

THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
OFFICIAL REPORT
[VOLUME 7]

**PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE FIRST SESSION OF THE NATIONAL
ASSEMBLY OF THE THIRD PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE
CONSTITUTION OF GUYANA**

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| 13th Sitting | 2 p.m. | Wednesday, 7th November, 1973 |
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MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Speaker

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

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

The Hon. L.F.S. Burnham, O.E., S.C.,
Prime Minister **(Absent)**

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

Senior Ministers (7)

The Hon. H.D. Hoyte, S.C., **(Absent – on leave)**
Minster of Works and Communications

*The Hon. S.S. Ramphal, S.C., **(Absent)**
Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Justice

*The Hon. H Green, **(Absent)**
Minister of Co-operatives and National Mobilisation

***Non-elected Ministers**

*The Hon. H.O. Jack, **(Absent)**
Minister of Energy and Natural Resources

*The Hon. F.E. Hope,
Minister of Finance

*Dr. the Hon. K.F.S. King,
Minister of Economic Development

*The Hon. S.S. Naraine, A.A.,
Minister of Housing

Ministers (6)

The Hon. W.G. Carrington,
Minister of Labour

The Hon. Miss S.M. Field-Ridley,
Minister of Information and Culture **(Absent – on leave)**

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

*The Hon. Miss C.L. Baird, **(Absent)**
Minister of Education

*Dr. the Hon. O. M. R. Harper, **(Absent)**
Minister of Health

*The Hon. G. A. King
Minister of Trade

Ministers of State (9)

The Hon. M. Kasim, A.A.,
Minister of State for Agriculture

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

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

***Non-elected Ministers**

The Hon. C. A. Nascimento,
Minister of State, Office of the Prime Minister

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

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

*The Hon. W. Haynes,
Minister of State – Regional (Mazaruni/Potaro) **(Absent)**

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

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

Parliamentary Secretaries (8)

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

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

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

Mr. E.L. Ambrose
Parliamentary Secretary (Agriculture),
Ministry of National Development and Agriculture

Mr. K. B. Bancroft,
Parliamentary Secretary (Hinterland),
Ministry of National Development and Agriculture

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

***Non-elected Ministers**

Mr. J. P. Chowritmootoo,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Education

Mr. R. H. O. Corbin,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of
Co-operatives and National Mobilisation

Other Members (18)

Mr. J.N. Aaron
Mrs. L. M. Branco
Mr. M. Corrica
Mr. E.H.A. Fowler
Miss J. Gill
Mr. W. Hussain
Miss S. Jaiserrisingh
Mr. K. M. E. Jonas
Mr. M. Nissar
Dr. L. E. Ramsahoye
Mr. J. G. Ramson
Mrs. P. A. Rayman
Mr. E. M. Stoby, J.P.
Mr. S. H. Sukhu, M.S., J.P.
Mr. C. Sukul, J.P.
Mr. H. A. Taylor
Mr. R.C. Van Sluytman
Mrs. L.E. Willems

Members of the Opposition

Liberty Party (2)

Mr. M. F. Singh, Deputy Speaker
Mrs. E. DaSilva

OFFICERS

Clerk of the National Assembly – Mr. F.A. Narain
Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly – Mr. M. B. Henry, AMBIM.

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National Assembly

2.10 – 2.15 p.m.

2.10 p.m.

PRAYERS

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

LEAVE TO MEMBER

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been granted to the Hon. Minister of Works and Communications for today's sitting.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS ETC.

The following papers were laid:

- a) Annual Report of the Ministry of Communications for the year 1971.
- b) Annual Report of the Ministry of Works and Communications (Communications) for the year 1972. [**The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House on behalf of the Minister of Works and Communications**]

PUBLIC BUSINESS

BILL- SECOND READING

GUYANA RICE BOARD (AMENDMENT) BILL 1973

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to amend the Rice Marketing Ordinance.” [**The Deputy Prime Minister of National Development and Agriculture**]

The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Development and Agriculture (Dr. Reid): Mr. Speaker, in moving the Second Reading of this Bill I wish to observe that this is a matter that was under consideration for a very long time. I believe that by now most people who are interested in the rice industry have come to the agreement that this is the time to have just one organization to carry the entire rice industry instead of two.

I wish, however, to trace briefly, the development of the rice industry in Guyana so that this House would appreciate the long road over which the rice industry has travelled and its present stage of development because from the early 19th century to the present time the rice industry has always been the third most important export industry.

The other industries that take precedence over the rice industry are, of course, sugar and bauxite. But the rice industry, in itself, is very meaningful, unlike some of the others. It involves a large number of people. As a matter of fact I believe that it creates more impact than any other economic activity in this country. It is well known that some 45,000 families are involved in the rice industry and, indirectly, many other thousands earn their living through the rice industry when we think of the thousands of people employed in the transportation service, and in recent times the development of roads and canal in the name of the rice industry, plus the marketing of the rice that has developed over the years. As a matter of fact, in this country of ours there is more land used for rice than any other activity.

There are 300,000 acres and this is about twice the amount used for sugar. For the sugar industry is only involved in about 150,000 acres. We do not pass a day in Guyana without thinking about rice. It is eaten by most, if not all of us.

From the by-products of this industry we get some of our stockfeed and, in recent times, more things are happening with the product from the rice industry. We will come to that a little later. After all, our pig industry, our poultry industry, our dairy industry, all these industries depend to a greater or lesser extent on the rice industry and the total value of the assets of the rice industry is in terms of millions of dollars. When you consider the land, when you consider drainage and irrigation facilities and the other infrastructure, when you think of the mills, the field equipment, transport services, the buildings and all the relevant capital goods that must be employed to service to service the rice industry, the total is somewhere about two hundred million dollars. In 1972 alone some twenty-five million dollars were earned by export through the rice industry. And it is good to note that that figure has been the highest export earnings this industry ever secured in Guyana.

2.15 p.m.

And so we come to the present organizations that serve this industry. Of course, the industry itself falls in the Ministry of National Development and Agriculture, supervised like some of the other Corporations, by Guystac. But unlike some other corporations, every Ministry in one way or the other is involved in the rice industry. All our activities on the coast are concerned with the rice industry, whether it is communications, roads, drainage and irrigation, co-operative, community development, labour relations, education, information, public health, banking, local government, in any field of endeavour on the coastland there must be some relationship to the rice industry.

But the two organizations that are directly involved in the rice industry are the well-known Guyana Rice Marketing Board and the Guyana Rice Corporation. I wish to say a word about the Guyana Rice Marketing Board. This organization was established under Ordinance No.5 of 1946 as the only buying and selling agency for rice produced in what was then known as British Guiana. Before this happened in 1946, this single buying and single selling function during World War II was performed by a Government agency and this agency operated under the Defence Regulations. That was a long time ago.

Today, the Board undertakes several activities, many of them probably in those days were never dreamt about as coming under the Rice Marketing Board. The Board is now responsible for purchasing all the rice produced in Guyana, except a few specific quantities that may be permitted under the Ordinance and retained by farmers for domestic consumption. The Board is involved in the fixing of prices to producers so that we ensure high quality and good quantity of production.

The Board is involved in the sale of rice to the local markets. More than that, it is the Board that is responsible for the export of all the rice from Guyana. This Board represents the Government of Guyana that deals with the Commonwealth Caribbean countries, in addition to any other customer that we may wish to supply. Because of these marketing commitments this Board itself has certain other functions to do. Unlike past years, the product must be one that is acceptable to our consumers abroad, a product that is clean and of a high quality, no odour

whatever, the grains must be of a certain form and style. Marketing is a very complex and intricate matter. Thus this Board itself must do not only storage as is common in many marketing organizations but also blending of the various grades so that our customers can get just that quality of rice that they wish; that is, if they need a certain percentage of broken rice in what they buy they must get that. The Board is responsible for doing that.

The Board must sell rice of a high quality, as I said a while ago, not like the olden days when customers complained about the quality and odour of the rice, the colour and that kind of thing. This Board must be involved in cleaning and re-milling, separating the impurities. Some years ago rice was sent to a particular country; when the customers opened the sacks all sorts of things were found being passed on them as rice. This Board was not really operating then. The story goes that some of our rice industry men went to the particular country to take note of the delivery and they had to go in hiding because their very lives were threatened; all sorts of things were found in the sacks-stones and everything to make the weight and those customers were so annoyed that our men had to go in hiding.

This Board does not allow that to happen anymore; all the impurities are properly separated. Even the size of the grain has to be specific. It would be interesting, if Hon. Members of the House have not done so yet, to make a visit to the Rice Marketing Board. They will see something going on there they might interpret for obeah because it is like magic. They would see some complex devices that can really separate the grains so that we can get the exact specifications. It is like magic, but do not go there and call it obeah. [**Mrs. DaSilva:** “I was there yesterday.”]

This Board also has to do with the utilization of the by-products of the industry. I do not think we have any samples around today, but perhaps one of these days the Executive Chairman of the Board might want to bring some samples, but the produce is sold so quickly that we do not need to advertise. I speak of the broken rice that is used not only for the brewing of beer but for the manufacture of Ricewah that is commonly known as rice wine, a very delicious wine.

