 65 to 72 which cover the Ministry of Home Affairs. It is a general question of the Minister of Home Affairs who is always very good at answering questions and tries to give an explanation to the nation. I should like the hon. Minister of Home Affairs to tell this House what is being done about the lock-up at Brickdam, (not the Prison) where the women are kept. For example, if they are arrested and charged this morning and they can't appear in court before tomorrow morning, they are put in this room at the Police Station in Brickdam. My information is that the condition of the Women's lock-up is appalling. The Ministry has been pushing the Government propaganda. The Minister said he was concerned about people, and these women are people, this is International Women's Year and I would not keep an animal in conditions similar to those in which they are kept. The Guyana Society for the prevention of cruelty to animals would come in and support me I am sure. The water is dripping down from the room above, the food is bad, the stench is appalling, and the women have to stay there until the next morning when they appear before court and the case is tried. Could the hon. Minister please tell this House what is being done about this room in which these women are kept?

I would have gone on at great length but I think the Minister has got the idea. I do not have to spell out all the terrible horrors. I don't think I ought to talk about it but I thought we had finished with Belsen and the concentration camps we had during the war. To think that we talk about socialism and egalitarianism in and all the other “isms” that this Government rams down the throats of citizens and conditions like this would be allowed to continue.

Item 93, Head 34 – Ministry of Works and Housing (Works) subhead 18 – Subsidy to Guyana. We have already had \$2,500,000 voted and a supplementary provision is now sought of \$1,230,000. The legend states: **“to provide for an increase in subsidy.”** I use this to ask the Minister to give this House and nation some information as to when the people who live in the area of the East Coast between Golden Grove and Low Lands are going to get the pure water supply? As everybody knows, the well has broken down. I hope that those concerned have learnt from this too. It was an old well, 18 years old. I am not an engineer but it is a simple thing, I understand. You put too much pressure in it and this causes the well to burst and cave in. If you wear a dress that is too tight you pop the seams. I hope those concerned have learnt from this experience and will not try to put additional pressure into wells that cannot take it. Go about it correctly installing and putting in new wells with proper pipes, so that it does not happen again. They have to learn from their experience. But it is very hard to get this across to the Members on Government because their heads are so thick.

[Mrs. DaSilva continued]

8 p.m.

But could they tell us in the mean time sir, what is the position of the well at Victoria? I believe that they will sink a new one but I think this has to be done by the Community Centre. We would like to know how soon this will be done and how soon the residents could expect water.

We always believe in paying honour where honour is due and I do feel that praise and honour should be given to the members of the Fire Brigade who bring up the tenders every day to supply villagers with water. The situation is very hard on the villagers but we realise that it is one of the things that happen. We do not want it to happen in another village. The wells should be constructed in a proper way. The Fire Brigade is doing an excellent job and I do hope they can keep it up. We would like to have some information on that situation.

The last question I have to ask is on item 201, Head 19 – Ministry of Home Affairs – subhead 16, Republic Day Celebrations which the Leader of the Opposition spoke about. \$25,000 is the voted provision and now we are asked to vote a supplementary provision of \$19,200 because the previous voted provision is in-adequate. The hon. Leader of the Opposition dealt with this very ably but I would like to go further than what he has said. We are not children. A birthday party is for little children. We are big people. We talk about being a nation and we need every cent to uplift ourselves. Do we need to have Republic Celebrations every year?

We talk about our Caribbean cousins. Even the hon. Minister of Finance has announced that we are going to get \$200 a year to go and visit our Caribbean cousins. I am talking about the Caribbean specifically. The object of Caricom is: that we learn from each other economically, socially and culturally. Let us copy from our Caribbean cousins in Trinidad who do not have freeness every year to have birthday celebrations in Trinidad. They have it every 5 or 10 years.

We can do it every 5 years. Mr. Corrica can write his calypsos for Christmas. Let us use this money for health and education or even give it to the Ministry of Information and Culture for its publishing and publicising.