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In addition to that, we have the machinery for the manufacture of rice flour. As I have already given notice in this House, before long the wheaten flour that we use will have to be blended with high quality, high protein rice flour manufactured at the Rice Marketing Board.

2.25 p.m.

And then, we are involved in the production, not only of the by-product that goes into the making of livestock feed, but the Board itself is manufacturing livestock feed and this country depends on the mill, managed by the Board, for all its pig feed. So we have seen this Board has made from the days of British Guiana to the present time under this Independent Co-operative Republic of Guyana, the great strides.

But the Board is still doing other things. In recent years, the Board has extended its activities outside of the marketing of rice and it is the Board that imports and distributes the majority of rice to farmers in this country, the fertilizers that they must use, the insecticides and the weedicides, so you can see the volume of work that this Board must do.

When we consider that over the past five years imports of these have risen annually from a few thousand dollars to over three and a half million dollars one must include that the Board must handle a vast volume of supplies, without which there can be no economic rice industry.

The Board even does more than that. Until the Agricultural Bank come into being, it was the Board that carried the credit for the farmers, both short term and long term, and even now notwithstanding the presence of the Bank, the Board is still involved in some of this work over the transition period. For example, during this year alone the Board extended credit to the tune of some \$4,000,000 to our rice farmers and one would think that at this stage that was enough activity for the Board, but not so. The Board is spread out like a good parent. It is taking care of other organizations and so the Board takes care of the organization known as the Guyana Rice Corporation. It is the Board that finances the Guyana Rice Corporation to get into the business of rice production, so it does not only do marketing now.

The rice industry is involved in producing its own rice as an organization, and the Rice Corporation does this. It is this Rice Corporation that must do all the research and this work is being paid for by the Board.

The Board does, through the Corporation, the production and distribution of pure line-seed paddy and any subsidies that must go to the farmers. Any long term credit that goes through the Rice Corporation must be financed by the Rice Marketing Board. But more than that: this Board is able, through its own financial resources, to undertake capital development programme involving such things as the erection of a modern packaging plant. I again repeat, I invite Members to see that plant. The purchase of rice mills and of feed factory is indeed quite a credit to the Board and to those who manage it.

We can at this stage probably compare, in financial terms, how the rice industry has progressed. We have selected two periods- the period from 1960 to 1967 to 1973 and there is reason for this selection. Until late 1965 the industry was managed in a particular way, a change was made in 1965 and in 1966 a new method came into being where the Government was fully responsible for the membership of the Board. When we look at 1960 to 1966 the loss for the rice industry was \$5.7 million. At this stage it is good to pause to remind ourselves of the state the rice industry was in when P.N.C. came into Government for the first time at the end of 1961. It was then a coalition Government. Our U.F. Partners had to run away from this onerous task. This is a task for men, not for boys. Boys ran out and men are now left to carry on the job. But during that period, and probably because of the coalition, we could not really save the industry so there was a total loss of \$5.7 million to 1966. In 1967 the rice industry came under the direct control of the P.N.C. side of the Government.

Our coalition partner had no real interest in rice farmers. That is the summary of the story. You must have interest in rice farmers to change this picture, and when we really shed of this partnership- do not get a shock, brace yourselves, hold your heart so that this good news really does not shock- the profit during those years amounted to \$13.1 million. **[Mr. Singh:** “Where did it go?”]

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2.35 – 2.45 p.m.

My good friend has asked what has happened to this money. I always say it is so easy to hear without being able to understand, for if my friend had understood all that I was saying, he would have understood what has happened to that money. When we talk of millions of dollars of inputs to service the industry, when we talk of the works in drainage and irrigation, and all sorts of things, he still at this stage would wish to ask what has happened to all that money.

That is not the whole story, because the Board has achieved financial success hand in hand with the increased prosperity of the rice farmers in the community, and the farmers themselves have been receiving the highest prices ever in the history of this industry. Apart from the services they obtain and the subsidy, there is the programme that is carried to the rice farmers, so that the farmers themselves have gained, having got now better understanding of the work they do. What is more, the local consumer- we want consumers all over this country to know this- has been paying the same price for rice over the last ten years. Quite an achievement for this industry to provide this local market with the staple diet with no price change upwards for some ten years!

With regard to management, the policy of this Government has been to select a majority of persons of wide interest, impartiality, and with business acumen, to serve on the board of directors. We support them with professional managers with the necessary training and experience. Sometimes, because of arrangements, we have had to accommodate certain persons on the board. We hope in time we not to have any such arrangement.

So now we come to the Guyana Rice Corporation. I have been talking about the Rice Marketing Board. The predecessor of the Rice Corporation, as we all know, was the British Guiana, later Guyana, Rice Development Company Ltd. It was a private company owned by Government and the Rice Marketing Board. It was incorporated on the 27th December, 1952. The Rice Development Company was concerned mainly with the operation of two large rice mills, one at Mahaicony/Abary and the other at Anna Regina. Also, the Rice Development Company was concerned with growing some rice at Mahaicony/Abary. I should mention that in recent times the Guyana Rice Corporation has been growing rice not only at Mahaicony/Abary but also Anna Regina and at Black Bush Polder.

In the late 1960's, the Rice Development Company began to engage in an increasing number of activities which required a wider legal mandate, and a stronger financial management than was intended for the company. Thus, through these pressures, or change, there came about the Guyana Rice Corporation under Order No. 33 of 1969, under the Public Corporations Ordinance No. 23 of 1962. Thus the Rice Development Company was absorbed by the new organisation, the Guyana Rice Corporation. And these are some of the activities of the present Guyana Rice Corporation.

I spoke just now about two mills. This new organisation operates some seven rice mills. These mills are located at Black Bush Polder, where we have three. At one time they were not functioning, but since the P.N.C. Government came into office in 1968, these mills at Black Bush Polder that were destroyed by vandals and other people have been rehabilitated and now function. We also have a mill at Mahaicony/Abary, we have a new mill at Belmont; another at Cane Grove that was at one time operated by some farmers. They got into difficulties and the Rice Corporation came to their assistance. We also have the mill at Anna Regina.

We cultivate rice now, not only at Mahaicony/Abary but also at Black Bush Polder and at McNabb. McNabb is an area around the Anna Regina district. Then we have facilities for drying and storing padi. We call them padi drying and storing centres. We operate four of these and the construction of these facilities cost some \$17 million. They are located at Ruimzigt, Wakenaam, Mahaicony/Abary, and at Anna Regina. We hope in the near future to have two more, one at Black Bush Polder and one at Somerset and Berks. For those who do not know where Somerset and Berks is, I would like to tell them that it is a district on the Essequibo Coast. Not too far from my home village.

This Rice Corporation also undertakes research into rice production at Mon Repos and several other places. The Corporation is actually in the process of constructing new facilities at Mahaicony/Abary. This will be one of the largest rice research stations. It will cost some \$4 million. Some people never like to hear about research, but in an industry like this, unless we keep with the changing times, with new varieties, new methods of cultivation, new methods of husbandry we will be like the little store that thought it was all right, until the supermarket came

into being and removed it out of existence. This rice industry is keeping up with the changes, because what variety is good for one generation is quite out of place for another generation, as we found for ourselves a few years ago when we faced a real difficulty. When the husbandry was changed from manual labour to heavy machines, people were still endeavouring to cultivate old varieties that were not bred for that type of husbandry.

Go along with research which is different from old-time-research. In the old-fashioned research, the scientist never found himself in the field. Now in our rice industry, all our scientists find a place in the field with the farmers, getting into the muddy rice fields and doing some of the work in the presence of the farmers. We take the research to the man who must make the best use of it.

2.45 p.m.

I mentioned too that the Guyana Rice Corporation is involved in the production, cleansing and distribution of high quality seed paddy. There was a time when very little seed paddy was used. But today when compared with 1963, farmers are using ten times as much seed paddy as they used in those days.

The Guyana Rice Corporation must also operate some of the means of production and so we have tractors and combines located at every point along the coastal belt and more and more pressure is being extended upon the Corporation to do more and more of this work.

The joint administration with the Guyana Rice Marketing Board creates programme for sale and production of commodities, and the work of the now famous Rice Action Committee is to provide the technical services and infrastructural facilities of the rice industry. So that while the Guyana Rice Marketing Board is concerned primarily with marketing functions the Guyana Rice Corporation undertakes managing production functions.

I would like to observe here that the work of the Guyana Rice Corporation facilitates most farmers in some way or the other. It might be through a supply of seeds. It might be through supervising the ploughing of their fields. It might be in the reaping of their paddy. It might be

showing them how to spray to get rid of the pests, and all sorts of things, as well as paying them properly when they sell their paddy.

The mills that the Guyana Rice Corporation operates produce 30 per cent of the net total output of our rice industry. But we want you to know here, without any excuse that the Guyana Rice Corporation has experienced a history of operating losses which were due to the number of activities undertaken by the Guyana Rice Corporation. Subsidy for the Guyana Rice Corporation must ensure that the farmers get assistance so that production can go on, so that we can produce better qualities of paddy, for years we were wrestling with this- three years of great difficulty- years of learning for the farmers and for the manager. We see now those years of trouble coming to an end because farmers, on the one hand, appreciate and the value of this work. The farmers are changing now to better husbandry, better variety. And so on the 31st of August this year was the first time the Guyana Rice Corporation achieved viability for the first time. It is indeed an achievement for the Guyana Rice Corporation when we remember where that Corporation started and all that it stood for during those years. This brings us now to the merger.

I have gone through all that history so that we can all be aware of the importance of the rice industry and the importance and value of changes that must go on from time to time. The time has come when those organizations must be one because the Guyana Rice Marketing Board and the Guyana Rice Corporation share a common objective.

was a time when the Guyana Rice Marketing Board used to contend that it was making profit and it was doing well and it had no part with the Guyana Rice Corporation. It took us some time and some measure of understanding to accept the fact that unless we have large quantities of paddy produced in this country then the Guyana Rice Marketing Board cannot gain. How can a Board make money if there is no paddy to sell? You know when equals are in two organizations contradiction goes on and the wrestling goes on and the people who are in the best position never want to give in. They always want to stand up on the hill top and stay up there all the time. So it was difficult to put into effect but from what I have said there is this common understanding even though the rice industry does not come under one organization. It still has these two

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institutions. But the two institutions belong to the people of Guyana as represented by the Government and an agent. The whole industry belongs to the people of Guyana.

Probably it was unwise from earlier years to have supported this division but we cannot sometimes tell all that would happen, but now we have realized that it would be better to have one organisation. This Government has long considered this union and indicated its intention in practical terms by appointing in 1967- and you will remember I called no dates before 1967-1973- and from since 1967 Government saw the wisdom in appointing one person as Chairman of both organizations. That is one reason why I put that period 1967-1973 separate from 1960-1966. This was a fundamental change- one Chairman- because it was always difficult to let these two organizations work together. It was difficult because of the reason that there were two Chairmen. So that we also appointed a number of persons in both the Corporation and the Board, functioning on both organizations, so there was this merger taking place. We are therefore dealing with a merger that has resulted from a long common law partnership and we agree with that common law partnership. Now it is quite successful.

2.55 p.m.

Was a common law arrangement which came through a proper acknowledgement and there was also this period of exciting courtship- and I am giving this advice to my friend on the other side, if he wants to get into any type of relationship before confirming it, it must go through its various stages. That is what we have done with these two organizations. We had the living together in common law partnership and now we are coming to this House to have the marriage. This legislation, after the merger, was delayed somewhat because we wished to ensure that the Rice Corporation achieves financial viability.

Today, we are happy to say that the Rice Corporation has achieved the desirous status in the crop year just ended. This is the right to regularize all these arrangements. The framework under which the new joint organization will work will ensure greater efficiency generally. It should achieve the more effective use of \$60 million worth of assets and combined manpower of about 2,000 employees. The mobilization of these resources should result in better service to the

national effort- and our interest is in the farming community- particularly in the rice farming community.

The Board of the new organization will embrace a wide spectrum of interests and will comprise men of action and ability dedicated to build and not to destroy. We have had the experience of a few people. We are hoping that we will have people who are dedicated to build and to destroy and whose purpose it is to serve the industry and the people of Guyana.

I will tell you how the industry will therefore be organized on the merger of the Board. The Minister of National Development and Agriculture will be responsible for formulating and guiding the execution of the overall policy for the industry. Other specialized Ministries and agencies of the Government will discharge their respective duties to the industry such as in the fields of drainage and irrigation or co-operatives, but the Rice Board will implement the Ministry's policy for the industry by providing all the services the required from production through all the stages to marketing including, but not limited to, the hire of equipment for land preparation, the production of seed, the supply of fertilizers and pesticides, the hire of harvesting machines, storing of harvested paddy, rice milling, transportation of rice, marketing, industrial use of by-products, research to discover methods of increasing yield and quality and educational services.

The Rice Producers' Association which was set up by Government under Ordinance No.7 of 1945 to organize farmers and to educate and represent them has long abandoned the high purposes of its conception and charted its own course of self-destruction by embracing subversion, civil resistance, political affiliation and public mischief. Thus, the conduct of officers of the Association, both on and off the Rice Marketing Board has undermined the business of the Board and created difficulties in its relationships with farmers and consumers.

Rice Action Committees which came into existence in 1969 and which have already achieved much in rice producing areas will be increasing in number and strengthened by additional producer and pertinent representation. These Committees which bring together the representatives of all official agencies operating in rice growing districts, members of local authorities, co-operatives and practicing farmers, millers and other interests will work at the

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2.55 – 3.05 p.m.

grass-roots level mobilizing all local human and physical resources to achieve better and greater production. These Committees will be adequately financed by the Board and a number of seats on the Board will be assigned to their members.

Finally, the Guyana State Corporation will oversee the Rice Board and will ensure that its operations are conducted efficiently and in accordance with its established procedures for personnel management, financial control, and business administration, so that it can play an even greater role in Guyana's Development.

The arrangements outlined represent the beginning of a new phase in the forward march of our rice industry and promises an even more rewarding life for all who depend upon it for a better quality of life.

Thus, Mr. Speaker, in moving the Second Reading I wish to emphasise that the actual merger of those two organizations have already been effected in practice and we have come to this House to regularize this arrangement.

Question proposed.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member Mr. Ambrose.

The Parliamentary Secretary, (Agriculture) Ministry of National Development and Agriculture (Mr. Ambrose): Mr. Speaker, I rise to second this Bill and to support very strongly the many views expressed by the Hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture.

3.05 p.m.

Some of us twenty years ago had rejected this idea of two separate organizations in the rice industry.

Some of us did say many years ago that it was not a practical thing to have two captains steering one single ship. Time has proven us right because when we take into account the events in the last twenty years, we see clearly how much the rice industry has suffered and how much the rice farmers have suffered because of the separate organizations pulling and dragging against

each other. When one looks into the functions of both of these organizations way back, one sees clearly that their objectives were the same but still, in many ways, they were separated, in many ways they fought each other to better compare profits.

The Rice Development Company bought paddy, processed it to rice, sent it to the Rice Marketing Board where the rice was milled, bagged and sold to the Rice Marketing Board, which was the main buying and selling organization, and from that the rice Board prepared the very rice for the export market. Two sets of handling charges, two sets of transportation facilities. All along the industry suffered and the farmers suffered. Two Boards of Directors, two Chairman, each applying to its opponents and so everything went wrong.

If I remember carefully in 1952-1953 when the R.M.C. came into being, some \$5 million was invested in that Company. In the short period of ten years, \$5 million was actually paid for losses and overdraft in the Banks and still 1960 when the Government made those substantial changes some \$9 million had to be written off. In that fifteen year period of loss of nearly \$15 million had accumulated all to the detriment of the rice industry and the rice farming community. Nothing good came out. As I said at the beginning, some of us said it was a wrong step at the start. Then came this heaven to the Government in 1969 when the Bill was actually introduced in this House and the change was made. The Minister went to some length to discuss the various benefits which accrued from those changes. I would only like to say, Mr. Speaker, that because of these changes, the composition of the Board itself was made.

Before 1967, the Board appointed members from a particular political party. In 1964-1965 that particular political party lost political control in this country and because of this it was clearly seen what took place at the rice industry level. Some of at the Rice Marketing Board were bona fide rice farmers in those years, but our decisions had to be based on political grounds. Many decisions which were taken were not in the general interest of the rice farming community and the rice industry as a whole. Therefore, the first thing that was done in 1967 was to see that people were put here who were prepared to serve the rice industry so that the business of the rice industry would've properly taken care of.

The purchasing and trading policies of both organizations were also changed. Rather than the G.R.C. selling to the Board and the Board blending and reselling, the G.R.C. carried out its own blending, its own milling process and employed its own trading expert for the export trade. Therefore, this too was a major reason for the profits that came later. In this way, the Board and the G.R.C. could extend credit facilities to small and big farmers, they also were able to extend their machinery on hire service. It was clear that the rice industry was beginning to move forward as all of us here are directly involved in the rice life.

changes, no doubt, were highlighted with our recent production of \$3 ½ million in machines, tractors, trailers and combines which we need to further service the rice industry which is rapidly growing in this country. It is clear that the time has come when the rice industry no longer stays in the background. The rice industry, for many years, has been crying for help and has been fighting and struggling to the position it now stands. I have no doubt of what the rice industry would be within a short while- another five years. We would not be at second and third row benches; we would grow to the extent of being in the first bench in this country.

Most significant at this time are the prices that are now paid to the farmers of this country even at this time when things are so bad because of weather conditions. Still all around one hears credit being given to the Government in relation to the exceptionally high prices that are paid. I must endorse what was said by the Minister earlier on today that we are paying the highest prices over paid for rice in the history of this country. It is true that we ourselves on the Government benches are not quite satisfied with even this major achievement.

We feel more can be had Greater opportunities can be there if we can succeed in getting all the farmers of this country to work together and so build the industry that we can be proud of. If this is done and done quickly, the rice industry, no doubt, would earn its proper place in this country's economy.

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We in the Government are not only committed to making the small man a real man, but we are committed to making the small farmer in this country the real farmer. There was so much ground

covered by the Minister that I think it is time for us to say no more, but to simply second the reading of this Bill, the Guyana Rice Board (Amendment), Bill, to merge these two organizations, the Guyana Rice Corporation and the Rice Marketing Board, into one general unit.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member Mr. Feilden Singh.