Cde. Minister of Home Affairs. (Cde. Mingo): Cde. Chairman, may I deal first with the questions raised by the hon. Member Mrs. DaSilva. On the question of the lock-up at Brickdam, I wish to inform her that another lady present in this House did bring to the attention of the Ministry, the condition of the lock-up at Brickdam. Since that good lady did this we were able to look at it and I can tell Members that conditions have been improved considerably because some work has been done.

On the question of the subsidy to Guywa, may I inform the hon. Member that efforts are being made especially on the East Coast Demerara to put these wells in order and the Ministry of Works is doing its utmost to ensure that this is done. Drilling equipment will very shortly be coming in and we hope to have that situation corrected.

On the question of Republic Day Celebrations, this provision in the estimates is not really provision for this year. Cabinet had, in July 1972, granted approval to be made under Head 19, Ministry of Home Affairs, subhead 13, Republic Day Celebrations, to accommodate the issue of flags and some other little things like those for Republic Day Celebrations from the Supply Division of the Ministry of Works and Communications. The issues were regarded as loans instead of being charged by the Ministry of Works, so we are now trying to regularise this by bringing this supplementary provision to pay off the arrear since this expenditure stands as unauthorised by the Ministry of Works.

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(Cde. Mingo continued)

8.10 p.m.

With respect to the remarks made by the hon. Member in respect of Republic Day Celebrations, I know that all the Caribbean territories that have become Independent or are enjoying Republican status have annual celebrations. I do not think we are alone in this regard. Even if this were not so, it was not necessary for us to follow them; we always set the pace. Next year we will have bigger celebrations as we will be celebrating the Tenth Anniversary of Independence.

I now come to the questions raised by the hon. Member Mr. Feilden Singh on item 94, subhead 19, Miscellaneous – Works and Services. He wanted to know what work was done. I am quite happy to mention a few: Work was done at the St. Stanislaus College Compound, the Uncle Eddie's Home and at various charitable organisations. Lorries were hired to give assistance to various organisations. This provision is needed for things of that sort.

Item 202, subhead 17, National Honours. The Secretary of the Office of the President has requested that arrangements should be made for the purchase of certain things. For instance, we have two hundred Efficiency Medals and things of this sort amounting to over \$800. The provision previously provided was not adequate and so we have sought to get this new provision to be able to meet the request of the President to have these things done.

Item 198, Ministry of Home Affairs, subhead 7 – Repatriation. The sum sought here was queried. This year we find that there is an unusual number of Guyanese who have to be repatriated to this country and it is necessary, therefore, to have this extra provision. For instance, we had anticipated that by the end of this year we should have spent \$2,000 in repatriation but the provision was found to be inadequate. We seek now to get extra provision so that we can do our duty. We have to do our duty to bring back our Guyanese. I hope the hon.

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Member Mrs. DaSilva who likes to talk about people leaving Guyana would also talk about the people coming back to Guyana.

Capital Estimates, item 21, subhead 11 – Equipment. I wish to state that this miscellaneous equipment comes from the United Kingdom and it includes such heavy vehicle like Caterpillar Tractors, Caterpillar Bulldozers, Diesel trailers, Bedford trucks and things of that sort. The hon. Member Mr. Singh also asked what are the special projects, subhead 28 – item 27, Capital Estimates. Lights were installed at the Wismar Community Centre and other things of this nature were done.

On the question of the quarry, there should be no anticipation that we would activate the quarry at the middle of the year. But when we look at the development taking place in the North West District, we see the need to have the quarry there activated. That is why this amount of money is being sought. I think this answers all the questions.

The Chairman: This completes consideration of all the items.

Question –

That the Committee of Supply approve of the Proposals set out in financial Paper No. 4/1975 – Schedule of Supplementary Provisions for Current and Capital Estimates for the period ending 31st August, 1975, totalling \$75,589,809.

Put, and agreed to.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Hope: Your Honour, I beg to report that the Committee of Supply has approved of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 4/1975 – Schedule of Supplementary Provision for

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Current and Capital Estimates, totalling \$75,589,809, for the period ending 31st August, 1975, and I now move that the Assembly doth agree with the Committee in the said Resolution.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

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

[Mr. Ramsaroop]

Adjourned accordingly at 8.18 p.m.