M. F. Singh: Mr. Speaker, we have been treated to a very interesting historical background to the rice industry. We note carefully the alleged progress and the agreed achievements. Very good indeed. After all, the foundations were laid by Mr. Peter D'Aguiar as Minister of Finance at the beginning of the Coalition Government, when the rice industry was transferred to his portfolio. The foundations were very solidly laid on solid ground and perhaps what we are seeing at the present, are the fruits of that solid foundation.

We are very pleased with the Hon. Minister, Dr. Reid, a very able Minister for his enlightening background to the rice industry, and we note the remarks of the Hon. Member Mr. Ambrose, who criticized the P.P.P.'s administration from way back before 1965. It is a pity that the Hon. Member Mr. Ambrose, for whom I have a great respect, stayed with the P.P.P. until early this year. Having recognized their wrongs, he should have left them a long time ago. We have no objection whatsoever to the proposed legislation to bring rice industry under one administrative control, but we also would like to look at history, to go back and look at the rice industry. **[Interruption]**

The Hon. Minister of Agriculture did it. Would you deny humble me the opportunity of doing it too? It is a well-known fact that the rice industry was used by the P.P.P. Government as a political football, but is it not also a well-known fact that the P.N.C. continued this policy? It has followed in the footsteps of the P.P.P. Now we have a proposal to change this structure, to change the whole administration to bring it under one comprehensive piece of legislation and it is our hope, our fervent wish, that this will mean also a change in the present political domination of the industry.

I have no intention of using the rice industry as any political football but we have heard complaints and it is my duty as I stand here as a member of the Opposition, to bring these

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complaints before this House, to air them before the House. I earnestly urge that attention may be paid to what I say and that honest and genuine attempts be made to remedy the situation. For example, the allegation is that the Rice Action Committees are comprised almost entirely of P.N.C. activists. These are the famous Rice Action Committees that the Minister was talking about. The allegation is that some of their members have only a slight association with the rice industry and that these Committees operate more as extensions of the P.N.C. party than as impartial committees acting in the general interest of the rice industry as a whole.

It is a very worrying state of affairs. We are told wherever there is smoke there is usually fire and we remember vividly that a former P.N.C. Minister of Information once said there was no difference between the Government and the ruling party. The Hon. Minister Mr. Nascimento- I am sorry he is not present today- would perhaps ask me where that former Hon. Minister is today. That is no concern of mine. At the time he said it, he was a Minister of the P.N.C. Government and we must take note of what P.N.C. Ministers say. A former Hon. Minister of Information made that statement and are we satisfied with it? Should that be so? Should it be that there should be no difference between the ruling party and the Government? We on this side of the House say a very emphatic No. We cannot accept that. Will a P.N.C. dominated Committee help to dispel the allegations of discrimination, of favouritism, that are so rampant at the moment?

We urge the Government, now that it is restructuring the rice industry, to do a proper job. Restructure also the Rice Action Committees. Take politics out of the industry, let fair and impartial personnel be appointed, let justice not only be done, let it appear to be done. We shall have shortly to appoint new people under this proposed legislation, as long as it is passed. The Government has a majority and it goes without saying that it will be passed. All we urge on this side of the House is that in these posts that are proposed in this legislation, let Government be careful with appointments. Let Government take people who will command the respect and confidence of the people involved in the rice industry. Not all of them are supporters of the Government.

3. 25 p.m.

The Government would like us to think that it has two-thirds of the population on its side. We all know that this is a minority Government. Let the Government, now that it has the control of Parliament, at least bend over backwards. If I were in control I would have bent over backwards to have the confidence of the people. At least try to make the two-thirds a reality. You have the legal two-thirds, try to put some moral justification to your existence in the Government. Never *de facto*! *De jure* according to the P.N.C. laws. *De facto*, No! As I said yesterday, the people have acquiesced but let us not mistake this for approval. Let us not mistake this for a complete sanction of what took place on July the 16th.

Let us turn to an aspect of this industry which will come under the new administration and which will need to be looked into in great detail because my contention is that what I am going to talk about now is really in an utter and complete mess. There is no other word which I can use to describe it. I am talking of the United States Sponsored Rice Storage Programme. It is true that the United States Agency for International Development loan—[**Interruption**]. Mr. Speaker, I think it was a good day indeed when the United Force-- [**Interruption**]. Mr. Speaker, I acknowledged that this is an honest Assembly. It is supposed to be. I will not continue any further.

Mr. Speaker: I hope you will try and keep it so.

Mr. M. F. Singh: But the temptation is very strong sometimes because of the prompting.

Mr. Speaker: You are a good Christian. “Lead us not into temptation”.

Mr. M. F. Singh: Mr. Speaker, I am reminded that when Jesus was aggravated by the many strangers outside the temple he took a whip and he beat them out of the temple. There is a limit to one’s endurance and let me say that the Guyanese people reached that limit after July the 6th elections.

I am thinking of the United States Sponsored Rice Storage Programme. The United States Agency for International Development loan for this was secured as long ago as 1967 when Mr. Peter D’Aguiar, that financial wizard, was Minister of Finance. The plan was

to build six sets of silos at Burma which we know as MARDS, Mahaicony, at Anna Regina on the Essequibo Coast, at Ruimzigt on the West Coast, Wakenaam, Black Bush and—

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member Mr. Feilden Singh there is a point of order. **[Pause]** Please proceed Hon. Member Mr. Feilden Singh.

Mr. M. F. Singh: I thought it was a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: I thought so myself. Please proceed. Sorry to interrupt you.

Mr. M. F. Singh: This last silo, but by no means the least as far as the Hon. Minister is concerned, is the one to be erected at Somerset and Berks, near Dartmouth. Huge sums of money have been paid out to this American construction company to put up these silos. Only three sets of silos, as far as I can understand, have been completed. One has been completed at Burma, one at Anna Regina and I understand that the one at Ruimzigt is complete but it has not been officially handed over as yet. Work on the Wakenaam site is about 70 per cent complete. I would like, if my information is wrong, for the Hon. Minister to correct me. I could be wrong. At Black Bush work has not started. At Somerset and Berks work has not started. The site has been identified. Materials and equipment are lying on the site. They have been lying there for almost a year exposed to the weather conditions. Nothing has happened apart from an identification of the site and putting down some of the materials there. What is happening? I understand that this famous American company is at present demanding increased sums from the Guyana Government because of failures and over-run **[Interruption]**. Go and look it up. Do your research.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member Mr. Nascimento, please do not disturb.

Mr. M. F. Singh: Thank you, sir. The failures and over-run caused by the company's own ineptitude. But this is what the new Board will have to deal with. That is why I am drawing it to the attention of the Hon. Minister and those people who will be members of this new body, whom are here. They know the problem.

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This company has failed miserably in its contractual obligations and the question arises: What kind of contract was in fact drawn up? What kind of supervision was in fact being performed? These are questions that need to be answered. We must not allow American Government agencies here to make “scapegoats” of us. We are an independent nation. We must stand up for our rights and if they offend us let us deal with them as we would deal with any other person.

Guyanese people are my first consideration. Fantastic sums of money have been spent. What have the rice farmers got out of this? How have they benefited? Rice storage facilities are again used. To what extent are these fabulous rice storage facilities, as I said before, at Anna Regina and at Burma, being used? Are they built? Certainly, from my information, no more than two are in partial use and the relationship between these contractors and the Guyana Government agency is bad. At one time- and this is a fact- police guards were posted outside the contractors’ offices and on every site police guards were posted and, personnel, employees of the company were not allowed to get into those sites. I understand we have moved away a little bit from that. The guards have been withdrawn.

What is the present position? Is work proceeding? Have we got a reasonable settlement? I understand that the Government was looking for new contractors but no one would touch it. So the question is: What happened now? Are these rice silos to be completed? By whom will they be completed? At what cost? And what about the demands being made at the present moment by this American company? These are questions which demand answers. These are the kinds of things that will have to be cleared up speedily.

3.35 p.m.

As I am talking about the rice industry being put on a proper footing, perhaps I should commend to the Government that its own national philosophy of co-operatives be applied to the rice industry. We have heard that the rice industry is making profit. We talk so much about co-operatives. Why could we not make the rice industry into a co-operative so that the profits can

truly go back directly to the farmers rather than have the farmers rely on the rather nebulous statement at present being fed to them that the profits of the rice industry are being ploughed back into the rice industry.

Every year- and this year is no exception- there are problems connected with the rice industry. So often in the past and at the present time we blame it on what the lawyers know as acts of God- heavy rains, flooding etc., but the essential thing is that more attention ought to be paid to drainage and irrigation. You can control flooding, you can control shortage of water in your rice field.

There is a famous Scheme, Mahaica/Mahaicony/Abary Scheme, which is known very well by my good friend Mr. S.S. Naraine, the Minister of Housing. I know this scheme; I was at one time Minister of Works and Hydraulics in the Coalition Government. It is a good scheme indeed, and this Government has said that it will implement this scheme, but while the grass is growing the horse is starving. When will we have implementation of this scheme which will bring so much more lands under cultivation and provide better drainage and irrigation facilities?

The Government in the past has said that it will implement this scheme but within very recent times we have heard nothing. I should like the Hon. Minister to tell us a little more about it. It is time for this Government to put words into action. I would not like to know that this scheme will end up like the Government's so much talked about Hydroelectric Power Scheme. At the beginning of the P.N.C. administration we heard so much talk about this scheme. We are hearing about Regional Ministers more than anything else these days.

Mr. Speaker, I should like to summarise what I have said by one final appeal to the Government. If we are to justify our existence on this side of the House, if the Government really believes in an Opposition, then it must pay attention to the reasonable criticisms which have been put forward from this side of the House. I appeal to the Government, take politics out of the rice industry and run the industry along proper commercial lines with knowledgeable men who can command the respect and the admiration of the majority of rice farmers, men who can fill

positions in the Rice Action Committees without attracting the allegation that they are P.N.C. activists. Thank you.

Dr. Reid (replying): Mr. Speaker, there is not much to reply to with respect to the observations about the Bill itself. But some other issues have arisen and one is that the rice industry is still a political football. We acknowledge that the rice industry has been a political football but in the performance over the past few years there is no evidence of the rice industry being used as a political football. When you go through the rice growing areas, and I wish my friend would go through the rice growing areas because probably he is living in the past. We should go through the rice areas and observe the kind of infrastructural work that is going on.

Our business is to deal with rice farmers notwithstanding to what political party they belong; and the evidence is in the field. I do not like to go identifying places but I can mention a few places like Port Mourant and Onverwagt. There is much evidence all over the country. In the circumstances, we do not expect to have a rice industry free of problems; that is some heaven he is looking for. This rice industry is a big thing. Whatever you do with a large number of people there must be areas of discontent.

My friend said that all we need to do is to have good drainage and irrigation and the problem is solved. I wonder if he has in mind to solve the problem of the weather. Has anybody able to control the weather? For instance, who would say that in the sugar growing areas there is no proper drainage and irrigation, and sugar can stand up to the weather better than rice. But if you talk with the sugar people you will hear the problems. People who are acknowledged leaders, who do not understand, make all sorts of contrary remarks instead of taking time to understand the problems of agricultural production and then give people correct guidance.

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Our Rice Action Committees, however, have been given credit all over this country for the amount of work done. When we think of the floods and the droughts we have gone through and the amount of effort that was put into the rice growing areas, we are satisfied with our Rice

Action Committees and credit must be given to our farmers because in many countries no production has been recorded.

In Guyana, we have been able to feed ourselves with rice, we have been able to maintain the price of rice in the local market and this in itself is a great achievement. We are dealing with all the farmers, we do not only take a number of P.N.C. farmers because we may not get enough P.N.C. farmers to supply the production. So we deal with all the farmers and this is the policy we adopt. We make no apology when we come to appointing people to the Board. We are not going to appoint traitors to the Board; we are going to appoint people who accept the policy and programme of this Government. It does not matter to which Party they belong. The Rice Action Committees are working for the rice industry and we have removed the rice industry from being a football but some people are still endeavouring to make it a football.

I wish my good friend on the other side will take some time off so that he can really understand the rice industry. I am glad that he mentioned the rice storage programme because this is the difference between the P.N.C. and many other political organizations. When people are not performing well the P.N.C. can come out publicly and tell them so and, if needs be, put the police on them. The P.N.C. had to do this indeed.

Four sites have already been completed. I wish my friend would visit some of these places. At Somerset you cannot see all the work above the ground because a lot of work has been done under the ground. If you go to Black Bush Polder, you will see the work but we have got into difficulty because the contractors have not been able to perform their duties and we are taking legal steps against them. This some political organizations would not do but with the P.N.C. Government this is done so that nobody would behave as a rascal.

The P.N.C. Government works hard and we are ensuring that the silos will be completed. We have imposed the penalty clause so we are sure about what will happen to the silos. There is evidence all around the country about the ploughing back of the profits and this is the way the industry has to be run because we have all sorts of people; some are well-to-do farmers, some are big farmers, some are small farmers, but if we are to deal with the industry as a whole this Government must be ever ploughing back profits otherwise some of the small farmers would not

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be able to go on producing on their own. This country has a majority of small farmers and we make no apology when we say that we shall always take care of the small farmers to provide as many facilities as possible.

We are in the process of getting more and more equipment so that some of the problems that we face now will not be faced later, but there will always be problems. I invite my friend to see the Mahaica/Mahaicony/Abary scheme because the work speaks for itself and you must believe the work, so go there and see the work that has been started.

The hydro-electric scheme is still in progress. We are not giving up and that is why we are still in the Government; we do not run out. Your Leader lost because he had to run. We stayed and we fought them through and that is what we are doing with the hydro-electric scheme. We fought for years and that is the main task. We so conduct ourselves and our business that when a fight comes we can stand up and fight because we know that those contractors cannot tell us anything. We know that therefore we have imposed the penalty and the work for the rice industry is going on.

I am glad the Hon. Member has seen good sense in this merging and he is all for this Bill. I want to congratulate him for having the wisdom to support a Bill of this nature.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Assembly in Committee.

3.55 p.m.

Bill considered and approved.

Assembly resumed.

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

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Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, this may be a convenient time to take the suspension. The Sitting of the House is suspended for 30 minutes

Sitting suspended at 4 p.m.

4.30 p.m.

On resumption—

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER NO.23(1)

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Leader of the House. The **minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House** (Mr. Ramsaroop): Your Honour you may have noticed on the supplementary order paper, which was circulated this afternoon that notice was given of a Motion to seek the approval of this House for the Guyana Rice Corporation Dissolution Order 1973 to be ratified. However, as a day's notice has not been given, it becomes necessary for Standing Order No. 23(1) to be suspended and therefore I am most respectfully craving your leave to move the Motion for that suspension.

Mr. Speaker: Leave is granted.

Mr. Ramsaroop: Your Honour I now formally move that Standing Order 23(1) be suspended to enable this Assembly to proceed with the motion on the supplementary order paper.

Question put, and agreed to.

Standing Order 23(1) suspended.

MOTIONS

APPROVAL OF THE GUYANA RICE CORPORATION (DISSOLUTION) ORDER 1973 (NO.116)

“Be it resolved that this National Assembly in terms of section 51 of the Public Corporations Ordinance 1962 (No. 23), approve the Guyana Rice Corporation (dissolution) order 1973 (No.116) which was made on the 6th October 1973, and

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published in the Gazette on the 13th of October 1973.” [The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Development and Agriculture]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Deputy Prime Minister.

Dr. Reid: I beg to move the motion standing in my name. We have already discussed the merger of the Rice Corporation and the Rice Marketing Board and this Motion is to ensure that the Bill can go in effect.

Question proposed.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

CONFIRMATION OF THE COMSUMPTION TAX (AMMENDMENT)

ORDER 1973 (NO.97)

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister of Finance.

The Minister of Finance (Mr. Hope): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the Motion standing in my name:

“Be it resolved that this National Assembly in terms of Section 5 of the Consumption Tax Act 1969 (No.13), confirm the Consumption Tax (Amendment), 1973, which was made on the 14th September, 1973, and published in the Gazette on the 14th September, 1973.”

The background to this Order was in fact explained by me to this House about two or three weeks ago when we were dealing with a similar Order affecting motor vehicles. This House will remember that I had then pointed out that Guyana, in conformity with its obligations under the Common External Tariff which was one of the instruments of the Caribbean Community and Common Market, had reduced the customs duties which were then current in Guyana. In fact, that reduction came about because Guyana, in common with other territories of

the Commonwealth Common Market adopted the Common External Tariff which, in our case, is lower than the duties which were current in Guyana before 1st August of this year.

In order not to bring about a substantial lost in revenue which was in fact not contemplated when these arrangements were made around the participating territories of the Common Market, we proceeded to prepare for enactment a list of goods, the duties on which were reduced, and against which and on which we were proceeding to apply a Consumption Tax. The policy we followed in imposing that Consumption Tax was to ensure that, by and large, the Consumption Tax just replaced the duty which was taken off as a result of the Common External Tariff. That was the general principle.

In fact, in individual cases, it did work out differently. There are a number of commodities on which we did not impose a compensatory Consumption Tax and these were largely in the areas of item of food. We allowed the C.E.T. rates to apply without any Compensatory Consumption Taxes. We protected the revenue even in these cases, because in other items, to get round percentages, 10 or 12 per cent, there were areas where more consumption tax was possibly collected than was required to replace the customs duties, so that on balance, the total revenue was protected while some items, mainly food, the very expensive ones were allowed to proceed with a lower rate of duty without the consumption tax while with others got slightly higher rates than might have been necessary in terms of the previous laws.

I was very pleased to learn from the members of the Chambers, in a release published sometime last week, that a number of items, mainly food, were now sold at lower prices in the shops because there was no consumption tax following C.E.T. this is what we had asked the firms to do, to ensure that where there was in fact a reduction in the duty, the consumer got the benefit of that reduction. I am told that this had happened. We have not yet completed our independent cheques to satisfy ourselves that this is in fact the case but if one goes by what has been said, it does appear that the consumer has been able to get the advantage, at least in some articles, in view of the fact that we had not improved the consumption tax on certain items of food stuff which enjoyed a reduction of the customs duties following the imposition of the C.E.T.

4.35 p.m.

In effect, sir, the document we have before us is a very lengthy document. It is lengthy because the number of items on which we had to reduce the customs duties was also very large. As a matter of fact, the reduction affected practically every item on our customs schedule. Therefore, the Consumption Tax Order will be almost as long and I venture to feel that eventually it will be just as long as the Customs Schedule dealing with the various items of commodities.

There is one final point I think we should note. In the past, as we proceeded to impose taxes of an indirect nature, it was possible and feasible to modify the rates of customs duties. Under C.E.T. that flexibility would no longer be there because for any duty rate to be changed, whether to be reduced or increased, it has to be done in conjunction with the whole Common Market. The area of flexibility which remains with us is the consumption taxes, and this, I think, is a fact that one must note because the theory is that from time to time we would come to the House with modifications, whether for a reduction or increases, but it would be in consumption taxes or purchase taxes and not in the rates of customs duties. That, briefly, sir, is the background to this Order which I now commend to the House.

Question proposed.

Mr. M. F. Singh: Mr. Speaker, we are very grateful to the Hon. Minister for the very able way in which he has supplemented what he said on a previous occasion, giving us fully the background first of our purchase tax and then to the Order made under the Consumption Tax Act 1969. The legislation here deals with a whole range of Consumption Tax.

On the last occasion, when we were debating the new Order dealing with purchase tax on motor vehicles, I pointed out to the Hon. Minister certain anomalies, particularly relating to such vehicles as Land Rovers, Mini Mokes, Toyota Land Cruisers, Police Jeeps and vehicles in this category and I said at that time they were caught by both the purchase tax and the consumption tax. The Hon. Minister said that if what I had alleged on that occasion is true it would indeed be an anomaly, it would be wrong, and he promised to look into the matter. I should like to say publicly, here and now, that from the information which I have received, on the very next day the

Hon. Minister investigated the matter and gave certain immediate instructions which remedied the situation. [Applause] I want to commend the Hon. Minister for the prompt and efficient way in which he dealt with the problem. Well done Mr. Minister!

Of course, I bear in mind that the Hon. Minister was a former civil servant and a very efficient one. He is not a product of Congress Place. Maybe this should teach us that we should give more scope to our civil servants and then, perhaps, we would have greater efficiency in our entire administration. But again I commend the Hon. Minister and I sincerely hope that other Ministers would emulate this example. The Hon. Minister has demonstrated very admirably the way in which this Parliament should properly function.

Turning to the document before, I was going to make an observation that the Government took the opportunity in many cases to add a little bit more on these articles here under the consumption tax as consumption tax even though the intention was merely to make good the short fall, but the Hon. Minister has explained that in some areas there was an increase. This was due to the fact that in other areas there was a short fall. We will take that point though the increase on commercial vehicles was a sizeable one. On commercial vehicles, for example, with an overall duty of 43 per cent - if you work with a tariff of \$100 - the price would have been \$143. Now they pay 35 per cent duty which, with a value with \$100 already makes it \$135. Then there would be a 10 per cent purchase tax on the cost, plus duty. So that 10 per cent of \$135 will be \$13.50 making a total of \$148.50. So that is the new price, \$148.50, as against an old price of \$143 which really is an increase of 5 ½ per cent. So in some cases there definitely is an increase and in some cases in not insignificant increase. But if this has been done in order to alleviate the suffering in respect of food commodities where, as we all know the cost of living has gone up as a result of higher prices of these commodities, well then, one cannot really have any particular quarrel.

It is a really specialised document. We have to look to the Brussels Agreement for really proper clarification and proper understanding of this. I am no expert on the Brussels Agreement but I do know that from information received that the customs and excise department seems to be having some difficulty in the interpretation and I would ask the Hon. Minister – this

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is to be expected in everything of this nature – to make a check on this. He has done so well in the past that I think we can ask him to do a little bit more on this occasion, to make a check on this with the Comptroller of Customs and Excise and his officers. He will find that there are some areas of confusion, some areas of doubt in respect of interpretation and, perhaps, a meeting of the various persons involved and the law officers would help. The commercial community have complained of some difficulty. I am sure the difficulties can be ironed out but it would be called for a speedy meeting between the Comptroller of Customs and Excise and, perhaps, representative of the commercial community, the law officers or the CARICOM Secretariat in order to have these matters ironed out.

There is one last point; I cannot resist the temptation of making an observation on it. It is in respect of tariff Head No. Ex87.02 732.311 – 732.312 which falls under the heading “Other including specialized transport vehicles such as ambulances, prison vans and hearses”. I always thought that prison vans were duty free and I am wondering how we are prescribing a consumption tax of 25 per cent for engine capacity of not less than 1800cc’s; 15 per cent for engine capacity for less than 1800cc’s. Are we intending to have private prisons so we can have private prison vans? I do not know. Perhaps the Hon. Minister will clarify these matters. It may be that I am wrong but my information is that prison vans would normally come in duty free and therefore they would not be subject to any consumption tax. It may well be that we have taken this directly out of some other document and that is why it is there. This could be the explanation.

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I also note that ambulances and hearses will have to pay more than commercial vehicles: they will pay a commercial tax of 25 per cent, so that apparently the prisoners, the sick people and the dead people are going to have a little more taxation put on them because the prison vans, the ambulances and the hearses will pay more than commercial vehicles. There could be a simple explanation to this but it is something that causes me to wonder: why are we putting a simple tax on this? They would all pay the same 35 per cent duty, but in respect of

consumption tax they would pay either 25 per cent or 15 per cent whereas commercial vehicles would pay only 10 per cent.

That is about all I should like to say on this, and I do again commend the Hon. Minister for his past performance.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister.

Mr. Hope (Replying): Sir, if I may explain very briefly the Hon. Member is quite right when he said that the description is really a standard description which comes out the Brussels Trade Nomenclature. It does not mean at all that any private prisons are anticipated.

The other point the Hon. Member raised was that trucks and lorries, the commercial vehicles would carry a lower consumption tax than, say, ambulances and hearses. Of course, the logical answer to that is this: in the case of commercial vehicles, these are productive vehicles and it has been our tendency to tax the productive inputs a little less than goods vehicles which are to be finally consumed. After all, I believe ambulances are really final consumption.

The mechanical answer to the question, however, is that in this particular case we are replacing what has been taken off, and for whatever reason our former customs tariff had imposed a lower rate of custom duties on commercial vehicles and some of these others, and the C.E.T, I think, maintained some kind differential along those lines. Therefore, what we had to replace in the case of commercial vehicles was less than in the case of the other kinds of vehicles.

Finally, one other point. The Hon. Member quoted a figure to show that some places we appear to be collecting more on some vehicles than on others. I think this was bound to happen in this sense: that in the customs tariff there are two columns. There is a preferential rate, that is the rate for the Commonwealth, then there is the general rate, and the general rate is usually higher. In our case it went about 20 to 25 per cent higher than the preferential rate. Under the C.E.T. those two rates, preferential and general, were maintained but the differential was narrowed. Therefore, when we impose one level of consumption tax to replace the duty that was

taken off of these two classes, preferential and non-preferential, it meant that the preferential tax would have imposed a little more on, say, the preferential imports, vis-à-vis the general imports. In some cases the situation is reversed. The situation was bound to arise because we were replacing two different rates by one compensatory rate and you must have the differential problem.

Question put, ad agreed to.

Motion carried.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister of Labour and Social Security.

BUILD-SECOND AND THIRD READING

NATIONAL INSURANCE AND SOCIAL SECURITY (AMMENDMENT) BILL

The Minister of Labour and Social Security (Mr. Carrington): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the Second Reading of the following Bill:

A Bill intituled

“An act to amend the National Insurance and Social Security Act, 1969.”

In so doing, I should like us to go back to the introduction of the National Insurance Scheme. When the National Insurance Scheme was launched on 29th September, 1969, we said then that it was a breakthrough for the workers who were enjoying social security, there was a hue and a cry from the Opposition of the possible failure of the Scheme. There were complaints from many sections of the community but we reminded them then that like any new institution or new system you must have teething pains. The National Insurance scheme is four years old; it celebrated its fourth anniversary on the 29th September, 1973.

Today we are about to make the first Amendment to the National Insurance Scheme Act. We should note that after four years of existence the National Insurance Scheme has provided a number of benefits for the workers of Guyana, benefits that they did not receive in

previous years. This was made possible because of the People's National Congress Government in seeking to protect the workers from such situations as old age, injury, and disablement.

Up to the time of its anniversary, the National Insurance Scheme paid injury benefit, disablement benefit, death benefit, sickness benefit, maternity, invalidity, funerals, survivors, old age grant and old age pension. There are many other things we need to do as we go ahead with the National Insurance Scheme. We propose to extend the reciprocity agreement with countries other than the United Kingdom. We hope to establish such agreements with the Commonwealth Caribbean, the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada where many Guyanese live at the present moment.

But you may want to know since we are catering for the employed, what we propose to do about the self employed. Within the four years of existence, the National Insurance Scheme registered 187,473 workers. We launched the self-employed scheme in 1972, and to date we have been able to register 5,334. This registration took place in certain areas. I am sure you know, sir, that many Ministers and Members of Parliament have been registered in the National Insurance Self-Employed Scheme.

We intend to, and we must extend this scheme, to other groups of self-employed workers. The Government's policy is to protect the worker from the cradle to the grave regardless of his status or position in life. For this reason, it is our intention to extend the self-employed benefit scheme to agricultural workers, to many self-employed artisans, to taxi drivers, to the vendors because we as workers who are employed and who are registered must consider workers generally; they too can become a burden to the state in their old age if there is not adequate protection at that time.

We want to make sure that every worker, be he a businessman, a farmer, or a fisherman, has the same social security protection as others. We know what the National Insurance Scheme has been doing over the years; it has been providing finance for many Government programmes in the interest of national development. It will continue to do this. With our massive Development Programme, the National Insurance Scheme will play a greater role

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because we hope to bring into the workforce over 50,000 workers who will have to register by law.

4.55 p.m.

We have a very important matter before us, Mr. Speaker. The Trade Union Congress has been making a request for reduction in the pensionable age from 65 to 60 years. To do this, we will need an actuarial examination or review of the Scheme to see if this is possible. The Government has already given certain undertakings that they will do everything possible to reduce the pensionable age to 60, but we will have to look very carefully at the mechanics, the financing and the economics of the Scheme to see if this is possible, within a certain time.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we would want to maintain the relationships between the employers and the trade unions. This Scheme came into being with the advice, technical and otherwise, of the I.L.O of which Guyana is a member under the tripartite system where workers, employers and Government take part in discussions on labour matters, but the discussions are also extended to social security and other matters. It is our intention to maintain the good relationships between the Trade Union Congress, and the employers' organisation, C.A.G.I., to bring them closer and to make them a part of the National Insurance Scheme. To do this, we will have to set up an advisory committee to the National Insurance Scheme and to the Ministry of Labour to do a number of things: to make recommendations and regulations from time to time, to make recommendations and amendments to the Act, to advise on efficient running of the National Insurance Scheme, because when we examine this, the workers and employers are a vital part of the National Insurance Scheme since both workers and employers make a contribution and this will be done very shortly.

I know the T.U.C. will be concerned because they are looking forward to this necessary provision and I want to assure them that this will be forthcoming in the shortest possible time. But to give you an idea, Mr. Speaker, on what this Bill at the present moment will do: the Bill will amend to make provision for the Guyana State Corporation to fix the rates of remuneration for medical officers and members of the medical board. Now that the Corporation

takes on its statutory function and supervision and control of such matters, the Act will have to be amended to give it the right to do this.

This will also set out to provide for employees of the National Insurance Scheme to treat matters and information as confidential. In other words, there are certain confidential matters that must come to the National Insurance Scheme true its employees or officers and they must consider it and deal with it as confidential. The Bill also seeks to extend the powers of the inspectors who inspect the books of various employers to see whether or not they are making their contributions or deducting contributions from workers and to give them the right to inspect and to take away, if necessary, such information.

The Bill finally sets out to reimburse the Government of the funds it spent earlier in launching the National Insurance Scheme. We feel that the National Insurance scheme, after four years of collecting revenue, is in a position to reimburse the Government to the tune of \$384,451.

Another final point; the bill will give workers who are presently making appeals to the various levels of the National Insurance Scheme tribunals and appeal boards the right to take these appeals to the High Court. In other words, we are providing that the workers are in a position to ensure that justice is done to them as members of the National Insurance Scheme.

5.05 p.m.

I therefore hope that this Bill will meet with the approval of this House. Thank you.

Question proposed.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member Mrs. DaSilva.

DaSilva: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that the Hon. Minister has reminded us that the national Insurance Scheme has just celebrated its fourth anniversary. I should like to put the record straight, because when he spoke, he gave the impression that all the Members of the Opposition were not in favour of the N.I.S. I have my notes here that I used when this Scheme was first started on 29th September, 1969, and it is just to put the record right, that I wish to quote:

“This legislation is long overdue. The United Force, like all right-thinking people, will gladly support it. We do not only pay lip service to wanting good legislation for all. We would never obstruct or give adverse criticism to any Bill of this kind that gives support or is in the main a good thing.”

What I said in 1969, I say today, four years later, because I think the Hon. Minister deserves to be congratulated. N.I.S. has its problems. What new scheme, what programme of work, or what thing in life does not have problems? But the N.I.S. has been trying to do its best. There have been people who have tried to claim even by inflicting injury on themselves. But, by and large, the N.I.S. is doing a good job and we hope it will keep it up.

But there are a few points I should like to bring to the Minister's attention. We support this Bill because it is in the interest of the nation, and these amendments which will help to further the efficiency and the efficient running of the organizations are worthy of our support. But dealing with the matter of efficiency, there are a few points I wish to make and to draw to the Minister's attention. One is an old story of complaint against the long time that elapses before sick benefit claims are paid. I have a copy of a press release from the Hon. Minister dated 7th may, 1971. It is not a new story. It still continues. The Minister said in his press release:

“The first criticism and the most constant in is that claims are delayed, persons have to wait an extremely long time before receiving their national insurance benefits.”

This is still going on. There must be problems in getting these matters processed.

I have been hearing over the radio, little spot announcements about N.I.S., about claims, about its benefits and so forth. There has always been talk about delay in giving benefits because people are not filling out the claim forms properly, because they are not giving the correct information, or giving enough information, so I should like to put a suggestion to the Hon. Minister, which I hope he will accept, to help with the smooth and efficient running of the Ministry. Government is going in for a lot of advertisement, a lot of propaganda on the radio. It is so much simpler and easier if you have something in front of you that you can see. You hear it on the radio; that is fine. But if you have it in front of you, you can see it and you can refer to it.

And a lot of this form-filling business gives problems to many people; they do not seem to know what to put where and what to do.

I should like to suggest to the Hon. Minister, the insertion in the three Sunday newspapers, of a specimen of the form that is required when one puts in a claim for benefits; then the person will have the form in front of him and he can be guided by that. This should help, because this complaint about the N.I.S. not paying promptly has been going on for a long time and I do not think it is the intention of the Ministry to deliberately cause delay.

other point I want to make about the efficient running of this N.I.S.S. relates to a problem which is existing in primary schools. Until last year December, I understand, the primary schools made up their own N.I.S. claims and submitted them. They got their vouchers, they got their stamps and they were able to keep their cards stamped up to date. It was done for teachers by the staff in schools. As from the beginning of this year, this was taken over to be done by the education department in its computerisation system. But right up until now, they have not got their stamps for this year and just recently the whole thing had been handed back to head teachers of the primary schools for them to make up the forms, to get stamps for pasting on the teachers' cards. **[Interruption]** That is correct. I can produce the people from whom I got the information.

This poses a problem because, first of all, if the inspector should go in to check the cards, the cards are not stamped. Government schools must set the example. If they went to a private employer's place and the cards were not stamped, there would be problems attached to that. When the teachers are transferred, they have no up-to-date stamped cards to take from one school to the next, as they should. It presents a great burden on the staffs of the schools because they have to check cards and have stamps affixed for nine months. Can the Minister go into that and find out about it?

Sir, I crave your indulgence for just a few minutes, as I am talking about primary schools and about education. Whilst it may not be absolutely relevant as an N.I.S. subject, I am

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sure the Hon. Minister of Labour must be concerned because it is a cause for his concern how our citizens are educated. I am sure I will not be stopped during the two minutes that I am going to take.

I wish to refer to an announcement which has been appearing in the Guyana Graphic, over the past week it answers the question I gave to this House which was circulated last week dealing with the announcement of the name of the text book I English Literature for the 1974 Preliminary Examination for Government primary schools. This announcement states in the paper that the book is the *Wooden Horse* and that it is obtainable at the Central Book Shop. I am sorry the Minister of Education is not here but I hope it will be drawn to her attention. The head teachers of the schools, who are the people who ought to have this information, are not aware that the *Wooden Horse* is being the book for the examination.

5.15 p.m.

This is November and they still are not aware of the name of the book. Maybe the Central Book Shop has some exclusive rights, some exclusive and prior knowledge, that they could put the name of the book out. The point is though that it has not come through the proper official channels, the head teachers are not telling the parents where they can get the book for the children because they do not know if this is right. Indeed, the rumour is going around that the book will be the same as last year – “The Young Warriors” – but if this is not confirmed, again the head teachers can do nothing. I am concerned about this and wonder if those in authority would look into the matter and see what the position is and let the teachers have their information. We want efficiency not only in the social security services but in our education services.

To go back to the actual Bill before us, in clause 2, in dealing with the confirmation of the minutes, it states “As soon as practicable thereafter...” The point made is well taken but it is not always possible to have it done immediately. I should like to urge that it should not be used as an excuse to push confirmation of the minutes further and further back and have them piling up on you and not have them confirmed. I also wish to refer to clause 5 which states:

“...the inspector if he considers it necessary may make copies of, or extracts from, the documents so produced, and for that purpose he shall have power to take possession of the documents.”

We are in the favour of inspectors going in and looking at the documents. Also, it might be necessary for him to take them away. But we would urge the Minister that he considers the point and apply an administrative decision whereby a time limit is placed and I would suggest that a reasonable time limit will probably be seven days. He would make an administrative order on it. Take the books away by all means if you want them, if they are needed, but do not keep them indefinitely because, naturally, this will cause the people inconvenience. But if you will agree that a period of seven days is reasonable you could make an administrative order to that effect.

The rest of the clauses follow through in similar vein for carrying through and working efficiently the department of the National Insurance Scheme services. And we support, as I said, anything for efficiency. There are two things, sir, that are always leveled against the National Insurance Service department. One is the imbalance in that department and the other is the lack of courtesy and the attention to the public. Maybe the Minister will have a little pep talk with his staff.

We have been talking about what the Bill proposes to do. I should now like to raise two points. Incidentally, I had these notes written for the 25th September when the Bill was to be first debated. Then it was changed to 11th October, now we are actually doing it on the 7th November. Since then the Minister himself on the 30th September, 1973, in the **Sunday Chronicle**, gave a press release, as it were an anniversary press release, and he spoke of reciprocal arrangements. I am very pleased again to congratulate the Minister because one of the suggestions I had in my notes to bring up for discussion was this matter of reciprocal arrangement. We support this. Incidentally, I was going to suggest it but coming from the Minister – who better could it come from? – this reciprocal arrangement will surely take place. It is specially needed now when the call is going out for Guyanese from abroad to come back and help Guyana, to help the Development Plan work.

Many if these people have been employed for many years overseas; in Canada, in the United Kingdom, in Caribbean Commonwealth countries and in those places where there is a National Insurance Scheme, they have been making their contributions. So, as well as the question of having to think money wise, where their salaries are concerned, it would be the problem, too, that if this reciprocity did not exist they would stand to lose all their annual contributions. So I wish to commend and congratulate the Minister that we are bringing in a reciprocal scheme and look forward to seeing it becoming a reality with as many countries as possible.

In the same press release on the 30th September in the *Sunday Chronicle*, the Minister also talked about a medi-care scheme which will take care of the workers' families. I have a similar set of notes in my hand which I had to suggest to the Minister, namely, that there should not be a hospitality scheme. Right now, although sickness benefits can go up to 60 per cent of salary, there is really a loss of earnings. Though workers receive this 60 per cent, they have, when they are sick, the added worry of finding extra money to pay the doctor's bill, to pay for the medicine, to pay for the drugs, to pay for the nurse's care and at the same time continue their usual expenses.

There are still many firms in the private sector that carry on their own insurance, including hospitalisation and family benefit schemes, not only for the workers but for their wives and children. I think the time has come when the government must consider extending schemes' benefits to include hospitalisation. I am pleased to see the Minister is considering this and calls it a medi-care scheme. It does not matter what you call it so long as it comes out that the worker and his family can benefit.

Forty-three million dollars was the amount of money that the National Insurance Scheme made up to its birthday. Well, it is the time now for some of that to be spent and for the people to feel that they are getting something out of the Scheme. Section 13 of the Act states:

“...contributions shall, subject to this Act, be payable by insured persons and by employers.”

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The National Insurance Scheme has not reached the stage yet where free hospitalisation can be given. We have not been in operation long enough for it to afford to provide free medical attention for all who belong to it. That is something we aim at for the future, something we hope will come to pass. But a hospitalisation scheme or a medi-care scheme in which Government participates, as well as the employer and the employee, is well worth considering and within our reach. With the three groups involved making contributions, the premiums should be kept at a minimum. The contribution by the workers should also be deductible for income tax purposes. The workers should be satisfied to have this arrangement and so should the Minister. The Minister recognised that a sick man is not an asset to the nation. In his little book here when he talks about the sickness benefits, he says:

“...There are few things more distressing and less helpful in speeding up one’s recovery from illness than financial insecurity. National Insurance aims at providing for insured persons financial security through regular payments during illness thus aiding their speedier recovery...”

If they have a hospitalisation scheme, a medi-care scheme, call it what you will, this would certainly go to help them. In the report which was made in 1971 which I have here, I note that 163,456 man-days were lost in industry due to sickness. Anything that can be done to reduce the loss of man-days should be done to get the worker back to his job as soon as possible. So I commend to the Minister work on this medi-care or hospitalisation scheme, whatever he cares to call it.

5.25 p.m.

Yesterday, when the Hon. Prime Minister was replying to what I had to say about the Ivory Coast and Mr. Houphouet Boigny he said that we do not tell other people how to run their country and we do not copy from other people. I am pleased to see that in introducing this reciprocal scheme we are copying from other people. We are all human beings with the same hopes and the same aspirations and what we have to offer should be shared by all. If one nation can benefit from the other, it is not a question of copying; it is a question of taking advantage of somebody else’s experience. I am glad in particular when it comes to the reciprocal scheme that

the Government has done this and it has not said it is not copying from other nations and so we lose. What it is doing is in the interest of all.

The National Insurance Scheme is operated with the maximum of efficiency will ensure the confidence and co-operation of all. Passing an amendment as we do here today could do nothing but good, and it will help to build the confidence of the nation if this Scheme continues to run with additional improvement in its administration.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister.

Mr. Carrington (replying): Mr. Speaker, I should just like to reply to a few of the suggestions made by the Hon. Member and to thank her for her suggestions and advice. But I should like to clarify a few points on the question of the total income collected by the Scheme. The sum of \$43 million is quite a sum, but at the same time we had to provide payments to staff, we had to provide the benefits I listed. The total amount paid in benefits was \$16,000,502. For instance there were 10,000 cases of sickness benefits. We are not really in possession of \$43 million; we have to take out for other things and for the development of the Scheme.

On the question of medi-care, I am happy that the Hon. Member supports this Scheme which the Government in time will examine. I should say it is more or less a projection; we have other things to do in respect of the National Insurance scheme before we get to this point.

Medi-care would be just an extension of the benefits in N.I.S. at present enjoyed by the worker and his family. The worker most likely will have to contribute more because every benefit is calculated on a percentage of his contribution. Therefore, if there is another benefit to be given to the worker, he would have to make a further contribution and this would also apply to the employer.

-care schemes throughout the world are gathering momentum and I should not be in the least surprised if Guyana had medi-care scheme by 1975 or 1974. Because there is in existence a number of such medi-care schemes in Guyana which can form a nucleus for any such national scheme. It could help the worker and his family; and when we speak of self-reliance,

these are some of the things we mean. The worker would be, to some extent, relying on himself by making his contribution. With the type of co-operation that we had when we launched the National Insurance Scheme, we would get employers to co-operate with such a Scheme.

the question of faster payments and benefits, it is a fact that this is one of the big problems when we launched the Scheme earlier. We set out right away to correct the situation by having a decentralization programme. In the past, most of the benefits were prepared in Georgetown and sent out to other areas for payment. We have decentralized and so the benefits are calculated in the areas and paid in the areas.

There are local offices in New Amsterdam, Linden and in the Essequibo so as to speed up payments. We have just established an office in Bartica. I would agree we can do a bit more in speeding up payments. It is not altogether the fault of the national Insurance Scheme offices in some of these delays. As the Hon. Member said, it is a question of sometimes the workers not finding the time or not knowing how to make up the claim forms. And I agree with her suggestion of perhaps getting written forms or guidelines for workers. We hope to involve their leaders in the various areas – a local government leader, a trade union leader or a co-operative leader; and leaders having the time and capacity we will have seminars so that they can advise and assist workers in preparing their claims.

But the National Insurance Scheme officials are there at all times in these areas to give either the employers or the workers whatever advice and assistance they need. They need not fear, they can go to any of these offices at any time and they will be assisted. As in any business you will find an employee who is discourteous, you will find discourtesies in some of the biggest businesses, even in the banks where there is the best calibre. We are not going to say that the national Insurance Scheme employees at times are not discourteous. But we would investigate, and if it is found that this is so, those workers who serve the public will be removed. Because too often many of our public servants do not realize that they are public servants and that they must be courteous to the public. Mr. Speaker, I must again thank the Hon. Member for her contribution and suggestions, most of which we shall look into.

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On the question of the seven days' payments we will examine this and it can be done administratively. But the question of collecting the documents is just another move that we have made in the Ministry of Labour. There are times when you see the documents and you make certain notes of what is in the books, most likely the wages books, but when you return to those books corrections have been made.

[Interruption] You cannot take a Photostat machine with you. In the Ministry we have decided to have a Labour Officer collect the books. Many employers would tell you that our policy is not to create any hardship for them; they get the books back as early as possible.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Question put, and agreed to.

read a second time.

5.35 p.m.

Assembly in committee.

I agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 2

Mr. Carrington: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that we delete Clause 2 of the Bill and renumber the remaining Clauses consequentially.

Amendment that –

Clause 2 be deleted and Clauses 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 be renumbered as Clauses 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 respectively

Put, and agreed to.

Clauses 3 to 7, as renumbered, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Assembly resumed.

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

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, “That this Assembly do now adjourn to a date to be fixed.” [**Mr. Ramsaroop**]

Assembly adjourned accordingly at 5.40 p.m.
